

**Special City Commission Meeting
December 27, 2023
7:30 a.m.**

ELECTED OFFICIALS PRESENT:

Adrian Petrilă, Mayor – appeared via Zoom
Mark Grill, Vice Mayor, Commissioner, District 2
Karen Marriott, Commissioner, District 1
Ward Friszolowski, Commissioner, District 3
Rich Lorenzen, Commissioner, District 4

STAFF PRESENT:

Andrew Dickman, City Attorney – appeared via Zoom
Wayne Saunders, City Manager
Amber LaRowe, City Clerk

Vice Mayor Grill called the meeting to order at 7:30 a.m. followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Vice Mayor Grill gave a synopsis of today's meeting and wishes to include the selection of the Vice Mayor to the Agenda.

Motion: Commissioner Marriott moved, Commissioner Friszolowski seconded, and the motion carried 4-0 to approve the December 27, 2023, City Commission Agenda with the additional item.

Selection of Vice Mayor

Vice Mayor Grill suggested that the Commission select Commissioner Friszolowski for Vice Mayor.

Motion: Commissioner Lorenzen moved, Commissioner Marriott seconded, and the motion carried 4-0 to select Commissioner Friszolowski as Vice Mayor.

1. AUDIENCE COMMENTS

Comments were provided after the candidate interviews.

2. DISCUSSION OF COMMISSION VACANCIES AND POSSIBLE APPOINTMENTS

Vice Mayor Grill announced his resignation, effective today. He thanked the City employees, the Commission, and his wife. Vice Mayor Grill left the dais at 7:36 a.m.

City Clerk LaRowe informed the Commission that Candidate Andrew Tsunis was unable to join via Zoom due to connectivity issues.

The Commission began the interviews with Nick Filtz.

What are some of the strengths that would help you as Commissioner?

Mr. Filtz gave his background of growing up in the City and his parents who reside here as well. He commented on the changes he has seen, specifically related to small businesses. He would like to see more small businesses in the City thrive.

Why are you interested in serving on the Commission?

He shared his interest in the City due to the longevity of his family living here. He has been interested in serving for some time and thought this was a perfect opportunity.

How many City Commission meetings have you attended?

He has attended none; however, has watched a couple online. His wife has attended a couple in person.

How many community meetings, town halls, and workshops have you attended?

None in person.

What is your involvement in the City?

Mr. Filtz touched on his involvement at the Recreation Center, and his networking with other individuals who work/live in the City and highlighted his help with grocery shopping for individuals in the City during COVID.

Can you touch on your Letter of Interest where you state you would like to restore traditions and improve the community?

Mr. Filtz explained that he heard stories from his father about past experiences in the City and would like to make the City more family-friendly.

What are three things you would want to tackle as a Commissioner?

He would like to see improvement of the roads, especially Gulf Winds Drive, improved crosswalks on Gulf Boulevard, and beach cleanup/renourishment efforts.

How would you improve Gulf Winds Drive and fix renourishment?

He would like to learn more of what can be done and respects the decision made thus far; he opined sidewalks could be added/improved along Gulf Winds Drive.

Have you donated to any local political campaigns or political action group and have you had any advocacy group involvement or other HOA/civic?

No to all.

The Commission interviewed Shawn Rae next.

Why are you interested in serving the City?

Mr. Rae stated that he has been a resident since 2010 and is interested in supporting the visitors and the residents. He feels that his skillset will help to find a balance between the two groups.

Are you a member of any associations, or advocacy groups, and have you donated to any campaigns?

No memberships and no political donations.

How many City Commission meetings have you attended in the last year?

None.

How many City Commission meetings have you attended?

Mr. Rae attended three meetings when Commissioner Doug Izzo resigned, and Commissioner Grill was appointed.

How many town hall/workshops/community meetings have you attended?

None.

What prompted you to apply once the position was reopened?

Mr. Rae was out of town and was not aware of the resignations. He had wanted to apply when Commissioner Izzo resigned but became ill and was unable. He stated that Commissioner Grill was doing a good job and saw no need to run for office until now.

The Conditional Use Permits for Sirata and Tradewinds are upcoming, have you viewed the Planning Board meeting for the Sirata and/or the Commission meeting for the same? Have you read the agenda materials?

No.

Can you explain the difference between the Comprehensive Plan and the Land Development Code?

He is unsure.

Have you had any conversations with a current or previously elected official and/or any current or prior advisory board member on the opening of these positions?

Mr. Rae spoke with Melinda Pletcher regarding the time commitment and the responsibilities.

What are the biggest issues facing St. Pete Beach that you could help with and how do your skills contribute to that?

He stated the first issue is the hiring of a new City Manager and believed his experiences with project management in the military would help with that selection process. Another issue is small businesses coming to the City and the third is the engagement of the community; he anticipated that learning from the Commission and staff will help him identify ways to contribute.

In the time that you have lived here, what are some positive changes that you have seen in the City?

Mr. Rae enjoys the Corey Avenue Sunday Market and would like to see more St. Pete Beach businesses participating as vendors there. He would like to see more engagement of the community on a social level much like the concert in the park activities.

Do you have any time commitments?

None.

The Commission interviewed Lisa Robinson next.

How do you feel your background will help in this role?

Ms. Robinson opined that her background as a broadcast professional has provided her with experiences of strategic and logistical planning that would translate well to being an elected official. She is no-nonsense and factual and must gather information to develop a plan to obtain a result.

What are your top priorities?

She identified sea level rise, the hiring of a new City Manager, beach renourishment and conflicts with the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers, the outstanding conditional use permit applications, and the divide within the community as her top priorities.

