

Town of Melbourne Beach

TOWN COMMISSION WORKSHOP February 5, 2025 at 6:00 p.m. COMMUNITY CENTER – 509 OCEAN AVENUE

MINUTES

Commission Members:

Mayor Alison Dennington
Vice Mayor Dawn Barlow
Commissioner Robert Baldwin
Commissioner Anna Butler
Commissioner Tim Reed

Staff Members:

Town Manager Elizabeth Mascaro
Town Clerk Amber Brown

1. Call to Order

Vice Mayor Dawn Barlow called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

2. Roll Call

Town Clerk Amber Brown conducted roll call

Commission Members Present

Vice Mayor Dawn Barlow
Commissioner Robert Baldwin
Commissioner Anna Butler
Commissioner Tim Reed

Staff Members Present

Town Manager Elizabeth Mascaro
Fire Chief Gavin Brown
Town Clerk Amber Brown

Commission Members Absent

Mayor Alison Dennington

3. Pledge of Allegiance and Moment of Silence

Vice Mayor Dawn Barlow led the Pledge of Allegiance.

4. Public Comments – 1:45

After being acknowledged by the Mayor, members of the public should state their name and address for the record. The Commission encourages citizens to prepare their comments in advance. Each individual will have three (3) minutes to address the Commission on any topic(s) related to Town business, not on the Agenda.

5. New Business – 2:15

- A. Presentation from the Melbourne Beach Volunteer Fire Department pertaining to the need to adjust the Department's current staffing model to a combination-type (hybrid) system, with a few paid staff to supplement the existing volunteers – Fire Chief Gavin Brown

Fire Chief Gavin Brown said he will be presenting part one tonight which is who we are as a Fire Department, challenges they are facing, possible solutions and what benefits the solution could bring the community. Part two will be presented in a month and will go over hard dollar figures and funding sources. The Melbourne Beach Volunteer Fire Department was established in 1953 by 6 Town residents. They are ISO class 3 which means the protection they provide is in the top 18% of all fire departments in the US. Staffing is himself, the only paid full time employee as Fire Chief, and one part time employee who is a Maintenance Technician. They also have 35 volunteers; 21 are state certified volunteer firefighters, 7 are EMTs or paramedics, 10 are state certified fire instructors, 2 are fire inspectors and 7 are stop the bleed and CPR instructors. Also have one Master Safety Officer in the department and 2 qualified strike team leaders. They respond to fire related and other emergencies in Melbourne Beach 24/7, 365. They write their own grants.

Commissioner Tim Reed asked what the success rate is for grants.

Fire Chief Gavin Brown estimated their success rate is 65% roughly, said most grants they apply for are federal, which means they are competing with all Fire Departments in the US. Feels confident they receive over 50% but sometimes the needs of other communities are greater. Said they are one of few Volunteer Fire Department's left. A lot of the volunteers bring knowledge from different backgrounds/careers in addition to the training they receive. They are a non-staffed fire station, the volunteers have pagers and are on call. They train other municipalities firefighters. They have a Volunteer Firefighters Association which is a 501c3 which donated over \$100,000 in benefits to the Town last year and provides many helpful programs. The Fire Department helps the Town host events and helps with non-emergency services. They also assist other Town Departments.

Commissioner Tim Reed asked what area the Fire Chief is referring to when he says they are one of the only Volunteer Fire Departments in the area. Asked about how Melbourne Beach compares in size and demographics.

Fire Chief Gavin Brown said Brevard County and surrounding Counties in Central Florida. Said there are not very many comparable sizes, the closest would be Indian River, although there are more residents and square footage in Melbourne Beach than Indian River. Indian River has some volunteers but relies on their paid Fire Department staff. Says people should care because the Melbourne Beach Fire Department provides professional service with a small town feel. Community expectations of the Fire Department are that people are going to show up with proper equipment to handle the emergency, that they are going to have the proper staffing for the emergency, and a guaranteed quick response. Says there are less fires now than there used to be but the fires are different now. They burn up to 8 times faster and reach hotter temperatures and grow larger in size due to more

synthetic materials and lithium batteries being used and new construction techniques which reduce cost but increase fire risk. Spoke about some of the issues with the department being made up of volunteers, they are hard to get and hard to keep.

