

**Summary Minutes of the:
ISLAMORADA, VILLAGE OF ISLANDS
(HYBRID) SPECIAL CALL VILLAGE COUNCIL MEETING**

Founders Park Community Center

87000 Overseas Highway

Islamorada, FL 33036

Tuesday, January 11, 2022

5:30 PM

CALL TO ORDER / ROLL CALL

Mayor Pete Bacheler called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. Acting Village Clerk Stephanie Conde called the roll with the following Council members being present on roll call: Mayor Pete Bacheler, Vice Mayor Henry Rosenthal, Councilman Mark Gregg and Councilman Buddy Pinder. David Webb was in attendance virtually, via Zoom. Also present were Village Manager Greg Oravec, Village Attorney Roget Bryan, Planning Director Daniel Gulizio, Acting Village Clerk Stephanie Conde and other pertinent staff.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE AND INVOCATION

Councilman Mark Gregg led the Pledge of Allegiance. There was no invocation.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mayor Pete Bacheler opened general public comment.

Hearing none, Mayor Bacheler closed public comment.

AGENDA: Requests for Deletion / Emergency Additions

Mayor Pete Bacheler asked for requests for deletions/emergency additions. There were none.

RESOLUTIONS

Tab 1: Request by Monroe County to Identify Village Priorities for the U.S. 1 Transportation Master Plan.

A RESOLUTION OF THE VILLAGE COUNCIL OF ISLAMORADA, VILLAGE OF ISLANDS, FLORIDA, IDENTIFYING AND PROVIDING A LIST OF TRANSPORTATION RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE POTENTIAL SOLUTION LIST OF PROJECTS WITHIN APPENDIX G OF THE APPROVED U. S. 1 TRANSPORTATION MASTER PLAN, TO IMPROVE TRAFFIC FLOW, ALLEVIATE CONGESTION, IMPROVE SAFETY AND ASSIST IN IMPROVING THE LEVEL OF SERVICE ON U.S. 1; AND PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

This item was heard at 5:33 p.m. Village Attorney Roget Bryan read the title of the resolution. Village Manager Greg Oravec explained that Monroe County is the lead transportation agency and as a result they have taken the lead in liaising with the Florida Department of Transportation and AECOM to develop a five-year transportation work plan for the entire County.

Kimberly Matthews, Sr. Director of Strategic Planning and Libraries for Monroe County, explained AECOM's 18-month process of idea gathering for the 5-year program and said it will be updated annually. She emphasized the importance of the Council putting forward its priorities for the Transportation Master Plan, said it is a "living document" and that additional feedback was welcome at any time. Mayor Pete Bacheler asked whether Planning Director Daniel Gulizio had any additional comments, to which he replied he did not. Councilman David Webb offered his comments including amendments to the Village's Transportation Master Plan resolution, after which Mayor Pete Bacheler asked the other Councilmen for their comments. Councilman Mark Gregg addressed 10 Islamorada-based projects within those provided by the County. He said he did not support the possible usage of the Old Highway as a frontage road as part of the Village's transportation priorities, because usage of the old road would promote "leap frogging," where motorists on U.S. 1 use both the Old Highway and U.S. 1, further backing up traffic. He said he would support the Old Highway as a "locals only" road if possible. Within the County list, he said he was interested No. 179, a pedestrian bridge at Coral Shores High School. He was in favor of No. 183, enhancing the highway with a continuous trail through the Florida Keys. He opposed the idea of a bridge on the outside of Windley Key and Upper Matecumbe Key and wanted it removed from the County's master list. He spoke in favor of making improvements to the Old Highway for pedestrian use. He also approved of improving/constructing bus stops throughout the Village. Vice Mayor Henry Rosenthal said he also opposed usage of the Old Highway and said it was like "adding another lane to U.S. 1." He said he wanted to maintain it as a secondary road because locals use it and he wanted to keep visitors on U.S. 1. He also supported the construction of bus stops for daily commuters, and would like to see bus stops make County's top priority list. Village Manager Greg Oravec said taken staff recommendations and input from the public, created a list tied to the reference numbers on the master plan in the agenda packet. He urged Council to plan now as it would take years to get projects completed. He summarized the list of Village projects he had compiled along with staff recommendations:

- 1.) Conduct an Access Management Study along U. S. 1 for the length of the Village (not just from MM77 to MM83) to determine the need for turn lanes and/or other access management improvements. The study should include review of possible improvements to the Old Highway to better serve as a frontage road that promotes safety and other modes of transportation through installation of bike lanes and walking paths. (Project #104 and #117 from the Monroe County List)
- 2.) Purchase property to create a Park-n-Ride hub parking area to promote alternate modes of transportation within Islamorada and serve as base for potentially expanded Freebee services. Islamorada is in the process of purchasing Walgreens property and has budgeted funds to convert the property to a parking area for this purpose. (Project #108 from the Monroe County List)
- 3.) Convert Snake Creek Bridge to a high-level fixed bridge. (Project #113 from the Monroe County List)

4.) Extend two lanes southbound on U. S. 1 another half mile to approximately San Pedro Church passed Planation Key School to alleviate backup and congestion at Woods Avenue light near Coral Shores High School and PKS. (#116 from Full List)

5.) Resurface U. S. 1 through entirety of Islamorada to repair areas further damaged during Hurricane Irma. (Projects #115 and #119 from the Monroe County List)

6.) Install shelters at designated bus pull-off areas and stops along U. S. 1. Funding for installation of bus stop shelters have been included in Islamorada's FY 21-22 budget. (Project #162 from the Monroe County Lis) Mr. Oravec cited the need for bus shelters, encouraged Council to team up with Monroe County and Tourist Development Council to improve the bus stops.

