

City of Keystone Heights City Council

Keystone Heights City Council Special Meeting 6/30/25. 4:00 pm

555 S. Lawrence Blvd. Keystone Heights, FL 32656 ANYONE WISHING TO ADDRESS THE CITY COUNCIL REGARDING ANY TOPIC ON THIS EVENING'S AGENDA IS REQUESTED TO COMPLETE A CARD AND RETURN TO THE CITY CLERK. SPEAKERS ARE RESPECTFULLY REQUIRED TO LIMIT THEIR COMMENTS TO THREE (3) MINUTES. THE CITY COUNCIL PROHIBITS THE USE OF CELL PHONES AND PAGERS WHICH EMIT AN AUDIBLE SOUND DURING ALL MEETINGS WITH THE EXCEPTION OF LAW ENFORCEMENT, FIRE AND RESCUE OR HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS ON CALL. PERSONS IN VIOLATION WILL BE REQUESTED TO LEAVE THE MEETING.

"Please turn off cell phones"

Date: Jun 30 2025 (4:00 pm)

Call to Order

1. Call to Order-Mayor Nina Rodenroth

Mayor Nina Rodenroth called the meeting to order at 4:00 pm.

This is a special meeting of the Keystone Heights City Council. City Manager, Charles Van Zant has taken a position in Treasure Island, Florida.

Invocation

2. Invocation: Beau Wright, Deputy City Manager

Deputy City Manager, Beau Wright gave an invocation to the attendees.

Pledge of Allegiance

3. Pledge of Allegiance-Vice Mayor Kussler

Vice Mayor Elston Kussler led the attendees in the pledge of allegiance.

Roll Call

4. Roll Call, Charlie Van Zant, City Manager

City Manager called roll:

Mayor Nina Rodenroth-present

Vice Mayor Elston Kussler-present

Councilman Ryan Knight-present

Councilman Dan Lewandowski-present

Councilman Dave Welch-present

Public Comment

5. Public Comments

Keith Hatch, Business Owner of 3 businesses would like to speak about City Manager:

Business Address: 350 S. Lawrence Blvd, Keystone Heights, FL 32656

1. Consistency
2. Commitment looks to better all parts of the City.
3. Continuity, no stepping stone to bigger and better.

Christine Thompson, Keystone Heights Resident

Resident Address: 645 SE Lakeview Dr. Keystone Heights, FL 32656

Urged the City Council to consider Tony Brown for interim City Manager.

She stated:

He served as both Mayor and City Council Member. Making him understand the challenges. He manages his own business with four employees. He served as Vice President and President of the Keystone Heights Volunteer Fire Department. He was called back to lead the dispersement of assets when the Fire Department was closed. He has served four years on the Azalea Health Board of Directors. Chaired the Relay for Life. He was the Town Santa Claus, He was also a board member of the Northeast Florida League of Cities. He is a servant leader.

Barbara Franklin,

Residence Address: 4586 SE 6th Lane

Keystone Heights, FL 32656

Read a post she had placed on Facebook

She supports Tony Brown.

Tony Brown has dedicated 25 plus years to our Community. Most of his family lives and works in Keystone Heights. He went to high school here. He also was the town santa claus for over 25 years. He has never been involved with drama. He never voted for anything just because it was popular. Tony will always be a resident. He deserves the opportunity.

Tony Brown, Keystone Heights Resident

Residence address: 135 Flamingo, Keystone Heights, FL 32656

He can bring community. He is a business owner, would like the opportunity to be interim city manager. He has been in the City Council shoes 4 times. He helped change the Charter. When he left in April, he had no intentions of coming back to City government-we need to tighten our belts. He was involved with the budget. Also there is a lot of things in Keystone that needs to be corrected. One of the biggest projects is the curve, intersection. He put a plug in for Jamie, he came on board and we needed his expertise. Mr. Brown stated he can bring community, experience on the Council dealing with budgets, projects. He will tell them right upfront, if he is chosen, he doesn't see anyone going anywhere. You are going to need Jamie, Beau and everybody to pull together to get through the next 6 months. He sent all of the City Council an email explaining his intentions. He is prepared to start whenever. He does have a business, They will have to understand, depending on what their vote is today, tomorrow morning the wheels will start turning for that. He is ready to start whenever. He can work with anyone.