Fire Chief Gavin Brown said the reason this is being brought forward today is because of changes in the local partnership with Indialantic. They cancelled the automatic aid agreement that was in place, saying it was not equitable due to them sending paid firefighters and Melbourne Beach sends volunteers, so it was costing Indialantic more. Fire Chief Gavin Brown said while it was not equal it was fair, both departments provided different things that benefitted both communities. The current model is not sustainable. We are unable to guarantee a quick response of 5 minutes or less which is critical.

Commissioner Robert Baldwin asked if volunteers are harder to find because requirements have gone up.

Fire Chief Gavin Brown said the training requirements have increased both for initial training and for continuing education. Said that people ask if we got more volunteers would that fix the problem and the short answer is no. It would help, but it would not fix prolonged response times and the shortage of volunteers with the skills for leadership roles within the organization. It takes a year to train a new volunteer. Says he wants to transition to a combination style department which will have some paid staff members to supplement the volunteers. Spoke about the various ways this would benefit the Town and that this could potentially bring back the automatic aid agreement with Indialantic and would allow for a partnership with Brevard County Fire Rescue. Does not want to outsource because it would cost a significant amount, will provide numbers at his next presentation, also once you outsource it is not a decision that can be reversed. The Fire Department is looking at applying for a grant for staffing.

Commissioner Robert Baldwin asked when the grant would take effect. - 42:25

Fire Chief Gavin Brown said it is hard to say, it depends when the grant is awarded and takes 6-12 months to start awarding them. Probably meet again in April before the budget to review costs/figures and the Commission can vote how they want to proceed.

Vice Mayor Dawn Barlow asked for data as far as the number of volunteers, number of calls, and budget. Asked the Fire Chief to provide the budget per year, number of volunteers, and the number of calls per year since 2019. Asked about the community paramedicine program that Satellite Beach has implemented, number of homes, general feedback, and data from their program.

Fire Chief Gavin Brown said he could get those figures, but the amount of calls does not matter when it comes to the speed at which emergencies need to be addressed and how many people that would require. Said the Police Department currently responds to medical incidents in Melbourne Beach but this would allow the Fire Department to be able to respond in addition to or instead of the Police. Said the ISO rating could potentially be lowered with a combination style Fire Department, but that would most likely affect insurance rates for businesses over residents. Said he will reach out to Satellite and get some data from them.

Commissioner Anna Butler asked in the event that we hire paid staff, if they would be 24/7, and asked if we have accommodations for that. Would there be any concerns about current volunteers wanting to transition to paid positions, leaving you with less people.

Fire Chief Gavin Brown said yes, they would be 24/7 and there would be slight retrofitting but there would not be any significant cost. Said he does not believe the paid positions would take away people that are volunteers currently, but could be used as a recruiting tool in the future saying they hire for paid positions out of the pool of volunteers first.

Deputy Chief John Miller spoke about how everyone is hiring right now and there is a staffing shortage.

Commissioner Robert Baldwin asked about the idea of paying Indialantic to continue to be the quick response to our Town.

Deputy Chief John Miller said that is something that could be looked into. He said it is important to know the roles of each department in that kind of agreement. Said in the previous agreement they only come out for fire, not medical. The inequity is that Indialantic does fire and medical services and Melbourne Beach only does fire. A community running medical and fire will get a lot more call volume.

Fire Chief Gavin Brown said the Town does not pay anything to the County for EMS, it's included in the resident's taxes. We cannot say we do not want to use those services because they are the only ones allowed to transport in Brevard County.

Commissioner Robert Baldwin clarified that currently, the County provides transport and medical and the Town provides fire and that the quickest responses would be in the Town.

