



Town of Surfside
Emergency Town Commission Meeting
MINUTES
June 25, 2021
3 p.m.

1. Opening

A. Call to Order

Mayor Burkett called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m.

B. Roll Call of Members

Town Clerk McCready called the roll with the following members present:

Present: Mayor Charles Burkett, Vice Mayor Tina Paul, Commissioner Nelly Velasquez, Commissioner Eliana Salzhauer, and Commissioner Charles Kesl (arrived at 3:10 pm).

Also present were Town Manager Andrew Hyatt, Town Attorney Lillian Arango and Town Attorney Tony Recio.

2. Resolutions

A. Declaring a Local State of Emergency – Andrew Hyatt, Town Manager

A RESOLUTION OF THE TOWN COMMISSION OF THE TOWN OF SURFSIDE, FLORIDA, DECLARING A LOCAL STATE OF EMERGENCY DUE TO THE BUILDING COLLAPSE OF THE RESIDENTIAL BUILDING CHAMPLAIN TOWERS SOUTH CONDOMINIUM LOCATED AT 8777 COLLINS AVENUE; PROVIDING FOR THE TERM OF THE STATE OF EMERGENCY; PROVIDING FOR AUTHORIZATION AND IMPLEMENTATION; PROVIDING FOR TRANSMITTAL; AND PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

Town Clerk McCready read the title of the resolution into the record.

The last whereas of the resolution was amended to read “approximately 100 individuals” and add “approximately more than 100 individuals”.

Commissioner Salzhauer stated that she sends her condolences to the family members and would like to make sure this does not happen again. She suggested the recertification not take place every 40 years but earlier and take care of what is happening with the beaches and what is under the buildings and take a closer look at this.

A motion was made by Vice Mayor Paul to approve the resolution as amended, seconded by Commissioner Velasquez. The motion carried with a 4-0 vote with Commissioner Kesl absent.

Town Manager Hyatt gave an update of the missing individuals, death toll and as of right now there are no survivors. He spoke regarding the urban search and rescue teams.

Mayor Burkett stated that the family members stated that they would like to hear from the experts and not the politicians. He stated that the Fire Chief for Miami Dade County spoke and committed to give updates.

Town Manager Hyatt stated that the updates will be taking place at the Grand Beach as of the last information he received.

Mayor Burkett stated that possibly family members should be the ones allowed at the Grand Beach.

Commissioner Velasquez also stated that they need to make sure that this does not happen again.

The following individuals from the public spoke:

Joe Treaster, New York Times and he stated that he would like to know what the Town is doing, and are they inspecting the buildings.

Commissioner Salzhauer addressed the comments made by Mr. Treaster and stated that the Town has hired a specialized structural engineer firm and are taking active steps to engage the right experts. She stated that the Building Official and the firm will make sure that everything is taking place.

Town Manager Hyatt addressed the comments made by Mr. Treaster and again stated that they are meeting with the engineering firm.

Vice Mayor Paul addressed the comments made by Mr. Treaster and spoke regarding the age of the buildings. She stated that they are built based on the building code when they were built. She stated that they are confident with how the new buildings are built.

Further discussion took place among the Commission and Mr. Treaster regarding the age of the buildings in Surfside.

Commissioner Kesl stated that the important issues are that it is a continued rescue effort and those in the center of this and the missing. He stated that they must meet the needs of those that have lost family members. He also stated that the family members are not getting regular updates. He stated that he hopes that will change.

Mayor Burkett stated that he addressed that issue with Miami Dade County Mayor Levin-Cava and the Miami Dade Fire Rescue Fire Chief who will be giving updates every four hours.

Commissioner Kesl stated that the building was under scrutiny and nobody stated anything, and the building was never evacuated. He is glad that they will be ensuring the other buildings in Town.

Mayor Burkett added information regarding the inspection process and spoke regarding the sister building on the other side. He stated that since they do not know what happened that they should address the issue with the sister building. He stated that he spoke to the Building Official to move the residents from that building temporarily to do a proper inspection of the building and address that building first. He spoke with Senator Scott and Senator Scott stated that they should give the option to the residents of the building to evacuate.

Vice Mayor Paul stated that the structural engineers the Town has hired are to inspect all buildings in Town and the strength of the infrastructure of the buildings.

Commissioner Salzhauer spoke regarding overdevelopment and the issues that it brings. She spoke regarding the beach renourishment project and stated that they used 88th Street as a staging area.

Mayor Burkett stated that if Mr. Treaster would like to continue to do the interview it can be conducted after the meeting.

Town Clerk McCready stated that Mr. Treaster is making a public records request that has to be directed to the Building Department.

Further discussion took place among the Commission and different media outlets regarding the 40-year recertification inspection.

Building Official McGuinness addressed the comments made and stated that the Champlain Towers report will be submitted shortly from the management of the building. He also spoke regarding changes to the zoning code. He explained the process of a 40-year recertification and the building was due this year. He stated that they were in the process and they are waiting for the report from the Champlain Towers.

Vice Mayor Paul asked Building Official McGuinness regarding the inspection of the roof a few days prior to the collapse.

Building Official McGuinness addressed Vice Mayor Paul's question and stated that nothing on the roof would have caused the collapse. He also addressed questions regarding open permits on the building.

Commissioner Velasquez asked if this could have been a natural thing like a sink hole.

Building Official McGuinness stated that it is not only what happened above ground but also underground. He explained the 40-year recertification process and who is responsible for the inspection and providing the report to the Town.

Mayor Burkett addressed the 40-year recertification comments and report and stated that there is much more going on here and they will find out what occurred. He stated that right now they are pulling bodies, hopefully live bodies from the rubble.

Further discussion took place among the Commission and the Building Official regarding the recertification process, the report from the management of Champlain Towers and what is to be expected.

The following individuals from the public spoke:

Joshua Epstein stated that he saw a report from US Today on a 2020 study that the building was sinking since 1990 and did the Town have a copy of the report and are there other buildings that were in this report.

Vice Mayor Paul stated that she was not informed of such report.

Commissioner Salzhauer stated this is a good question for the Town Attorney.

Town Attorney Arango stated that in the four years she has been here, the Town was never provided with that report or information.

Mr. Treaster asked what the Town would do if they received a report with deficiencies.

Building Official McGuinness stated that the deficiencies have to be taken care of and an updated report has to be provided.

3. Adjournment

A motion was made by Commissioner Kesl to adjourn the meeting without objection at 4:10 pm. The motion received a second from Commissioner Velasquez. The motion carried with a 5-0 vote.

Accepted this 9th day of November, 2021.



Charles W. Burkett, Mayor

Attest:



Sandra N. McCreedy, MMC
Town Clerk