

**City of Dunnellon**  
**City Council Special Workshop**

<https://dunnellon.zoom.us/j/83495171193?pwd=Ym5zWkg2cFMvcjd6dWR5bUpma0Rmdz09>

Webinar ID: 834 9517 1193

Date: January 05, 2022

Time: 3:30 p.m.

Place: City Hall

20750 River Dr., Dunnellon, FL34431

**Public Comment**

Anyone who wished to provide public comment was able to do so by participating in the City Council meeting in person, or via the Zoom "AUDIO ONLY" platform and/or telephone, by speaking during public comment portions of the meeting when recognized or by submitting written comments, evidence and/or written testimony in advance of the meeting via email to the City Clerk at [modom@dunnellon.org](mailto:modom@dunnellon.org)

Members of the public who wished to participate were encouraged to register in advance by Noon on Wednesday, January 05, 2022.

**Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance:**

Mayor White called the meeting to order at approximately 3:38 p.m. and led the Council in the Pledge of Allegiance. He asked if any invitee or volunteer was present to open with prayer. Pastor Tom Welch provided the invocation.

**Roll Call**

Bill White, Mayor, Seat 1

Louise Kenny, Councilwoman, Seat 2

Anita Williams, Councilwoman, Seat 3

Valerie Hanchar, Vice-Mayor, Seat 4

Jan Cabbage, Councilwoman, Seat 5

**Staff Present**

Mandy Odom, City Clerk

Jan Smith, Finance Officer

Chief McQuaig, Police Department

Troy Slattery, Public Works Manager

Georgina Cid, Community Development Manager

Michelle Leonard, Assistant City Clerk

Lt. Yox, Police Department

**Legal Counsel**

Andrew Hand,

Shepard, Smith, Kohlmyer & Hand, P.A.

**Proof of Publication**

Mrs. Odom announced for the record the agenda for this meeting was posted on the City's website and City Hall bulletin board on December 29, 2021.

Mayor White welcomed everyone and covered public and Council meeting etiquette.

**Agenda Item No. 1 – Public Comments**

Art Jones, 12163 Palmetto Way, stated he performed a public record request for a letter written by Sheriff Billy Woods, from Marion County, regarding the cost for the County to assume the Dunnellon Police duties. He said after review of the letter he has changed his position and would like the Council to keep the policing with the Dunnellon Police Department. He commented he is in favor of relocating the department to the former Souls Harbor Church building. He asserted we should give the Police the very best we can and that building makes a tremendous amount of sense.

Kathy Dunn, 11386 Hendrix Dr., and Julianne Mendonca, 11894 E. Blue Cove Dr., stated they were there to offer additional comments regarding an idea which may have been presented in the past. Mrs. Dunn said City Hall is grossly underutilized and maintenance has been long neglected. Mrs. Dunn and Mrs. Mendonca proposed creating a municipal complex to utilize City Hall more effectively. They presented a plan with what they believe are cost-savings and then proposed a feasibility study to determine if their idea was a possibility.

Scott Kiefer, 90754 N. Cedar Grove, said he is a resident, business owner and a member of the Historic Preservation Board. He presented a document listing City owned buildings and buildings within the City currently for sale. He asserted his research regarding the properties shows the former Souls Harbor Church as still the best option for the relocation of the Police Department. He stated his second choice would be to tear down the former Gary's Carpet building and the current Police building, utilizing the space to erect a new building. He proposed a third option of a limited listing with a realtor for the former Souls Harbor Church.

Tom Welch, PO Box 143, thanked Council for the amount of time taken to discuss the topic thoroughly and providing the public numerous opportunities to comment. He also thanked Mr. Kiefer for his diligence in providing Council with additional options. He stated the location on Ohio Street appears to be the most cost effective and makes the most sense to utilize.

