

**Special Meeting
Palmetto City Council
October 22, 2001 5:30 PM**

Elected Officials Present:

**Pat Whitesel, Mayor
Shirley Bryant, Vice-Mayor
Tamara Cornwell, Council Member
Donna Keefer, Council Member
Mary Lancaster, Council Member
Brian Williams, Council Member**

Staff and others present:

**Karen A. Conlon, City Clerk
Diane Ponder, Administrative Assistant**

Mayor Whitesel called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

Captain Lowe opened the meeting followed by the pledge of allegiance to the United States flag.

Mayor Whitesel expressed her appreciation to Vice-Mayor Bryant for calling this special meeting to discuss events surrounding the Palmetto Police Department.

1. MAYOR'S UPDATE

Mayor Whitesel stated that on Thursday she placed Chief Kenneth Bright on administrative leave with pay, pending conclusion of an investigation of the police department by the Manatee County Sheriff's Department. Mayor Whitesel stated she took this immediate action because the Chief's effectiveness and authority was being severely affected.

Pursuant to Section 11 of the Palmetto City Charter, Mayor Whitesel formalized her previous action and suspended Chief Bright, with pay, for the duration of the Sheriff's Department investigation.

MOTION: Mr. Williams moved, Mrs. Lancaster seconded to approve the suspension of Chief Bright, with pay, for the duration of the Sheriff's Department investigation, pursuant to Chapter 11 of the Palmetto City Charter.

Discussion ensued. Ms. Cornwell inquired if, according to the press release, Chief Bright concurred with the action. Ms. Cornwell asked Chief Bright to come forward from the audience.

Chief Bright stated he and the Mayor met Thursday at which time he agreed this was the best action for the city to take. He stated his opinion Council had given

employees the authority to come to them and by-pass all the regulations in the manual regarding the grievance process. He stated the employees at the police department were out of hand, so at that time the Mayor discussed the possibility of him leaving so the investigation could go on. He further stated Council had taken any authority he had out of his hands so he is now ineffective as a Chief, saying if the employees are going to run the department an investigation needs to begin.

Discussion ensued on the necessity of employees following instructions from their supervisor, the right of employees to make public comments at Council Meetings, and the fact Council made no comment, nor gave any employee any direction.

Mayor Whitesel called for a vote to the motion on the floor. The vote was unanimous.

2. ATTORNEY'S UPDATE

Attorney Richard Groff advised Council members of the Sheriff's Department Internal Affairs Department have begun their work. Attorney Groff stated he has asked the department to present a report of findings to the Council and Mayor of the state of the police department in all of its facets; general over-all management, moral of the employees and all other possible perimeters.

Attorney Groff discussed the grievance process according to the city's Personnel Policy. Attorney Groff also discussed the process in filing an EEOC complaint.

Mayor Whitesel commented on her meeting with Ms. Martinez, where she asked Ms. Martinez for additional time in making her decision due to the investigation. Mayor Whitesel stated Ms. Martinez has agreed to wait for the conclusion of the investigation.

Attorney Groff explained the EEOC complaint process.

Discussion ensued on the need to update the Personnel Policy as well as begin the Charter review. City Council directed Mrs. Conlon to begin the review and update of areas of the Personnel Policy that have been cited in previous discussions.

3. OTHER TOPICS PERTINENT TO THE INVESTIGATION

Mayor Whitesel appointed Capt. Garry Lowe as interim Chief of the Palmetto Police Department. Council concurred with the appointment.

Capt. Lowe discussed the Palmetto Police Department's chain of command.

Capt. Lowe stated that as instructed in the directive the police department received, all personnel files kept at the police department would be transferred to the Human Resource Department by October 24, 2001.

Mrs. Conlon discussed Mrs. Jones instructing employees involved in the situation that they should follow the procedures as set forth in the Personnel Policy. Mrs. Conlon also informed Council that employees contact Mrs. Jones on a regular basis either in person or by phone concerning many aspects of their job.

4. PUBLIC COMMENT

Kevin Kenney, David Hartshorn and Robert Coleman spoke in favor of Chief Bright and the performance of the police department. Cynthia Fobbs voiced concern of the department's inability to obtain adequate records. Corp. Scott Tyler spoke of the excellent men and women of the police department that are continuing to do their job.

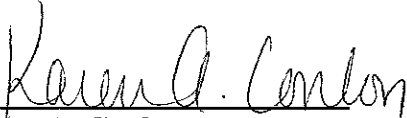
Council agreed to hear information on the Tomato Festival.

Brenda Reeder of the Tomato Festival Committee addressed Council, informing them the Committee wishes to cancel the event this year. Reasons for the cancellation is inadequate vendor response and the fact the event isn't coming together properly. The scholarship funds were also discussed. Ms. Bryant read a motion made at the October 8, 2001 Council Meeting approving the transfer of the scholarship funds to Farm City Week for administration of the scholarship program.

Mr. Williams recognized Council Member-elect Charlie Grace and candidate Larry Bustle.

Meeting adjourned at 7:40 p.m.

Minutes approved: November 5, 2001



Karen A. Conlon
City Clerk