



# **TOWN COUNCIL WORKSHOP MINUTES**

## **MONDAY, MAY 12, 2025 – 2:00 P.M. PIERSON TOWN CENTER**

### **1. Call meeting to order**

Mayor Gray Leonhard called the meeting to order at 2:04 P.M. and asked Deputy Clerk Ryan Smith to take the roll call.

### **2. Roll call**

#### **PRESENT:**

Mayor Gray Leonhard  
Vice Mayor Robert Greenlund  
Councilmember Jimmy Anderson  
Councilmember Linnie Richardson  
Councilmember Brandy Peterson

Town Attorney Scott Simpson and Town Planner Mark Karet were also present. Town Clerk Yvonne Braddock was absent.

### **3. Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance**

Councilmember Linnie Richardson gave the invocation, which was followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

### **4. NEW BUSINESS**

#### **a. Town Clerk discussion**

Mayor Leonhard said the purpose of the meeting was to discuss some concerns he had about Town Clerk Yvonne Braddock. Mayor Leonhard said he felt Ms. Braddock was doing a great job overall, but something had been off recently.

Mayor Leonhard's primary concern was a \$6,000 cash donation accepted by Ms. Braddock at the Council meeting on May 6, 2025. The donation was made by Greg Shugg as a contribution to the ongoing operation of the airport. This donation had been declined at the regular Council meeting on April 15, 2025 because no decision had been made on whether to continue operating the airport.

Councilmember Jimmy Anderson said he thought the donation was a great thing. Vice Mayor Greenlund asked if the donation was cash or check. Mayor Leonhard said it was cash. Mr. Shugg gave the money to Ms. Braddock during the Council meeting. Ms. Braddock informed the Mayor and Town Attorney of the donation after the meeting ended. The Mayor said his

concern was that no other Council members were aware of it, and his recollection was that the donation had been declined at the prior Council meeting.

Councilmember Brandy Peterson said her understanding was that the Council declined to accept the donation at the prior meeting because it had not made a determination regarding the airport status. Councilmember Peterson said the Council had voted at the May 6<sup>th</sup> meeting to keep the airport open for another year, and she did not feel Ms. Braddock had done anything wrong.

Vice Mayor Robert Greenlund said he recalled declining the donation at a previous meeting.

Deputy Clerk Ryan Smith said that he had stopped the donation at the April meeting because he wanted to get feedback from the Town Attorney first, noting that the optics of accepting the donation while deliberating on keeping the airport open could look bad. Mr. Smith said he thought the anonymous donation still seemed sneaky but that he did not think that was Ms. Braddock's fault. Mr. Smith said he felt Mr. Shugg should have spoken to Council or written a letter stating that the donation was for the airport, and the Town should have provided a receipt for the donation. Mr. Smith said he would defer to the Town Attorney for how that should be handled.

Town Attorney Scott Simpson said the first time the donation was presented, there were questions about what the donors expected in return for the money. Mr. Simpson said the Town needed to ensure there was no quid pro quo for accepting the donation. Mr. Simpson said cities get donations and that it is not uncommon, but those donations are usually earmarked for specific purposes. Mr. Simpson said he did not think the donation could be anonymous for the fact that the Town would need to receive a letter or simple agreement from Mr. Shugg stating that the donation was for the airport and that there were no strings attached. Mr. Simpson said the donors needed to understand that they were not entitled to anything because they were making a donation.

Vice Mayor Greenlund said he did not think the Town should turn down any donations it receives. Mr. Simpson said it was fine as long as the Town had a document stating that. Councilmember Linnie Richardson said the airport was a specific interest and she could understand how a donation could be misconstrued.

Mayor Leonhard said the donor tried to give the \$6,000 to him and other Council members after the April meeting had adjourned and noted that it felt like a bribe. Mayor Leonard said his personal feelings were that the Council should have been made aware of the acceptance of the donation by Ms. Braddock during the public meeting.

Councilmember Anderson said that Ms. Braddock had taken the money to the Mayor and the Attorney as soon as the meeting adjourned, and that she was not trying to hide it.

Vice Mayor Greenlund said he did not think this issue warranted sending Ms. Braddock home. Councilmember Anderson agreed.

93 Councilmember Brandy Peterson asked why this issue was being discussed at a workshop  
94 rather than a special emergency meeting. Town Attorney Scott Simpson said, per the Charter,  
95 the Mayor had the authority to suspend someone until the issue could be addressed at the next  
96 regular Council meeting. Mr. Simpson said the suspension could not be addressed at a special  
97 emergency meeting, but that a special meeting or workshop could be called for the Mayor to  
98 inform the Council of the issue.