Commissioner Tim Reed asked if it is possible to quantify the volunteer response versus a paid response time. - 1:08:48

Fire Chief Gavin Brown spoke about how NFPA recommendation for paid departments is on scene in 5 minutes. Typically today with the volunteers it's between 10-15 minutes to be on scene.

Deputy John Miller spoke about how there is no difference in time putting gear on and getting on scene. The time difference is the time it takes to get to the station in order to respond to the call.

Fire Chief Gavin Brown spoke about how he can provide the stats on response times. If the department had paid staff the response time could be 3-4 minutes.

Commissioner Tim Reed asked about what number he means by a few paid staff.

Fire Chief Gavin Brown spoke about the minimum would be 6 and the maximum would be 8. You must have 2 on shift per shift for 24 hours and 48 hours off. The other possibility is 8 staff and they would work 24 hours on and 72 hours off. This would lower overtime when someone takes time off, and the yearly salary would be lower.

Commissioner Tim Reed asked about the statement if there were 20 new volunteers, that still wouldn't fix the issue.

Fire Chief Gavin Brown spoke about how it would not change the response times and it would not change the automatic aid. He spoke about the requirements to become a firefighter which includes 191 hours of classroom training for minimum level members.

Deputy Fire Chief John Miller spoke about how manpower is as important as response time. The volunteer system provides the manpower.

Fire Chief Gavin Brown spoke about how Florida requires 2 in and 2 out. Two people can start rescues but trying to put the fire out requires 4 certified firefighters on scene.

Vice Mayor Dawn Barlow asked if there is a grant out there to extend beyond the first 3 years if the Town did receive that grant. As budget is coming, that is something that needs to be looked at. - 1:22:08

Fire Chief Gavin Brown said the Safer Grant allowed people to apply for extensions which we could apply for but would not rely on it.

Town Manager Elizabeth Mascaro spoke about the response from Indialantic was that they would just hire more staff to help Melbourne Beach. Would rather invest in our department than pay another department to hire more staff.

Commissioner Robert Baldwin spoke about leaving no stone unturned and discussing all of the options.

Deputy Chief John Miller spoke about how the difference is culture.

Commissioner Robert Baldwin asked about the possibility of volunteers staffing the station for additional pay.

Fire Chief Gavin Brown said they would be able to be at the station, but none of the volunteers want to and he understands it is a big ask but he would take applications if they are willing to. But as far as pay, you can only pay so much in stipend (20%) for it to be considered a volunteer position.

Commissioner Robert Baldwin spoke about getting data and quotes prior to that workshop.

Fire Chief Gavin Brown spoke about how right now volunteers are covering the Town, but it's not realistic to not allow our volunteers to leave Town because they have to cover the area.

Commissioner Anna Butler spoke about how the Town is vulnerable. We do need to do all of the due diligence, but something has to happen.

The Commission confirmed the next workshop will be in April.

Town Manager Elizabeth Mascaro spoke about how a lot of the volunteers have a full time job and they still volunteer a lot and it is a lot to ask.

Vice Mayor Dawn Barlow spoke about how skilled and qualified our department is.

Deputy Chief John Miller encouraged the Commissioner to ask questions and spoke about how compliance is mandated for us, we do not get to pick the requirements.

B. Discussion on amending Resolution 2023-10 Town Commission Rules and Procedures – Commissioner Anna Butler – 01:37:00

Commissioner Anna Butler spoke about reaching out to other municipalities to ask about time limits. A lot of them had time limits. One of them that had limits started having 2 meetings per week which she does not want.

The Commission agreed there is room for improvement.

Vice Mayor Dawn Barlow spoke about how the resolution drives how the meetings should go, and the prior Commission got away from following it.