7.) Move Florida Department of Transportation Weigh Station to an alternate location. Village Manager Oravec stated terrible current location front of Venetian Shores.

8.) Provide for safe bike paths/walkways on bridges within Islamorada to increase safety for bikers and walkers to get from one island to another. Mr. Oravec asked the Council to consider safety, "Are you really a Village of Islands if they're not connected?"

9.) Add raised medians in the middle of U. S. 1 at certain locations to facilitate pedestrian crossing and safety, especially on Upper Matecumbe. Village Manager Greg Oravec recommended implementing pedestrian safety measures in downtown Islamorada.

Councilman Buddy Pinder was not in favor of a Passover from Windley Key to Tea Table but wants to reserve the decision when Planning Director Daniel Gulizio has put together a final list. Kimberly Matthews hoped to have Village recommendations to compile with other Keys municipalities at Transportation Committee meeting on January 24, 2022. Vice Mayor Henry Rosenthal wants the Village to move forward on their own projects.

Village Manager Greg Oravec believes the Village should partner with FDOT and Monroe County to have as many of the projects paid for without Village money. He said the Council should hold another special meeting if they needed more time but that the list of projects and resolution were approvable. Village Attorney Roget Bryan pointed out the list of projects recommended by staff.

Mayor Pete Bacheler recommended approval of the resolution and priority list.

Councilman Buddy Pinder asked whether modifications could be made and whether the document was a working document, which Village Manager Greg Oravec confirmed. Councilman David Webb referred to the list of projects as the Village's wish list and said it was important to move forward.

Vice Mayor Henry Rosenthal said he was not prepared to wait for FDOT because of what he referred to as the length of time it takes in government to get things done. Mayor Pete Bacheler said the Council should approve the wish list, which was reiterated by Councilman Mark Gregg. Vice Mayor Henry Rosenthal said he wanted to move forward with approving the list.

Councilman David Webb discussed his four amendments for the resolution and said that not one single recommendation in the County's document would reduce the number of vehicles in Monroe County. He said the overwhelming problem with traffic in Monroe County is the number of vehicles and that what he was suggesting with his amendments was to try and start focusing on strategic priorities: what the strategic plan should be for the community going forward, how many people live in the Keys and how many cars they are driving. He also mentioned sea level rise and affordable housing and how they impact the quality of life in Islamorada or reduce it. He said he wanted to reduce traffic issues and address the carrying capacity of the Keys and whether it had been reached or breached. He implored the Council to require the County and the State to follow through with the Keys as an Area of Critical State Concern.

He moved to amend the resolution with his 4 amendments and approve the list of priorities to be sent to the County. Councilman Mark Gregg asked for clarification on the amendments and where they would be placed within the resolution. Councilman David Webb said his amendments were in addition to the other "Whereases" in the resolution.

Village Attorney Roget Bryan clarified the clauses for the final resolution. Councilman David Webb said he was trying to use the resolution as a tool to partner with the County and State and that the Council should consider the carrying capacity of the Keys and how it will change in the future. He said he has talked with many in the community who believe the carrying capacity was reached long ago and that for the future, the Village needs to have specific conversations about carrying capacity.

Councilman Buddy Pinder asked Village Attorney Roget Bryan whether the Village was discussing the entire County or Islamorada-specific projects. Mr. Bryan said the projects being discussed were policy driven and that it was the Council's decision whether to incorporate Councilman David Webb's suggestions. Councilman David Webb said he was in support of the 10 recommendations from staff. Village Manager Greg Oravec told the Council that it was a fair debate and that the contours of the debate needed to be figured out for the Village.

Councilman Buddy Pinder said he had a problem with "reached" vs. "breached." He said he needed time to think about Councilman David Webb's amendments. Mayor Pete Bacheler asked Councilman Buddy Pinder whether he was asking if the Council was stepping outside its boundaries. Councilman Mark Gregg said there had been other instances where the Village has stepped outside its boundaries, opposing the Urban Development Boundary in Miami-Dade being one of those times.

Councilman David Webb said he was trying to be careful with the language of his amendments and that cooperative efforts were needed to address the existing traffic issues as well as the steps needed to determine whether the carrying capacity of the Keys had been reached or breached. He said the Council needs to be part of the dialogue with the County and the State to determine what carrying capacity means and that he was trying to make sure that the conversation continues.

Village Manager Greg Oravec said "breached" would be better replaced by "exceeded." Councilman David Webb said he approved replacing "breached" with "exceeded."