Deirdre Murphy, 20 year Keystone Heights Resident

460 SW Magnolia Ave, Keystone Heights, FL 32656

She has worked with a lot of different groups in Keystone Heights. She is a real estate agent in commercial and residential. She stated growth is coming our way.

We will need to deal with growth. We need a visionary to lead the way for the future. She supports Jamie Booth as Interim City Manager.

Brandon Waters. Real Estate Agent,

2348 SE 30th Ave

Melrose, FL 32666

He supports Tony Brown, he feels everyone will benefit. He feels Tony has a lot of experience. He does not know Jamie at all, but he sounds like a sharp man, He runs a development company and he has side investor wanting to spend 9 figures as there is a lot of growth coming.

6. Discussion

Mayor stated Rich Komando, City Attorney is on the phone. He could not be there in person due to an emergency.

Mayor Nina Rodenroth stated the interim city manager will need to be effective July 15th.

Councilman Dan Lewandowski made a motion for Jamie Booth to be hired as the interim city manager until we figure out the long term. His salary would be \$8,000.00 per month.

Mayor Rodenroth: starting July 15 to 12/01.

Councilman Lewandowski, with no benefits. There will be negotiations with whomever is hired in the future.

Councilman Elston Kussler second the motion.

Councilman Welch asked the meeting attendees if anyone else wanted to be considered for position. There was no one. He stated we do not have an amount of time as of yet.

Mayor Rodenroth suggested 90 days.

City Manager Charlie Van Zant suggested 6 months due to annual budget and hurricane season.

Mr. Booth was asked to give the city council his background.

James Booth, City Engineer

Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) led the process in narrowing down the number of projects to a more realistic number. He built the City a CRA plan that the City had not had since 2014.

Worked with SOLO. He has led the project to have the trees removed from Lake Geneva.

Strategic Plan and workshop

Comprehensive Plan

Infrastructure within the City of Keystone Heights.

Nightingale Culvert Project

Streetscapes

Sidewalk improvements

Beasley Lane, Beam Avenue

Trailhead completion

Colonel in the United States Army

He served 4 combat duties in Iraq-Afghanistan

He led rebuilding of airports and infrastructure.

Army Corp of Engineers

Stormwater management

Provided leadership with 3 hurricanes in 1 year.

Post disaster infrastructure

District command

Councilman Lewandowski wanted to state that Tony Brown has done a lot for this community.

Mayor Nina Rodenroth stated she would like to see a 6 month interim, especially with the millage, budget and the staff is very stable.

Councilman Lewandowski suggested 3-6 months.

City Attorney Rich Komando stated, the interim city manager would serve at the pleasure of the city council.

This could be a month or a year. He advised not to get caught up with a time limit.

Councilman Welch wanted to make the audience aware that he felt it was unfair how Charles Van Zant was being described. He stated Mr. Van Zant was not using the City of Keystone Heights as a stepping stone. Mr. Van Zant was very professional in notifying each council member, that he had been recruited to be the City Manager of Treasure Island. He wanted everyone to know this was not a strategy. If you have an employee who is recognized across the state and is wanted for a different job, who would stand in their way?

Vice Mayor Kussler wanted to express the importance of the refilling of the lakes. It is important to recognize Mr. Booth as an engineer, which we need to move forward. Vice Mayor stated he has also worked with Tony Brown and he is great. He just feels the engineering background is important.

Voice from audience member:

Wasn't that something that Scott started and someone else years ago?

Councilman Welch stated Jamie helped SOLO get over the finish line. There was no one with his background to make it happen.

