



**CITY OF FLORA  
SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES  
CITY HALL COUNCIL CHAMBERS  
131 EAST SECOND STREET**

**September 24, 2024 – 4:30 P.M.**

**OPENING CEREMONIES**

Mayor Rick Slaughter called the Regular Council Meeting of the City of Flora to order and City Clerk Kaci O'Dell called roll. Present were Mayor Rick Slaughter, Commissioner Linda Spicer, Commissioner Jeremy Henderson, Commissioner Phil Wiley and Commissioner Jim Fehrenbacher.

Others in attendance were City Attorney Bob Coble, Assistant Chief of Police Jeremy Ruger, City Administrator/Economic Development Director Mike Stanford, City Clerk Kaci O'Dell, City Treasurer Kim Adair, Building and Zoning Official Chad Bayles and Superintendent of Public Services Toby Rinehart. Several Public Works employees and City of Flora citizens were in attendance.

Mayor Rick Slaughter led the Pledge of Allegiance and Commissioner Jeremy Henderson offered the Invocation.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Mayor Slaughter informed the guests that now was the time if they wished to speak. Several guests had questions regarding the proposed new Wastewater Treatment Plant. The main concerns were: how would it affect utility customers, what type of design it would be, and how did the City come to choose the design?

City Administrator/Economic Development Director Mike explained that utility customers would see an increase on their utility bill. This will not be in the form of a tax, but an increase on their sewer portion of the bill. He also clarified a certain amount of this increase will be set back for a future plant and repairs to the new plant. The plant design is called SBR. Guests were told that Mr. Johnson with Fehr Graham will explain what that means and the process that was taken to come to that decision.

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

A MOTION TO APPROVE THE AGENDA FOR THE SEPTEMBER 24, 2024, SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING FOR THE CITY OF FLORA WAS MADE BY COMMISSIONER SPICER; SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER WILEY.

- Vote: Yes – Slaughter, Spicer, Henderson, Wiley, Fehrenbacher
- No – None
- Abstain – None; Absent – None

## **REGULAR BUSINESS**

Mayor Slaughter welcomed Matt Johnson, Engineer with Fehr Graham. Mr. Johnson went on to address the questions asked during public comment.

Mr. Johnson went through the process of how Fehr Graham came to be the qualified engineer company to head this Wastewater project. He commented that it was disappointing to hear the concerns of the design when we are this far in the project. Mr. Johnson explained that in 2020, the City went out for bids on this project. In the Request for Qualifications Document the project was set up for USDA funding. It was also in writing that the City would like the awarded engineer company to consider new technologies versus conventional technologies.

The reason the SBR hybrid design was chosen was due to the existing large storage volume lagoon that already exists. Without this, SBR would not work. An oxidation ditch would have been selected if the lagoon did not exist. The cost of the SBR hybrid became the cheaper option with that existing lagoon. This caused a significant decrease in construction costs.

Mr. Johnson went on to speak about funding options. He reminded Council that the USDA has sent a letter of commitment for financing. This letter includes the funding and loan payment terms. The project cost 27.8 million and is offering a \$5,264,000 grant. The remaining 22 million loan will be at 2% interest for 40 years. An annual loan payment \$821,640.00.

Mr. Johnson stated his company is very familiar with both USDA and IEPA funding. They have completed projects using both. With the IEPA there is no grant option. You borrow and they forgive the principal balance for certain amounts of the loan, which is capped at 5 million per fiscal year. The IEPA interest is less than USDA, but you have a shorter length of time to pay off. There are pros and cons with both. Mr. Johnson repeated that USDA has provided the City a letter of commitment. It is in writing; we have the money. IEPA is nothing more than available and the City is eligible to apply for it.

If the City wanted to apply for IEPA, applications are due every March. IEPA takes all applications and scores the projects based on a long list of criteria. Some examples include: project readiness, ready to build, design finished, permits in hand from IEPA and a major one is need. The scoring sheet comes out sometime in the summer, whenever they are finished. Mr. Johnson shared some stats to help everyone understand how competitive the loan program is. If the City wanted to apply with IEPA, we would be submitting for FY27. The City's plant doesn't have the need factor. Being an old plant doesn't make Flora unique. High on the need is what we don't have and that's because of the City of Flora Staff. Basically, it's well taken care of, no violation notices have been given, and the City is not under a consent notice with the Attorney General's office to make some type of improvement to the plant. It is possible to apply for IEPA funding and not be selected. With USDA, the City has a letter of commitment.

Commissioner Jeremy Henderson expressed concern that it sounded like the Fehr Graham operators would be learning the system along with the City's operators, not the Fehr Graham operators teaching the City's operators. Fehr Graham Engineer, Matt Johnson responded, "One idea to address the concern is to talk to the operators at the plant in Colorado and maybe I can as part of my services, pay for them to come out a week or two weeks or something like that."

Mr. Johnson hopes moving forward communication will be better and stressed that he is always available to speak with anyone.

City Administrator/Economic Development Director Mike Stanford had two items for council.

A MOTION TO HIRE KYLIE ZIMDARS AS FINANCIAL CLERK AT \$23.00/HOUR PLUS BENEFITS EFFECTIVE OCTOBER 14, 2024 WAS MADE BY COMMISSIONER SPICER; SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER WILEY.

- Vote: Yes – Slaughter, Spicer, Henderson, Wiley, Fehrenbacher
- No – None
- Abstain – None; Absent – None

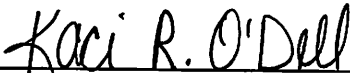
A MOTION TO INCREASE PAY RATES BY \$1.00 PER HOUR FOR DEANNA RINEDOLLAR, DIANE BRASHEAR AND BRITTINE DENONCOUR EFFECTIVE SEPTEMBER 30, 2024 WAS MADE BY COMMISSIONER WILEY; SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER SPICER.


- Vote: Yes – Slaughter, Spicer, Henderson, Wiley, Fehrenbacher
- No – None
- Abstain – None; Absent – None

**ADJOURN**

At approximately 6:47 p.m. with no further business to discuss, Mayor Slaughter requested a motion to adjourn.

COMMISSIONER WILEY MADE A MOTION TO ADJOURN; SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER FEHRENBACHER. COUNCIL MEMBERS CONCURRED AND MAYOR SLAUGHTER DECLARED SAID MEETING ADJOURNED.

  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Kaci R. O'Dell, City Clerk

  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Rick J. Slaughter, Mayor

Approved by City Council on: October 21, 2024