How many City Commission meetings have you attended this year?

She stated she hasn't counted but she knows she has attended more than 6.

How many workshops, community meetings, and town halls have you attended?

Ms. Robinson has only missed one District 2 town hall and she has attended the District 1 town halls to hear about

the Boca Ciega Drive discussions. She also attended community meetings in 2002 and 1999 that affected her district as well and was able to get stop signs at Boca Ciega Drive and 71st.

Have you attended the Planning Board meeting and/or the City Commission meeting where the Conditional Use Permit for the Sirata was presented?

Ms. Robinson attended both.

Have you reviewed the Sirata Conditional Use Permit application and agenda packets?

She has reviewed the presentations, read the reports for the Planning Board and the Technical Review Committee, and probably read about 2,000 pages of the agenda.

What is your familiarity with the Comprehensive Plan and the Land Development Code?

Ms. Robinson knows that the Land Development Code regulates the Comprehensive Plan. She has familiarity with the articles as she is research driven and involved in the City. She continues to stay involved in the City and felt this was the perfect opportunity to step up. Ms. Robinson will bring honesty, integrity, and honor to the Commission.

Are you a member of any HOA, advocacy, civic, etc. groups?

No.

How do you think you can solve or assist with the top problems facing the City?

Ms. Robinson performs her own research, listens to staff and the presentations, and the findings to come up with the facts that lead to a plan to accomplish. Regarding the tackling of sea level rise, this world issue won't be solved overnight; however, she opined creating more permeable surfaces for stormwater would be the first step that she would want the City to go with.

Why have you never run for City Commission before?

She supported Commissioner Grill and was proud to be a cheerleader for him. Also, she was traveling more than she is now and did not feel it was the right time.

What positive changes have you seen in the City since you've lived here?

Ms. Robinson spoke positively about the small pocket park development and would like to see more beautification efforts.

In your work experience, have you had to do a lot of work with teams?

Her profession is very team oriented.

Do you have a specific example of when there was a conflict in your team, but after listening to both sides, you were able to come up with a different conclusion?

Ms. Robinson stated that she cannot go into her profession with her mind made up, she is always fluid and flexible.

Have you donated to any local campaigns?

Ms. Robinson donated to Adrian Petrila's Mayoral campaign.

Have you made any donations to a PAC or advocacy group?

No.

Resident Deborah Schechner spoke in favor of Lisa Robinson for Commissioner District 2. She complimented her level of involvement, her attendance at the Commission meetings, and how she educates herself on the issues.

Resident Deborah Edney spoke about the inconsistent interviews and her opinions on the way the Commission interviewed Candidate Joe Moholland for District 4.

Resident Mark Grill clarified that the questions asked regarding the donations to a campaign or political action group were made to those individuals who were being interviewed and showed up on the public record for the treasurer reports (can be found on the City's public record portal).

Resident BJ Lawson thanked the newly appointed commissioners for stepping up to serve. He spoke in favor of appointing Lisa Robinson as Commissioner of District 2. He opined it was unfair to reopen the submittal for letters of interest after the confirmed date and time. He also mentioned the recent City Manager investigation, his opinions on the lack of prior elected official concern for the allegations, and the legal fees associated with the investigation where no findings have been produced.

Resident Joe Moholland appreciated Mr. Grill's clarifications regarding the questions about donations. He reminded everyone that donations to campaigns do not only come in the form of money.

Vice Mayor Friszolowski made it clear that he spoke to Mr. Filtz about applying for this position but has had no direct involvement with him. Mr. Filtz has assisted Mr. Friszolowski's family on real estate transactions in the past and has heard wonderful things about his character and hard work. Vice Mayor Friszolowski bases his decisions on character.

Mayor Petrila opined that Mr. Filtz would be a good candidate for being appointed to an advisory board so that he can learn the City and its functions and then evolve to a Commissioner role. He appreciated all the candidates who applied and spoke about the need for the Commission to appoint the individual who has been the most involved in the City and is up to speed on the priorities. He addressed the level of consistent involvement seen by Ms. Robinson both in the community and at public meetings.

Vice Mayor Friszolowski thanked all the applicants and ranked Mr. Filtz as his top choice, Mr. Rae as his second choice and Ms. Robinson as his third choice.

Commissioner Marriott expressed her participation in the meetings at home and has been staying informed of the issues surrounding the Conditional Use Permit and the City. She expressed her opinions on the importance of someone having an objective mindset towards the issues before the Commission.

Commissioner Lorenzen opined that the Commission shouldn't hesitate in selecting an individual who hasn't been involved for a long time versus someone who has.

Motion: Mayor Petrila moved to select Lisa Robinson as District 2 Commissioner. The motion died for a lack of second.

Motion: Vice Mayor Friszolowski moved, and Commissioner Lorenzen seconded the motion to appoint Nick Filtz as Commissioner for District 2.

Mayor Petrila expressed his views on the appointment of Mr. Filtz and the appearance of conflict due to his business in the City.

Vice Mayor Friszolowski disagreed, stating that the only conflict would be if Mr. Filtz was doing business for the City of St. Pete Beach.

Mayor Petrila stated the Commission needs to select the most qualified person with experience of what is facing the City Commission.

Commissioner Marriott expressed her views on qualified versus unqualified in the context of the Mayor's views.

The motion on the floor carried 3-1. Mayor Petrila voted no.

Commissioner Friszolowski adjourned the meeting at 9:00 a.m.

MINUTES APPROVED: JANUARY 9, 2024



AMBER LAROWE
CITY CLERK



ADRIAN PETRILA
MAYOR