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FEATURED

City outlines plan to replace commissioner

By RICHARD TAMBORRINO Special to The Citizen

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The atmosphere at the recent Key Colony Beach City Commission session, while mostly business-like and forward-thinking, was noticeably more respectful and complimentary than what the city has seen the past few months.

This was the first session since former commissioner Beth Ramsay-Vickrey stepped down. Ramsay-Vickrey, who served on the commission since being appointed in April 2022, was mayor pro tem for less than two months following former mayor Patti Trefry's abrupt resignation in October. Commissioner Joey Raspe became the city's new mayor in December.

Ramsay-Vickrey had been an outspoken proponent of a complete City Hall rebuild, which many residents oppose, but after Trefry resigned and the city appointed Tom DiFransico to Trefry's set in November, Ramsay-Vickrey shifted to a minority voice on the commission.

The commission, at the Feb. 15 meeting, outlined its plans to fill the open seat. The deadline for applicants to submit a letter of intent to the city clerk is March 14 and the commission is expected to discuss and potentially select a candidate at the next commission meeting on March 21.

The reshaping of this commission has not only altered the mood within the city, but has also accelerated City Hall refurbishment plans.

Raspe, as acting city administrator, outlined several repair items aimed at shoring up the current City Hall for occupancy. Electrical, HVAC and asbestos removal — isolated to an unused area in City Hall — were quickly approved by the commission, while Commissioner Tom Harding suggested a mold and mildew inspection as well.

Resident Joe Schmidt addressed the commission, offering to review Marble Hall plumbing at no charge, since he was a plumbing contractor before retirement. Another resident commended Raspe on the “restoration of leadership” after the city’s tumultuous 2023.

Raspe said that bids for more extensive City Hall refurbishment were being secured, and that a specific bid to repair the Marble Hall administration area floor — dubbed the “fault line” by city staff for years — is a “down the road” item. Raspe also confirmed engineers were working on overall repair plans and that he believes the city is “heading in the right direction.”



However, new bids for a potential complete City Hall rebuild are still being pursued, so the city can make an “apples to apples” comparison between the cost to refurbish versus rebuild.

Other items discussed included the addition of regular town hall meetings, a move Marathon made last January adding monthly council workshops.

Commissioner Tom Harding brought up the city’s plans to fill the city administrator position and appropriate compensation “for a city our size.” Raspe said that while the city administrator job is “not a 40-50 hour per week” position, it’s also not merely a part-time position either. Raspe believes the commission must examine the duties and compensation more thoroughly before posting the position.

During Harding’s review of the treasurer’s report, the subject of legal expenses was raised again. The city incurred unanticipated expenses to fight a resident petition referendum opposing a city hall rebuild as well as the police unionization in 2023.

Legal expense data supplied by the KCB city clerk reveals that since the firm Vernis and Bowling took over KCB’s legal work at the beginning of 2021, the town of roughly 775 people has spent more than a half-million dollars on legal expenses.

This breaks down to \$405,487 in general billings, \$4,440 for the Building Department, \$64,287 for code enforcement, \$31,025 to fight the citizen referendum and \$6,711 for the police unionization drive.

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