

CITY OF MELBOURNE, FLORIDA
MINUTES – SPECIAL MEETING BEFORE CITY COUNCIL
SEPTEMBER 18, 2001

A special meeting of the City Council was held in the City Hall Council Chamber, 900 E. Strawbridge Avenue, and was called to order at 7:30 p.m. by Mayor John A. Buckley.

1. All present gave the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America.
2. Roll call.

Present:	John A. Buckley	Mayor
	Cheryl Palmer	Vice Mayor, District 5
	Richard Contreras	Council Member, District 1
	Ed Palmer	Council Member, District 2
	Pat Poole	Council Member, District 3
	Grace Walker	Council Member, District 4
	Loretta Isenberg-Hand	Council Member, District 6
	Henry J. Hill	City Manager
	Paul R. Gougelman, III	City Attorney
	Cathleen A. Wysor	City Clerk
	Amy W. Elliott	Director of Finance
	Karen Windsor	Budget Officer

Mayor Buckley informed the audience that the budget advertisement contained the correct figure for “gas taxes”; however, the line was not identified as gas taxes. He noted that this will not affect the adoption of our budget.

Mr. Hill opened with a presentation and overview of the proposed 2001-2002 budget. The presentation included discussion on the notice of proposed property taxes; city’s budget calendar; millage rate (4.5228 mills); budget total (\$99,603,506); millage rate history; Melbourne property valuation since 1987; new growth portion of the valuation; residential construction; comparison of proposed tax rates with other municipalities in Brevard County - Melbourne ranked ninth out of the other 15 cities; total by major fund (General, Water & Sewer, Golf Courses and Airport); chart of sources of revenues in the General Fund; chart of expenditures in the General Fund; chart of revenues in the Airport Fund; chart of expenditures in the Airport Fund; capital improvements in the Airport Fund; and city-wide major goals included in the proposed budget.

3. PUBLIC HEARING – Proposed Final 2001-2002 Budget

Mayor Buckley opened the public hearing.

Judy Good, 322 Banyan Way, Melbourne Beach, President of the Board of Directors, Melbourne Municipal Band, stated that the band appreciates the support provided by the city over the years. She asked that Council continue to subsidize the band so it can continue bringing the joy of music to our citizens. Ms. Good stated that the band understands the problems associated with balancing a budget; the band struggles to stay in the black. She urged Council not to impose the dollar per person fee (for those attending concerts) and said this will take money from our elderly retired citizens and

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from the band's treasury. She offered that if there is no other way to continue operating the auditorium, then the band would pay \$200 - \$300 per set of concerts. She noted that those who attend the concerts are on a fixed income and not able to give more. The city would collect its dollar at the door; however, (when the hat is passed for the band) the band would not receive anything. She concluded by commenting that people who attend the concerts shop, eat, and spend their money in the city. The band is an asset and should be considered a good investment.

Mayor Buckley read the letter from State Representative Mitch Needelman encouraging Council not to adopt the one dollar per person fee for band concerts.

Bruce Florin, 7185 Orchid Tree Drive, Grant, reported that he is concerned that the dollar fee will decrease donations made by patrons. He referenced the band budget detail sheet distributed to Council and noted that the majority of their expenditures are fixed. He listed the number of concerts/events conducted by the band each year and stressed that in order to meet the budget, they must receive donations from concert patrons. Any reduction would result in expenses exceeding income and should that occur, they would not be able to continue.

Loretta Vargas-Betancourt, 3817 St. Armens Circle, Melbourne, representing the Melbourne Community Orchestra, said she is here to appeal the one dollar admission fee to the auditorium for those attending orchestra concerts. She noted that the orchestra budget is modest and approximately two-thirds comes from voluntary contributions by attendees. The average contribution is less than one dollar per person. She stressed that they cannot afford to lose two-thirds of their income. Ms. Betancourt concluded by stating that the orchestra attracts businesses and families to our area. These people provide income and growth to the local economy. The members of the orchestra do not believe that the auditorium problems can be solved by charging an admission fee. Additionally, their members have varied expertise and are willing to assist Council and staff in assessing the auditorium problems. One possible solution may be to charge others a higher (rental) rate.

Gina Summers, 510 Westchester Avenue, representing the Melbourne Community Orchestra, agreed with Ms. Vargas-Betancourt's presentation.

John P. Gaddie, 4121 Mustang Road, Melbourne, Board of Directors and member of the Municipal Band, said he fears the one dollar fee would be damaging and cause the demise of the band. He noted that the band is an asset greater than what the fee would generate. The band's budget is weak and fragile and if not for donations, they would not have a quality conductor. Mr. Gaddie listed the approximate cost for hiring a 50-person band (the Melbourne Municipal Band has 80 members) and said this means that in just one year, the band provides \$190,000 in services. This does not include performances at schools, convalescent homes, etc. He asked Council to reconsider assessing the one dollar fee.

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Robert Bauer, 5061-4 Park Lake Drive, Melbourne, agreed with the points raised by each speaker.

Edwin Beasley, 3623 Sandy Crane Court, Melbourne, Board of Directors and member of the Melbourne Municipal Band, asked Council to oppose the one dollar admission fee proposed for the auditorium. He reported that as a former Leisure Services Director, he knows the problems associated with maintaining an auditorium. He assured Council that the employees at the auditorium are high quality. He added that Council does not have all the facts needed to make a good decision on the fee. When people pay at the door, they are reluctant to give a donation. Imposing a fee could cause the demise of the band and the orchestra. He offered to meet with staff and work out something more amenable.

