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Mayor Henry then announced a change in the agenda to allow for discussion and public comments on the evening's highest profile issue, the adoption of wording related to the clarification of the process used for selecting members of the Florence Urban Renewal Agency (FURA).

The discussion was a continuation of one that had started at the last council meeting held March 4. At issue was determining who should have the final decision in selecting the individuals who serve on the Florence Urban Renewal Agency (FURA).

Councilor Preisler made the point, as he had previously, that the financial and community wide impact the FURA committee has would best be harnessed by allowing the complete council to decide on the final make-up of the committee. Preisler also stressed that the FURA appointment was fundamentally different from other committees because of the far-reaching financial ramifications created by the decisions made by the group. "In calling for these changes to the Urban Renewal Board process [allowing the mayor to decide] — and this is no negative spin against the Mayor — it is a policy decision and a money decision, and I do not agree with it," Preisler said. Preisler was not alone in his opposition to the decision to codify the Mayor's authority over FURA, as Councilor Joshua Greene was also strongly opposed to the code amendments. Greene made his position clear at a council meeting earlier in the month when he attempted unsuccessfully to convince his fellow councilors to reject the recommendations for modification made by City Attorney Ross Williamson. Greene suggested that the council should instead require the selection process for the FURA committee be one that required approval by all members of the City Council. Greene and Preisler have both previously stated their disagreement with Henry's belief that, simply because the Mayor has always had the final say in appointing committee members, he or she should retain that prerogative. The two councilors said they believe that times have changed and the process for deciding who should sculpt the city's financial future should be decided by more than one individual. Greene restated his position Monday evening with an attempt at developing consensus, not creating controversy, he said. "It's nice to see everybody here to hopefully hear both sides of the equation. As many of you already know I am opposed to this language...The Urban Renewal Agency should be insulated from having a process that's left just to a Mayor," Greene said. "The promise we made to the voters when we started urban renewal was that people that represent the other taxing districts be appointed by the district and then considered by the council...The change that you are making is not the same. You are mandating that the Mayor has the right to make a final decision. The last thing we want to do is inject partisanship into the process. The decision should be based on who is best suited to serve."

Councilor Lucio made a brief comment supporting the Mayor's authority in determining the individuals selected for FURA. Councilor Woodbury added his support for the Mayor's position. Woodbury spoke briefly. "I believe our jobs as councilors is not to try and advance our agendas, but to listen to the community that we serve. And that community overwhelmingly supports the clarification recommended by our City Attorney last week. And I am in favor of continuing with that program."

The final comments regarding the FURA amendments came from Mayor Henry. "The first delegates, or members, of the Urban Renewal Committee way back when were appointed by the Mayor, believe it or not. So that seems to me to set precedent," Henry said. "There have been different ways of doing things over the years, but since I have been Mayor, I've appointed every urban renewal representative, including you, Councilor Greene. You wouldn't be there if I hadn't appointed you." The Public Comments portion of the discussion surrounding FURA saw six of the eight speakers supporting the Mayor's position. Two members of the Siuslaw Public Library Board of Directors made the point that, as representatives of the library district, they should be able to appoint members from their organization to be FURA members. This position was undermined by comments made by Attorney Williamson, who said the relationship established between other tax entities and the city was more than likely unconstitutional and unenforceable. The discussion ended and the vote to approve the language recommended by City Attorney Williamson, which was adopted on a 3-2 vote. The council next turned its attention to approving two consent items and considering zoning changes for two properties in town. The first change in zoning was requested by the Pastor of Crossroads Assembly Church, Dale Edwards, on behalf of his organization. Glen Southerland from the City Planning Department reviewed the specifics of the petitioner's request with councilors, noting that his department supported the zoning change. Southerland pointed out the changes to code would be minor and would not impact the petitioner's neighbors. Edwards then made a brief presentation detailing the reasons for the requested change. The changes were related to lighting and sidewalk requirements that were from the organization's perspective unnecessary. The comments from Edwards and Southerland were accepted and councilors approved the change with little discussion. The councilors then moved to the last order of business to be considered, a second zoning request modification submitted by Larry and Chrystal Farnsworth for a city owned parcel in the Pacific View Business Park District. The Farnsworths were requesting changes that would add "Storage" and "Community Uses" to the allowable uses in the district for the parcels that the couple hopes to rent from the city. Wendy FarleyCampbell, Florence Planning Director, reviewed the facts and history involved in her department's decision to support the zoning change. The unusual shape and size and the location of the land being discussed was cited by Campbell as a deterrent to builders and developers, limiting the parcel's desirability. She also reminded councilors that all other aspects of the process for approving the final design for the proposed facility would be vetted by staff and there would be extensive oversight involved if the recommended changes were approved. She then answered a few questions from councilors and reiterated the city's support for the change in zoning. Farnsworth also mentioned the unique physical qualities of the tax lots under discussion as a compelling reason for the council to approve the change. Farnsworth assured councilors that his company will bear all costs associated with the planning, permitting and construction of the facility. Farnsworth also shared design illustrations that showed a well-landscaped and easily accessible facility that would be partially hidden from passing traffic by extensive native landscaping. There were minor concerns expressed by Councilor Greene regarding the architectural elements that would be used in building the proposed personal storage facility, but he did ultimately join in the unanimous decision to approve the change. After the last item of business had been conducted, the meeting was adjourned.

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