Mrs. Odom read the following email comment received on January 3, 2022 from Pastor Jeffrey Welch of the Dunnellon Presbyterian Church into the record:

“The congregation of Dunnellon Presbyterian Church through its leadership wishes to convey its strong support of locating the City's Police Department at the corner of Chestnut and Ohio Street commonly referred to as “the former church property” that has housed the

congregations of the FUMC and Soul's Harbor congregations. We support the choice for the following reasons:

- Location on the already City owned property makes sense fiscally, tactically for the Police Department, visibility in the community and demonstrates to the community that the historic core of the City remains an important and life-sustaining part of community for small business development, residential walking distance living, and historic preservation.
- Having followed the discussion on the potential use of the property for a Police headquarters through the media and other sources, City Council members and persons speaking in public hearings have repeatedly falsely opined that "neighbors" object to locating the Police Department on the property at Chestnut and Ohio. There could be nothing further from the truth expressed in such comments! Not only do we as a congregation (who share a greater boundary with the property than any other residence or business) support the location, a survey of our immediate neighborhood (Chestnut, Ohio and Park Streets) found that not a single property owner objected to the placement of the Police Department at the "the former church property." Comments that the neighborhood "objects" to the placement of the Police Department on Ohio Street are spurious at best, and nefarious at the worst.
- We would not be good "Presbyterians" if we did not admit that in at least some part our support of the use of the property on Ohio Street is an expression of our own self-interest. Our congregation has a long history of supporting a strong downtown/historic district that is a mix of businesses, residences and public buildings. Twice in the last thirty years, we have literally "put our money where our mouth is" regarding the downtown/historic area. In 1993, this congregation had the opportunity, and the resources, to move out of downtown Dunnellon, beyond the City limits toward a more advantageous and visible location north of the City. The congregation decided not to make that move, because we believed in downtown and its value to the greater community. We spent over \$750,000 to expand at our current location and "stay put." A second time, about 8 years ago, this congregation once again was faced with the choice of leaving our current location or making extensive repairs to our historic Sanctuary. Again, we chose to invest in the community, spending nearly \$500,000 to "stay put" when building a new facility may have been a "more advantageous" investment. Why did we again stay and invest in the community? Because we believed in this City and the value of its downtown. We still do, and believe that the Police Department being located on the "former Church property" reflects comparable/compatible values with our own. Unfortunately, previous congregational activities are planned that conflict with the time of the Council Workshop dedicated to the discussion of the location of the Police Department facility. We will not be able to send a representative to express our position. We would humbly request that this letter be read aloud at the workshop, or at a minimum, that the text of this communication be read into/spread upon the minutes of the meeting.

Sincerely yours seeking the welfare of our City, The Leadership of the Dunnellon Presbyterian Church Jeffrey W. Welch, Pastor and Moderator of the Session"

Mayor White commented he had replied to the email thanking the Pastor but took exception to the Council being referred to as “nefarious”.

Vice-Mayor Hanchar stated even though she is an elder, she is not a member of the sitting session.

**Agenda Item No. 2 – Council Discussion – Police Facility**

Mayor White summarized an historical review of the Police facility discussion. He said his biggest concern is how this is going to be financed and he commented one way or another this Council is going to take action.

Councilwoman Kenny said she appreciates the comments made by both the Pastor and the Mayor. She stated as a previous realtor and Planning Commission member the comprehensive plan weighs heavy on her decision. She spoke about placing a non-conforming building within a residential area. She also commented about the potential of the Northern Turnpike Extension adding to the complexity of the issue. She stressed she would not be in favor of utilizing the former Souls Harbor Church and she made that commitment to the people who supported her being in office. She welcomed more suggestions from Mr. Kiefer regarding other options which may be available.

Councilwoman Williams stated she had nothing new to say. She acknowledged other people’s positions. She said law enforcement is one of the most important industries and said she is still in favor of the former Souls Harbor Church. She explained her concern is the health and welfare of the people and the Police are in an unsafe and unprofessional building.

Councilwoman Cabbage agreed a new Police building is necessary, but emphasized we need to be fiscally responsible. She suggested profit from the sale of the former Souls Harbor Church, current Police building and budgeted monies could be used to move forward with a new plan. She stated the funds could be used to add to the current City Hall building by expanding it into a municipal complex. She observed there to be unused office space in the Public Works building and she suggested Community Development could be relocated there. She projected these changes could be completed for less than \$900,000.