At 6:22 p.m., Mayor Pete Bacheler opened public comment.

Angel Borden said the carrying capacity of the Keys needs to be addressed but that what the Village and its residents feel about the Keys traffic would be overridden by other politicians and residents south of the Village who want to continue profiting off tourism. She said the proposed pedestrian bridge at Founders Park was unacceptable and it would be unacceptable at Coral Shores High School as well. She said she was in favor of a raised road and a tunnel underneath U.S. 1 with the Sheriff's Office close by. She said the missing element was the discussion of raising US 1 along Lower Matecumbe to compensate for future storms and that it was something she would like to see on the list of priorities. The idea of a bypass bridge was not a good idea, she said.

Charlotte Norris, a homeowner at Safety Harbor, urged the Council to "get out of the weeds" and accept the list of priorities and Councilman David Webb's amendments.

Sue Miller said she wanted to make sure the public was able to see Councilman David Webb's amendments because she had not seen them in the agenda packet. She requested for the amendments to be read out loud.

Councilman David Webb said he'd be happy to read the amendments.

At 6:28 p.m., Mayor Pete Bacheler closed public comment.

Councilman Mark Gregg asked whether the public had had access to the amendments prior to the meeting, to which Village Attorney Roget Bryan responded that no, the amendments had not been provided to the public prior to the meeting as Councilman David Webb had wanted to propose them during the meeting. Councilman David Webb made a motion to pass the 10 priorities plus 4 amendments to the resolution. Mayor Pete Bacheler seconded the motion. Councilman Mark Gregg clarified whether the word "breached" was going to be replaced with "exceeded," which Councilman David Webb confirmed. Vice Mayor Henry Rosenthal asked for the entire resolution to be read for the public and said not everyone has computers or knows how to navigate the website. Mayor Pete Bacheler asked how many pages long the resolution was, to which Village Attorney Roget Bryan said "Four pages." Village Manager Greg Oravec said, "I'm on my way out and let me just tell you, this is silly. Read the amendment into the record. Where does it stop? Are you going to read a 600-page packet? This is a business meeting of the Village Council but reading a whole resolution?" Councilman David Webb said he was going to take the floor and read his amendments, which he did:

WHEREAS, Federal, State and local government officials all have acknowledged that the Florida Keys have a finite carrying capacity; and

WHEREAS, a critical component of carrying capacity is the number of vehicles transiting U.S. 1 and secondary roads within the Florida Keys; and

WHEREAS, notwithstanding the need for identifying solutions within a U.S. 1 Transportation Master Plan, only direct steps taken to curb the further proliferation of vehicles in the Florida Keys will meaningfully address the ever-increasing traffic congestion issues; and

WHEREAS, cooperative efforts among all levels of government are needed to address both the existing traffic issues as well as the steps needed to determine whether the carrying capacity of the Florida Keys has been reached or breached or exceeded.

Council voted and the motion passed unanimously.

MAYOR AND COUNCIL COMMUNICATIONS

At 6:36 p.m., Village Attorney Roget Bryan asked whether there were any Mayor and Council communications. There were none.

Village Manager Greg Oravec addressed the Council and said he did not have anything more to add to his letter of resignation, which had been submitted the day prior, Monday, January 10, 2022.

He said that after 25 years of living a very public life he was looking forward to reclaiming his anonymity. He said he personally wanted to thank the Council for the opportunity and that he had enjoyed getting to know each one individually. He thanked Finance Director Maria Bassett, Village Attorney Roget Bryan and Fire Chief Terry Abel. He apologized to Planning Director Daniel Gulizio and Assistant to the Village Manager/Public Information Officer Katie Atkins for resigning so quickly after their onboarding process as new employees. He said he wanted to show gratitude to the public for their support and told his family that he was grateful for them and that he loves them more than words can explain. He said the Village Council would be better served by another Village Manager and that with time being precious, "We should not just be satisfied with our work, but never think of it as a grind." He continued, "As it turns out, I've lost my appetite for some of the critical dynamics that go with this job and for me they've become more than just isolated moments in time – they've robbed the job of its joy. Given that these dynamics are playing out against the backdrop of a difficult move, which has my family split between two places, I have come to the regrettable yet real conclusion that I cannot muster the deep reservoir of enthusiasm and passion necessary to properly serve you, this Village Council, and meet its many challenges." He said having submitted his resignation he wanted to part ways with relative grace and was hopeful that "We could renew our perspective pursuits of happiness with the hopes of finding them."

Mayor Pete Bacheler asked for any last comments.

There were none.

Village Attorney Roget Bryan asked the Council to confirm that they accepted Mr. Oravec's resignation. The Council unanimously accepted.

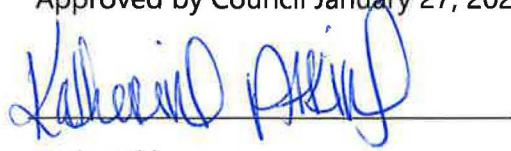
There was no further comment.

ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Pete Bacheler made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Councilman David Webb seconded the motion.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:41 p.m.

Approved by Council January 27, 2022.



Katie Atkins

Public Information Officer