Mayor Rodenroth, Mr. Booth has been a huge help with the Lake Geneva Restoration. This has been going on for over 50 years with the lake levels. All the intricacies with the government makes things go slow. It has been important to have someone with Mr. Booth's background and knowledge is a huge advantage to us.

Mayor Rodenroth, Tony do you have a question?

Mr. Tony Brown stated I just say, it is obvious you guys have already made your decision, you made it before you walked in the door. I was just here to offer my service. My hats off to him, he is smart and has done a lot.

I couldn't touch what he had done. Speedy for your thing about SOLO. I have been apart of that for years. Scott Kornegay happened to be the manager at the time. I was Mayor. We formed a roundtable congressmen, senators were here, that was, I was part of that. So for you to say that I really haven't done anything,

Vice Mayor Kussler stated I didnt say that,

Mr Brown stated I have been part of SOLO for a long time.

Vice Mayor Kussler stated I would never say that to you, Tony.

Mr. Brown stated he thinks you all are wasting your time, go ahead and make the vote and let's get out of here.

Councilman Knight states number 1 I tried to ask Tony to stay on the council. I wouldn't be right here if he wanted to stay. I did not want to run against him. I also told Charlie Van Zant if I did sit right here, do his best not to get hit by a bus for the next two or three years. So, the only thing worse than you getting hit by a bus is you leaving, because of where we are right now. My wife talked me out of sending a certified letter to the Mayor of Treasure Island, I was that angry. That having been said, I am torn and I will tell you why because we have another person, I have thier resume, if we advertise the position I will ask them to bring it forward. Tony has skin in the game he lives in the city limits, I understand you do not. A few weeks ago we had a meeting and someone brought up the fact we had been trying to get some courts fixed over here for a year and a half, two years. I am also torn, we have heard it from the developers and people who have interest, I hope they are successfull, I want my home to go up in value. They talk about the growth. Our county, commissioner, who lives here, came out today opposing utility rate increases. Growth is good, but growth means there are people on fixed incomes and others, now I am a lifelong republican, and they are going to get priced out of this community real quick with what we call fees, service charges. I call that self taxation. So I am torn, I will tell you that right now. I haven't made up my mind on voting on anybody or anything tonight, if I had my way I wouldnt be down here right now. I am torn about the impact this has on moral of our City employees, they just passed a work chart. We have talked, Mr. Van zant and I about retention and pay raises. There is no doubt that Mr. Booth is exceptionally qualified, he has worked hand and hand with Janis Fleet, who specializes in CRA planning and all that for cities and helping to ease the growth. We need to do something that makes sense for an interim. I would recommend even if ultimately Mr. Booth is to be the city manager we still advertise and go through the process and listen to people in this room and let people have their voice heard. You can say whatever it is you want to about me, I don't care. I want you to spell my name correctly when you say it. That's my view of it. Charlie will be here until the 14th. We have a budget, weve got somethings to deal with, with the people who do our auditing. We've got some other issues and we need some continuity. I do think the vote sounds as though, Mr. Booth you have the vote, I pray, I will be praying for you. And I will probably vote for the sense of all of us being unanimous here tonight. So when the people at home read about this, they know. I do think it should be advertised, I do think it should go through the process. I am not trying to be mean to you or difficult. I do want our employees to stay, I don't know anything, I have not heard one thing bad about Mr, Van Zant, and I haven't heard anything bad about any of our employees, I haven't heard of any trouble. I think it ought to be Dec 1st, interim manager until Dec 1st. Let's amend that motion lets have that discussion and then lets advertise it, speed it up, whatever we want. Rich can advise us, our city attorney and let's get on with it. I want everyone to be happy. I am sorry somebody will be mad after this. I personally asked I personally asked, I saw Tony out walking. I asked Tony to put his name in the hat, he has skin in the game, he lives in the city. I got the resume from someone else who lives in the City. But at the end of the day, the vote is what it is, and you can see that reflected, and so I will vote with it. Nothing against Jamie. But I am voting for the best interest for the city. Having been said, it needs to be advertised.