Commissioner Anna Butler spoke about how the main things are the Chair drives the entire meeting and keeps everything on task. We don't necessarily need a hard stop time, but we should pick certain parts of Robert's Rules of Order and put them into the Resolution. Limit the debate to each Commissioner gets 2 times to speak the first time is 3 minutes and the second time is 2 minutes. Limit the total amount of time allotted for Public Comment to 30 minutes. Feels this would be a good starting point.

Commissioner Robert Baldwin asked how you would limit Public Comment. Suggested making a list to speak and go in order until the time is up.

Commissioner Anna Butler said we could do that or limit the time each person speaks.

Vice Mayor Dawn Barlow spoke about section J4 and that is a section to limit the Commission. This talks about how before a Commissioner member is allowed to speak a second time, the others have to have been given the opportunity to speak first. Said if one Commission member is speaking after each person, it is on the rest to say out of order.

Commissioner Anna Butler said a minimum of 7 days prior to the meeting the packets should be available.

Commissioner Tim Reed said he wanted to touch on the sequence of the agenda. Said if he is understanding correctly, the current resolution has aspects of it that if the Commission followed more closely, we would be more on track for an efficient meeting.

Vice Mayor Dawn Barlow mentioned that each resident can speak for 3 minutes and there should only be 3 responses to anyone speaking at the podium. Commissioners can ask follow up questions. Public Comment is not intended to be a 15 minute discussion.

Town Clerk Amber Brown said the three minutes is not specified by the State, that is by municipality, we do have to allow Public Comment, said to ask the Town Attorney if you can cap the time for Public Comment. A lot of other municipalities have a card the residents have to fill out that has their information and a summary of what they will speak about, must turn in the card before they are allowed to speak.

Commissioner Robert Baldwin asked if the time allotted to each individual speaking is based upon how many cards they get ahead of time to which no one had the answer.

Vice Mayor Dawn Barlow mentioned getting the Town Attorney's opinion.

Commissioner Tim Reed said it would be hard to limit public comment to 30 minutes. That comes across harshly.

Commissioner Robert Baldwin said they are more so focusing on limiting time per speaker.

Town Manager Elizabeth Mascaro said the Commission does not have to respond to public comment at all. It should not be a conversation.

Vice Mayor Dawn Barlow said it says, if under Public Comments a citizen's concerns can be addressed by answering their question, provide a short explanation, or by the Commission directing the Town Manager to follow up. Said we could build in a time limit for each Commissioner responding to Public Comment.

Town Manager Elizabeth Mascaro said there have never been meetings that last as long as these have, with very limited agenda items. Suggests stopping the back and forth and having things put on the task list to put on another meeting or workshop agenda. - 1:53:10

Commissioner Anna Butler said if we get our packets early, that will help if we have questions we can have a meeting with that department head and ask them.

Vice Mayor Dawn Barlow reiterated the importance of using out of order.

Commissioner Tim Reed said he could lead, starting with page 6, Non Agenda Public Comment, would be happy if that was at the very beginning.

Town Clerk Amber Brown said the agenda additions, changes and deletions are typically done towards the beginning of the agenda because that is the Commission's agreement to the agenda so no one can go out of order.

Vice Mayor Dawn Barlow said the order should be Call to Order, Roll Call, Pledge of Allegiance, then the Meeting Agenda. The Commission agreed. Then she said number 5 would be Proclamations and Awards.

Town Manager Elizabeth Mascaro said it might be good to have the visitors speak and then go into Public Comment and then the boards could make their presentations.

Commissioner Robert Baldwin asked who approves special guests.

Town Manager Elizabeth Mascaro said that may be by request, someone may contact a Commission member to sponsor x, y or z. Said things still get vetted.

Vice Mayor Dawn Barlow said it could come through the Town through departments or through the Commission.

Commissioner Anna Butler clarified that if someone comes to her with a request to sponsor something, she does not need further approval.

Town Manager Elizabeth Mascaro said if a Commissioner does not want to sponsor something they can suggest having the person come speak during Public Comment.

Vice Mayor Dawn Barlow said after number 5, Proclamations and Awards would come number 6, Special Guests and then number 7, Public Comment for Non Agenda Items.