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100 Councilmember Linnie Richardson said the Charter granted the Mayor the power to suspend  
101 an employee, but she noted there was also a personnel manual with differing procedures on  
102 disciplinary actions. Councilmember Richardson read from the personnel manual which states  
103 that oral and/or written reprimands could be issued by Council members, and the Committee  
104 Chairman (now synonymous with the Mayor) could temporarily suspend an employee without  
105 pay for up to five workdays. The latter option requires the Mayor to call a special meeting of  
106 the Council to address the issue. Councilmember Richardson said according to this document,  
107 an oral reprimand would have been the first step. Councilmember Richardson said she did not  
108 think five days off was warranted.

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110 Town Attorney Scott Simpson said the personnel manual is inconsistent with the Charter and  
111 the Charter Review Committee probably needed to address that during their review.

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113 Councilmember Jimmy Anderson said he felt the Mayor should have spoken to Ms. Braddock  
114 and that should have been sufficient. Councilmember Anderson said he felt Ms. Braddock  
115 had done a wonderful job.

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117 Mayor Leonhard said he did speak with Ms. Braddock and wanted her to take some time off  
118 with pay to de-stress and come back with her mind more focused. Mayor Leonhard said Ms.  
119 Braddock had sent out an agenda with incorrect information on it and he felt there were more  
120 issues going on than the donation discussed earlier.

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122 Councilmember Jimmy Anderson said a lot of people make mistakes and he felt the Mayor  
123 was only upset because the former Mayor's name was on the incorrect agenda. Vice Mayor  
124 Greenlund said it looked the same to him, and he felt the Mayor did not handle this situation  
125 correctly.

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127 Councilmember Linnie Richardson said she felt Ms. Braddock needed to come back to work  
128 and the Town needed to follow the personnel manual. Town Attorney Scott Simpson said if  
129 the Mayor rescinded the suspension, the discussion would not have to be added to the agenda  
130 for the next regular Council meeting. Mayor Leonhard said he did not want it to come to that  
131 and that he was withdrawing the suspension.

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133 Councilmember Brandy Peterson said the Council had put a lot on the employees over the  
134 past year and not everything would happen instantly. Councilmember Peterson said she felt  
135 the Town should take care of its employees. Councilmember Peterson said she had not  
136 reached out to Ms. Braddock because she was not sure if she was allowed for ethics reasons.  
137 Mr. Simpson said Council members could talk to employees individually, but warned that  
138 they shouldn't overstep the Mayor or Charter.

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Mayor Leonhard reiterated that he cared about Ms. Braddock and that he sensed she was stressed, but noted he probably contributed to the stress, which was not his intention.

Councilmember Jimmy Anderson suggested Mayor Leonhard could ask Ms. Braddock's husband, Michael Braddock, who was in attendance, if Ms. Braddock was having a problem. Mayor Leonhard said it would probably be best to speak with Ms. Braddock about that rather than her husband.

Mr. Braddock said Ms. Braddock had been in bed crying since the suspension, and that the situation did not go down as the Mayor was describing. Mr. Braddock said anyone could make mistakes but that it was nothing to "get in an uproar about." Mr. Braddock said he was advised by his attorney not to speak. Mr. Braddock said Ms. Braddock had cleaned up all the messes left by previous clerks, computerized everything, put a permit system in place, and worked on grants that were messed up by the Town. Mr. Braddock said the Town would be lucky if Ms. Braddock came back and that a lot of other places would love to have her.

Mr. Braddock stated that Mayor Leonhard and Councilmember Richardson had a closed-door meeting with Deputy Clerk Ryan Smith and implied that such a meeting was not allowed. Mr. Smith said that Councilmember Richardson was not present. Mr. Smith said he was asked by Mayor Leonhard to have a meeting in his office, where Mayor Leonhard asked Mr. Smith what he thought of the \$6,000 donation. Mr. Smith said he told the Mayor that he did not think the acceptance of the donation was wrong in his opinion. Mr. Smith said he relayed the details of that meeting to Ms. Braddock before she left work on Wednesday.

Mr. Braddock said he did not cause this issue, and it was not his place to fix it. Mr. Braddock said Ms. Braddock had been trying to bring in renters at the Town Center, as well as trying to get grants to help the Town. Mr. Braddock warned the Council that the Town would be taken over by the County if it did not get a handle on things.

Vice Mayor Greenlund asked the Town Attorney to reiterate what was required to reinstate the Town Clerk. Mr. Simpson said the Mayor could rescind the suspension in writing and Ms. Braddock could return to work if she chose.

Mr. Braddock stated that he was a Certified Public Manager for the State of Florida and informed Mayor Leonhard that his handling of the situation was not appropriate. Mayor Leonhard stated that one issue is that the Council has not done evaluations with its employees. Mayor Leonhard said he would reach out to Ms. Braddock.

## **5. ADJOURNED**

**Hearing no further business, meeting adjourned at 2:54 P.M.**

Minutes prepared by:

Minutes approved by:

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Ryan Smith, Deputy Clerk

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Gray Leonhard, Mayor