Joan Needelman, 2317 S. Bignonia Street, Melbourne, Melbourne Municipal Band, said that the members are often told when they visit nursing homes and senior centers that they are the only means of entertainment. She asked Council not to charge the dollar admission and stressed that the members really want to play. Imposing a fee would cause a hardship on a lot of people.

Hal Gibson, 1556 Independence Avenue, Melbourne, representing the Space Coast Winds, stated that the arts provide for the human spirit. Music is considered an international language and it is what people turn to in troubled times. He urged Council to seriously reconsider the issue and find another way to accomplish the budget.

Betty Blevins, 2413 Nobility Avenue, informed Council that she has played clarinet in the band for 26 years. Last year she turned 80 – making her the oldest member of the band. She noted that four years ago she moved to Melbourne to be near the band. The band has many followers from the Cocoa area who have dinner at local restaurants before concerts. She concluded by saying she would vote for a half cent tax in November to help fund the auditorium.

That concluded comments from the public.

4. RESOLUTION NO. 1716: A resolution adopting a millage rate of 4.5228 mills, which is 0.0683 mills (1.53%) above the rollback rate of 4.4545 mills. This millage rate is the same as the current year rate.

Attorney Gougelman read the resolution by title.

Moved by Poole/E. Palmer for approval of Resolution No. 1716. Motion carried unanimously.

5. RESOLUTION NO. 1717: A resolution adopting a budget for the 2001-2002 fiscal year, making appropriations for the payment of operating expenses, capital expenses, and for the principal and interest on the bonds and other indebtedness of the city, in the city's General Fund, Special Revenue Funds, Water and Sewer Fund, Stormwater Utility Fund,

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Golf Course Fund, Capital Improvement Fund, Insurance Fund, Airport Authority Fund; and establishing authority for the City Manager to implement the budget.

Moved by Buckley/Walker to not impose the one dollar fee at the auditorium for band and orchestra concerts.

Mrs. Hand agreed that the city should not impose a one dollar fee on our senior citizens. For many, this is the only type of entertainment they can afford. She added that the city needs to keep the arts alive in Melbourne.

Mayor Buckley clarified that his motion would provide for the money to come from contingency.

Mrs. Palmer said she has spoken with many members of the band and the orchestra who have assured her that the one dollar fee would end their musical career. It would take away the funds they collect, which comprise a large part of their budget. Additionally, the one dollar fee won't solve the problems of the auditorium. The city needs to make it a priority to see what can be done to make the auditorium more self supporting.

Mrs. Poole spoke in support of the dollar fee and pointed out that the band and orchestra concerts result in a great deal of expense to the city. She referenced the roof problem at the auditorium and stated that she does not think anyone would strain to put a dollar in to help with upkeep of the auditorium. The city is trying to keep the taxes down so the older population doesn't have as much to pay. The one dollar fee could do a lot to help the city with expenses. Continuing, Mrs. Poole pointed out that the city is practically supporting the band and orchestra; we do more for these groups than any other group in the city.

Mr. Palmer pointed out that a dollar amount can't be placed on the band and the orchestra. They make Melbourne the focal point for culture, music, and talent. Concert attendees eat in our restaurants, buy gas, etc., and the city benefits in that regard. Melbourne is fortunate to have such talented musicians and he would support the demise of the dollar fee.

Mr. Contreras applauded all the musicians who support the city. He referenced the number of people who volunteered to help and suggested they work with staff to make recommendations on how to mitigate losses at the auditorium. He noted that we need to be proactive in order to get in front of this situation.

Mrs. Walker agreed with the comments made by Council Members in eliminating the dollar fee. She added that music is medicine for the soul.

Mrs. Poole pointed out that there has been talk of bulldozing the auditorium. She stated that is why she is desperate for the fee. She cares deeply about the building and does not want to see it torn down.

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Mayor Buckley said many times the amount collected by the band and orchestra is less than a dollar per head. He agreed that if a dollar is collected at the door, the amount collected (when the hat is passed) will be reduced. He added that he has talked with representatives from cities three and four times our size and they cannot believe that we have the Melbourne Municipal Band, the Melbourne Community Orchestra, and the Space Coast Winds. He thanked the organizations for their contributions to the city.

The question was called. Motion carried unanimously.

Mrs. Poole asked if the band and orchestra would provide a basket at each concert for donations to keep the auditorium standing. Members from the audience indicated they would.

Mr. Hill noted that the following changes need to be made as a result of Council's action:

Account	Change	New Total
Auditorium Revenues	(\$30,000)	\$ 138,000
Contingency	(\$30,000)	128,299
General Fund Total	(\$30,000)	39,570,683
Total Budget	(\$30,000)	99,573,506

Moved by Walker/Contreras to make the noted adjustments. Motion carried unanimously.

Attorney Gougelman read Resolution No. 1717, as amended, by title.

Moved by Walker/E. Palmer for approval of Resolution No. 1717 with the changes as noted. Motion carried unanimously.

6. ADJOURNMENT

The public hearing adjourned at 8:34 p.m.

City Clerk – 9/25/2001

Approved by Council: _____