Vice-Mayor Hanchar commented they are educated by everyone’s experiences and some ideas are good but some she does not agree with. She said after speaking with people, she found them to be fine with the Ohio Street location but are not interested in taking the Gruff’s property off the tax roll. She stated she could see how a few more parking spaces could be obtained by tearing down the Gary’s Carpet building, but she would like to see it stay on the tax roll as well. She spoke regarding the vacant lots and the listing price of \$85,000 for one of the lots. She commented expanding City Hall doesn’t seem feasible because of the need to relocate two buildings of employees during remodeling. She said the Historic District is

already zoned with residential and businesses. She indicated she truly believes, with the funds already set aside, the Police Department can be moved into the former Souls Harbor Church fairly quickly. She said this seems to be the most fiscally responsible and the right option.

Mayor White commented if one would like to understand the present, they would have to understand the past. He reviewed the history of the numbers that came into play with the purchase of the former Souls Harbor Church and retro-fitting it for a new Police building. He said if it was doable he would vote for the retro-fitting of the current building with funds already allocated and then keep the former Souls Harbor Church for other community uses. He shared his second choice would be to purchase a vacant lot and construct a brand new building on it. The third choice would be to retrofit the former Souls Harbor Church for the original quoted amount. He commented the City cannot afford to spend close to a million dollars on this project because other departments will suffer without those funds.

Mrs. Smith added the one cent sales tax is not guaranteed each year. She said the amount would need to be discussed annually with Council as to where they want the funds to come from.

Further discussion followed regarding what funding is available, what the City can and cannot afford, what the City's priorities should be, the numbers received from the architect and estimates received.

### **Agenda Item No. 3 – Public Comments**

Brenda D'Arville, 11661 Camp Drive, thanked Council and said she thinks there have been valid points made. She commented the current building does not appear to be able to be retrofitted or repaired. She agreed with Councilwoman Kenny's comments and asked rhetorically if we really want to put a Police building in a residential neighborhood. Mrs. D'Arville stated with the funds we have and the sale of the former Souls Harbor Church we could provide a good place for the Police Department with property we already own. She stated she agrees Community Development could be moved to Public Works and the current City Hall building could be converted to a municipal complex. She said she believes this can be done without having to go into debt.

Julianne Mendonca, 11894 E. Blue Cove Dr., commented it was a great discussion. She said if the budget is a Christmas wish list, she votes for the Public Works department to get a million dollars. She urged Council not to overlook Councilwoman Kenny's expertise regarding zoning. She pointed out a 2<sup>nd</sup> story for City Hall wasn't on their mind and they had simpler ideas.

Kathy Dunn, 11386 Hendrix Drive, stated there are many areas within the City Hall building which are not being utilized. She commented Public Works is also underutilized. She said she doesn't understand why we are going backwards.

Scott Kiefer, 9075 N. Cedar Cove Rd., said whatever Council decides, it is his belief it is in the best interest of the City to keep the former Souls Harbor Church. He commented adding a second story to the City Hall building would cost a significant amount. He stated the area on Ohio Street is not just residential. He explained there are other listings available to add to the list of properties he gave Council previously.

Art Jones, 12163 Palmetto Way, commented there were great ideas all around. He said one thing he finds missing is the fact that the former Souls Harbor Church is 6,000 square feet and it would cost a lot more than has been projected for a new building of this size to be constructed. He said he thinks they're getting a lot more building with this option than any of the others, but he shared he would like to hear from the Police.

Pastor Tom Welch, PO Box 143, stated he did not want Council to forget the other amounts which would be received toward the retrofit, nor the commission to be paid if a realtor sells the former Souls Harbor Church.

Dominic Batista, 19860 SW 93<sup>rd</sup> Lane, via zoom, stated what he has heard is a rehash of what has been discussed over the last 18 months. He commented there has really not been any kind of strategy presented. He agreed the remodel of City Hall might be a good idea. He asked if they have interest in expanding the Historic District, would it be commercially or residentially. He said it sounds like the former Souls Harbor Church is a slam dunk.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 5:22 p.m.

Attest:

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Penned Signature of  
Amanda Odom, CMC  
City Clerk

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Penned Signature of  
William P. White, Mayor