Commissioner Tim Reed suggested a time limit for Special Guests. Asked about adding a place for the Commission to talk about Non Agenda Items.

Town Manager Elizabeth Mascaro said that issue would fall under Commission Report which falls towards the end of the meeting, but could be moved up.

Vice Mayor Dawn Barlow brought up translating her summary of open items into a Commission Report that would get inserted to help have visibility to share with everybody. Suggested number 8 would be Consent Agenda. Number 9 Unfinished Business. Number 10 is New Business.

Town Clerk Amber Brown brought up Public Hearing and Special Orders.

Vice Mayor Dawn Barlow updated the order putting Public Hearing and Special Orders at number 9, Unfinished Business becoming 10 and New Business becoming 11. Asked if department heads not coming to meetings included the Finance Manager.

Town Manager Elizabeth Mascaro said it does include the Finance Manager but they will be coming at certain times when relevant.

Town Clerk Amber Brown said the Finance Report is different from other departments because there is typically a vote on that one.

Vice Mayor Dawn Barlow said in that case, the Finance Budget Report should come first at number 12, and number 13 would be Department Boards and Committees.

The Commission discussed appointments and Town Clerk Amber Brown said that typically falls under Consent Agenda. - 2:17:35

Vice Mayor Dawn Barlow asked about Administrative Reports which is the Town Manager and Town Attorney Reports becoming part of the Department Reports.

Town Manager Elizabeth Mascaro said that could all fall under Department Reports.

Vice Mayor Dawn Barlow said number 14 would be Commission Reports, number 15 would be Task List and number 16 would be adjournment. So the total list looks like: 1 Call to Order, 2 Roll Call, 3 Pledge of Allegiance and Moment of Silence, 4 Meeting Agenda Additions, Deletions, Changes, 5 Proclamations and Awards, 6 Presentations by Special Guests with 5 minute maximum, 7 Public Comment Non Agenda Items, 8 Consent Agenda, 9 Public Hearings Special Orders, 10 Unfinished Business, 11 New Business, 12 Finance Budget Report, 13 Town Staff and Board Reports, 14 Commission Reports, 15 Task List, 16 Adjournment.

Town Clerk Amber Brown said this will now be part of a resolution that will be drafted and presented to the Commission to be voted on as a whole. If there are items the Commission would like to change that could be done now or at another workshop.

Vice Mayor Dawn Barlow asked for 10-15 minutes to make recommendations on the resolution and additional amendments.

Town Clerk Amber Brown clarified that the Commission's resolution will supersede Robert's Rules of Order.

Vice Mayor Dawn Barlow continued, saying to keep TCW, STCW, and RTCM the same deadline to provide the agenda packets 7 days ahead. Page 13 and page 14 to say, 5:00 p.m. on the second Friday before the meeting.

Town Manager Elizabeth Mascaro said that the Town Attorney said walk ons are allowed.

Vice Mayor Dawn Barlow said page 14 number 3, remove the last sentence not allowing walk ons. Asked the Town Clerk about section 4.

Town Clerk Amber Brown said what that was saying is if there are no verbal objections, there is unanimous consent.

Vice Mayor Dawn Barlow said page 15 Section 6, change to 7 days before the meeting on Wednesday. Said there is no deadline defined about the Commission getting questions about the packet to the Town.

Town Manager Elizabeth Mascaro said the Commission can ask her questions up until right before the meeting, and does not believe they need a deadline. - 2:34:25

Vice Mayor Dawn Barlow said page 16 Section 7 notes the public is to address the Commission, not a single person.

Commissioner Robert Baldwin said that at the start of Public Comment, it is a good time to remind them that they are supposed to address the Commission as a whole and not to address an individual Commissioner or Town Staff at all.

Vice Mayor Dawn Barlow asked if the Commission wanted to add Public Comment cards.

Commissioner Tim Reed said he was not in favor at this time, and the Commission agreed.

