

**Minutes of Special City Council Meeting
held Wednesday, March 31, 2021, at 5:00 P.M.
in the Council Chambers, 11 North 3rd Street,
Jacksonville Beach, Florida**



CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Hoffman called the special meeting to order at 5:00 P.M.

ROLL CALL

Mayor: Christine Hoffman

Council Members:	Georgette Dumont	Sandy Golding	Dan Janson
	Fernando Meza	Cory Nichols	Chet Stokes

Also present were City Manager Mike Staffopoulos, Deputy City Manager Karen Nelson, City Clerk Laurie Scott, and Attorney Cliff Shepard, one of the City's attorneys.

PURPOSE OF MEETING

The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the termination of the City Attorney's Employment Agreement via Resolution No. 2081-2021.

BACKGROUND

City Manager Mike Staffopoulos explained there were several Action items for the Council's consideration stemming from the Special City Council Meeting held on March 25, 2021, related to the arrest of the City Attorney [Chris Ambrosio]. The Council approved the following directives:

- Placed the City Attorney on paid administrative leave beginning March 24, 2021, until further notice.
- Authorized the Mayor to direct the City Attorney to refrain from accessing City properties or facilities, or from contacting City employees, until further notice.
- Directed City staff to prepare a Resolution for Termination of the City Attorney's Employment Agreement in accordance with the provisions of the City Charter, Chapter VI.
– City Attorney, Section 34, - City Attorney; appointment by council; removal.

Action 1: Adopt/Deny Resolution No. 2081-2021 to terminate the City Attorney under Section 5(B) of his Employment Agreement.

Mr. Staffopoulos explained the Resolution was prepared with the assistance of the City's outside legal counsel, Attorney Cliff Shepard. Adoption of Resolution 2081-2021 would start the process of the Termination of the City Attorney's Employment Agreement with the City of Jacksonville Beach. It would follow the process outlined in the City's Charter. If the Council adopted Resolution No. 2081-2021, a second resolution would need to be adopted by a supermajority (5 of 7) Council vote for the final termination to become effective.

Adoption of Resolution No. 2081-2021 would also suspend the City Attorney with pay until the effective termination date in accordance with the City Charter. A notice would be prepared to the City Attorney informing him of the actions taken by the Council, afford him the opportunity to request a hearing, and advise him of the status of his compensation and benefits. If the City Attorney requests a hearing, one would be scheduled. Another Special City Council Meeting would be set to consider the final resolution for termination when and if appropriate.

Mayor Hoffman requested the City Clerk read Resolution No. 2081-2021 by title only, whereby Ms. Scott read the following:

"A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY OF JACKSONVILLE BEACH, FLORIDA, TO TERMINATE THE CITY ATTORNEY UNDER SECTION 5(B) OF HIS EMPLOYMENT AGREEMENT; PROVIDING FOR ADOPTION OF RECITALS, REPEAL OF PRIOR INCONSISTENT RESOLUTIONS AND COUNCIL DECISIONS, SEVERABILITY, AND AN EFFECTIVE DATE."

Motion: It was moved by Mr. Nichols and seconded by Ms. Golding to adopt Resolution No. 2081-2021 to terminate the City Attorney [Chris Ambrosio] under Section 5(B) of his Employment Agreement.

Council Member Dumont noted the third bullet point in the Resolution did not match the exact language contained in the police report.

Amended Motion: It was moved by Ms. Dumont and seconded by Mr. Nichols to change the third bullet to "He admits to yelling to the victim," not "at the victim."

Roll Call Vote: Ayes – Dumont, Golding, Janson, Meza, Nichols, Stokes, Mayor Hoffman
The amended motion passed unanimously.

Discussion:

A Council discussion ensued. Attorney Cliff Shepard answered questions from Council members.

Roll Call Vote: Ayes – Golding, Janson, Meza, Nichols, Stokes, Dumont, Mayor Hoffman
The original motion passed unanimously, as amended.

Action 2: Approve/Disapprove termination of the City Attorney's additional pay effective April 1, 2021.

Motion: It was moved by Mr. Nichols and seconded by Ms. Golding to approve termination of the City Attorney's additional pay effective April 1, 2021.

Mr. Staffopoulos said staff was looking for direction from the Council regarding additional pay and some of the benefits currently in effect. He explained in addition to the base salary, the City Attorney's Agreement had additional pays, including an insurance supplement, automobile allowance, bar certification stipend, and a pension opt-out supplement, which are not covered under the language in the City's Charter.

Discussion:

There was no Council discussion.

Roll Call Vote: Ayes – Janson, Meza, Nichols, Stokes, Dumont, Golding, Mayor Hoffman
The motion passed unanimously.

Action 3: Approve/Disapprove termination of the City Attorney's health, dental, vision, and life insurance benefits effective June 1, 2021.

Motion: It was moved by Mr. Nichols and seconded by Ms. Golding to approve termination of the City Attorney's health, dental, vision, and life insurance benefits effective June 1, 2021.

Discussion:

Mr. Shepard clarified the 30-day period started the day after Mr. Ambrosio was served with the notice. Deputy City Manager Karen Nelson stated these benefits are paid at the beginning of each month, and for all employees, the termination of the benefits takes place at the end of the month during which the termination takes place.

Roll Call Vote: Ayes – Meza, Nichols, Stokes, Dumont, Golding, Janson, Mayor Hoffman
The motion passed unanimously.

Direction from Council

Mr. Staffopoulos stated the process would take 30+ days until the actual termination of the City Attorney would occur. He explained there was the possibility of an alternative remedy to allow the City to move forward quicker. Mr. Staffopoulos sought direction from the Council on whether staff should reach out to Mr. Ambrosio to see if there was a solution that would be amenable to both parties to end the matter quicker than the 30+ days.

The Council supported staff reaching out to Mr. Ambrosio.

ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 5:19 P.M.

Submitted by: Laurie Scott
City Clerk

Approval:



Christine H. Hoffman, MAYOR

Date:

4/19/21

LS: sg