Councilman Welch said I concur with that thats the way most positions are handled or should be.

Councilman Knight asked if the motion could be amended to allow for advertisement.

Councilman Welch, yes.

Charlie van Zant stated, So, Madame Mayor if you want to amened the motion, someone will need to state the motion, someone needs to second the motion. and then vote on the amendment. And then after the amendment passes or fails you vote on the amended motion or the original motion that has already been made.

Councilman Knight I move that we amend the motion that is on the table, that we hire Jamie Booth for 180 days. That we hire Jamie Booth as interim city manager until Dec 1st, and that we advertise the position in the interim and that we make. amd that we advertise the position and set a date in early January with consultation with city attorney to begin the interview process for the hiring of the new city manager sometime in February 26. And that the salary be set at \$8,000.00 per month. If you could put that in correct form.

Councilman Lewandowski, I second

Mayor Rodenroth, all in favor,

all say aye

Mayor Rodenroth, motion carries. Any questions Rich?

Mr. Komando, City Attorney, as there was not an advertisement that went out recently that we start with that. Then have Mr. Booth then have Mr. Booth talk with each councilman individually

Mr Hatch would like to ask Jamie a question. Jamie said yes as long as the chair oks. Mayor Rodenroth says yes.

Mr Hatch Jamie, my only question is, you have a stellar, stellar resume, everything you have done, your accomplishments, my biggest concern is continuity, I am not a born here Keystonean, it is a great place. I love this City. My question is why do you want to serve in this capacity, this gentleman here called me out about stepping stone, that is the way I saw it, it short term, Charlie I am behind you 100%. But the person who steps into this position needs to have long term goals for the city, not there personal vision.

Mr. Booth said it is not his long term vision but the City's. And the City Council signed off and finalized it. The position is executing within the guidance of the City Council and the Strategic Plan. The City Manager serves at the pleasure of the City Council.

Your next question, I retired, if you had asked me a year ago, I was retired. You can ask my wife, I wanted to retire that's it, I am done. We decided to retire in Keystone Heights. I appreciate Mr. Van Zant allowing me the opportunity to work as a transition job with the City. I appreciate the team Mr. Van Zant has put together is amazing. I love the City council and that team. Over the last 6 months I appreciate what this team has done, I appreciate being a part of that team. And I want that team to be able to continue and deliver on the strategic plan and the objectives that plan is. I grew up here, I believe in what this City is and can be. I am not looking to go to the county or the state. I am looking to live in Keystone Heights and enjoy what that is.

Keith Hatch asked how will you work with the businesses. We don't get a vote as a business.

Mr. Booth answered what he would like to do is to get involved with the business organization. I want to attend the meetings and spend time understanding the businesses needs. What the city can do is listen to the business and take into consideration and exercise the needs. The voices of the citizens are who the council is elected by.

Mr. Hatch states since 2020, he has had 2 representatives visit. I would love to have someone ask me what we need. I have a problem with a semi delivering ice cream, cannot deliver on Beam Street behind my businss it cannot be used. I have brought this up before the ice cream and nothing has been done. I just want some interaction. We pour into this City and do quite a bit for this City. I would like to see something from this City Council. They only paved part of the road.

He has a question for council. If this is truly an interim position, why would you not have rely on experience to step into the interim position and let someone who that you possibly have for the future work along beside someone with experience, and then in 6 months put it out for a job application. Something is not making sense. Mr. Booth has the engineering experience and Tony is sitting here with the Council, budget and government perspective. It doesnt make sense to me.

The Mayor said we are done now, We have a plan to move forward. Toward the end of the year we will open the position and go from there.

Meeting is adjourned.

Adjournment

[7. Adjournment, Mayor Nina Rodenroth](#)

Mayor Nina Rodenroth adjourned the meeting at 4:51 pm