Vice Mayor Dawn Barlow referenced limits on each Commissioner's speaking time. Says she personally feels that if the public is limited to 3 minutes and the Commissioners have been able to do their homework they should also be limited to 3 minutes. Asked if the Commission wants the public to speak before the Commissioners do.

Town Manager Elizabeth Mascaro said you have to make a motion before you speak because it is possible that no one is in favor of it.

Vice Mayor Dawn Barlow said as it states now, the Mayor introduces an item, asks for a brief discussion, each Commission Member is given an opportunity to speak, then Public Comment, then Commission Members speak again.

Town Clerk Amber Brown said the reason this is written in the resolution is because it is not following Robert's Rules of Order. It is up to the Commission to change it if they want.

Vice Mayor Dawn Barlow said that means J7 needs to go to 3.

Commissioner Robert Baldwin said you can always amend your motion after learning things from other Commissioners or the public, but a motion needs to be put out first.

Town Manager Elizabeth Mascaro mentioned that anyone on the Commission can respond to Public Comment, but asked if they wanted a time limit on response times.

Vice Mayor Dawn Barlow said to limit Commissioner's responses to 1 minute, page 17 J6.

Town Clerk Amber Brown said she would have to see if she could program multiple times to be able to keep time for various things during the meetings, but could figure it out later.

Town Manager Elizabeth Mascaro suggested purchasing another timer.

Vice Mayor Dawn Barlow wanted to mention page 20 Section 12 Minutes – Currently says the deadline is Tuesday before the meeting on Wednesday for the minutes and spoke about changing it to the second Friday before the meeting.

Town Clerk Amber Brown asked if revisions should be included in the packet or presented at the meeting. Also spoke about the Consent Agenda, anyone can pull something from it, it would still become an agenda item, but not a Consent Agenda item.

Vice Mayor Dawn Barlow said section 13, it takes four votes to pass the resolution. Section 1 (C) said this language says 2/3rds of the Commission is needed for a vote which is 3.33 people. Sounds the same but has different language than 13. Can we remove Section 1(C)?

Town Clerk Amber Brown said she will verify what Section 1-20 of the code says.

Commissioner Robert Baldwin left at 8:54pm.

C. Discussion on the proposed Task List – Vice Mayor Dawn Barlow – 02:55:00

Vice Mayor Dawn Barlow said she is going to build out a written Commission Report that any of the Commissioners can see in the packet.

Commissioner Tim Reed said the way he has currently seen it is tasks for the Town Staff. The list that the Vice Mayor is building out is more like a Commission list, the topics and items we want to work through and prioritize.

Vice Mayor Dawn Barlow spoke about getting minutes from the various Boards to be in the know about what they are doing. Suggested having each Board formalize in an email what was done in the past year and what will be done in the coming year. Also asked about any other lawsuits pending or known at this time and how communication with the Town Commission has taken place.

Town Manager Elizabeth Mascaro said on Monday there was a ruling where the request was denied. They have 30 days to appeal. Said there is a meeting, it's called a Shade meeting, and those are strategy meetings. Once the lawsuit is finalized it becomes public record.

Vice Mayor Dawn Barlow asked about the Magistrate.


Town Manager Elizabeth Mascaro said the Magistrate passed away yesterday. Said the Town Attorney was already meeting with another attorney in Rockledge to talk about a local magistrate before the current Magistrate passed. Discussed asking another member of his firm to come up until the Town can find someone.

Commissioner Tim Reed spoke about having a workshop to start the discussion about the Town Manager's Contract renewal which ends this fiscal year.


6. Adjournment

Commissioner Anna Butler moved to adjourn; Commissioner Tim Reed seconded; Motion carried 4-0.

Meeting adjourned at 9:16 pm.


Alison Dennington
Mayor

ATTEST:


Rachel Pembrook (Feb 19, 2025 15:37 EST)
Rachel Pembrook
Transcriptionist