

**TOWN OF ASTATULA  
MAYOR AND COUNCIL  
SUMMARY MINUTES**



**COUNCIL WORKSHOP  
TUESDAY JUNE 13, 2023  
TOWN HALL**

Having been duly advertised as required by law, Mayor Mitchell Mack called the workshop to order at 5:32 pm. He led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Members Present:**

Mitchell Mack, Mayor  
Stephen Cross, Vice-Mayor  
Gayle Sikkema

**Absent:**

Orita Issartel  
Zane Teeters

**Also Present:**

Graham Wells, Town Clerk  
Wally Hoagland, Police Chief

Roll Call was performed. A quorum was present although not required.

**AGENDA REVIEW**

There were no changes to the agenda.

**NEW BUSINESS**

**DISCUSSION ON THE PROPOSED INCREASE FROM GFL ENVIRONMENTAL FOR GARBAGE COLLECTION FOR FY2023-2024.**

The contract with GFL allows them to request an annual rate increase based on 70% of the CPI-U for the preceding 12-month period. The new rate to the town for each residence will increase from \$18.81 per month by 67cents to \$19.48 per month. The Town Council has the discretion to approve, or not to approve, the CPI adjustment.

If the rate for solid waste disposal is approved for GFL Environmental, the same percentage rate increase has historically been passed to the residents which is collected on the Tax Roll. The current equivalent monthly rate charged to the residents is \$20.16 and would increase by \$0.72c to \$20.88 per month or by \$8.64 to \$250.50 annually.

The tax collector takes 2% of what is collected (\$5.01) per year for each household assuming that they pay their taxes plus an additional cost of approximately \$5.00 per household (minimum) for the preparation of the TRIM file. There is also a cost incurred in town hall in dealing with the issues arising from the collection of solid waste. A final decision on whether to pass on the increase will be made at the public hearing in September. Should the town absorb and not pass on the increase it would amount to approximately \$6,432.00.

Vice-Mayor Cross requested that in the future, a copy of the contract be sent out as part of the packet. Discussion ensued on the level of service that GFL were providing and how it compared with other towns, the county, and other carriers.

Also, the cost to residents in Astatula is much lower than other municipalities and significantly lower than Howey in the Hills for virtually the same service. The initial contract with GFL, formally WCA, was from 2014 for seven years. In 2021 it was extended for a further three-year period. There is an option to extend it annually for further one-year terms.

Vice-Mayor Cross said that we should put it out for bid next year. The Clerk cautioned against that, if a deal was able to be struck to extend the service. Once put out to bid, there is no going back. The other carriers, such as Waste Management, WastePro and Waste Connections are typically more expensive and GFL, who would know their competitors' rate structures, will underbid them, and retain the contract by being the low bidder.

This is what happened in Howey, instead of a five percent increase, they ended up with over twenty percent. There is also no guarantee that the service will be better through another carrier as the county found out when GFL pulled out and was replaced by FCC Environmental. When you are looking at an increase as low as \$8.64 per year, there is no sense in going elsewhere, as residents would likely see an increase in the \$30.00 to \$50.00 per year range.

The Clerk emphasized that this decision is only to accept the increase (.67c per month per household) from GFL to the town and have it put onto the TRIM notice. The decision whether to pass it on to the residents would be taken at a public hearing in September. If the increase is not passed on, then the town would absorb the cost and it would come out of the ad valorem taxes from the general fund.

Following further discussion on the pros and cons of accepting the increase, this item would be voted on at the regular council meeting following the workshop.

#### **DISCUSSION ON THE RENEWAL OPTIONS FOR HEALTH INSURANCE FOR 2023-2024.**

A decision was made last year to change the plan for health insurance to Plan 14002 for most employees and to give the financial benefit of this plan to employees who opted to go on HSA Plan 14771 so that their spouses or children could be included. To remain on these plans the increase for the new year starting in July is set to be \$291.87 per month (3.7%) or \$3,502.44 for the next twelve months.

It was also decided that alternative quotes would be sought from another carrier and from the Florida League of Cities. A quote from Cigna was not available as they do not write small group policies. Brown and Brown provided a quote from United Healthcare, however the premiums for similar plans were higher than Florida Blue. The closest to the current plan would cost an additional \$2,392 per month.

Lindsey Larson from the Florida League of Cities email said she was trying to work with underwriting because rates came back extremely high compared to what we are currently getting from Florida Blue. Also, they have a tiered rating, so it doesn't go based on age what premium you pay, it is just one set premium (or rate) for each tier. She did not send any actual figures, only the comparative plans.

Furthermore, she had asked for the renewal quotes from Blue Cross which I would not send to her. They must provide their quote based on the information that the other carriers had. We were also asked to provide any knowledge of preexisting conditions.

Blue Cross base their premiums solely on age. There was discussion on the merits or otherwise of the different networks and the availability of doctors and specialists. Last year, the council spent a lot of time researching and choosing the two plans that were settled on. A 3.7% increase when inflation is over 5% does not seem unreasonable and council members present did not have an issue with the increase.

The decision on what they choose will be voted on at the regular council meeting following the workshop.

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned at 6:22 pm.

Respectfully submitted,



Mitchell Mack, Mayor

ATTEST:



Graham Wells, Town Clerk