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Venice City Council*

MINUTES OF A WORKSHOP
CITY COUNCIL, VENICE, FLORIDA

OCTOBER 31, 2012

A workshop of the City Council to consider Wellfield Park was held this date in Council Chambers at City Hall. Mayor Holic called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

ELECTED OFFICIALS AND OTHERS PRESENT

Roll was called with the following elected officials present: Mayor John Holic, Vice Mayor Kit McKeon (10:29), and Council Members Jim Bennett, Emilio Carlesimo, Bob Daniels, Jeanette Gates, and Dave Sherman.

Also present: City Clerk Lori Stelzer and City Manager Ed Lavallee, and for certain items on the agenda: Community Development Director Chad Minor, Utilities Director Len Bramble, City Engineer Kathleen Weeden, Fire Chief Jim Warman, Battalion Chief Shawn Carvey, Police Chief Tom McNulty, and Public Works Coordinator Judy DiFabbio.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Council Member Carlesimo.

Mayor Holic recognized Sarasota County Officials Commission Chair Christine Robinson, Parks and Recreation Director Carolyn Brown and Manager Jack Colligan, and Sports Development Coordinator Patrick Calhoun. Mayor Holic stated the purpose of this workshop is to discuss bringing portions of the Wellfield Park complex up to usable standards.

I. MISS VENICE FAST PITCH: JEFFREY NAIDEL AND STEVE CONSTANTINO

Mr. Naidel and Mr. Constantino provided background on the Miss Venice Fast Pitch program and noted problems relating to the need for an additional field and major issues with drainage, overall maintenance, and the amount and condition of existing bleachers. Mr. Naidel and Mr. Constantino answered questions concerning cost of an additional field, existing field maintenance, condition of existing bleachers, drainage, and composition of field surface.

II. VENICE LITTLE LEAGUE: TODD KERKERING, PRESIDENT

(9:33) Mr. Kerkering, after disclosing that he is also a county employee, provided background information including field usage and maintenance, concession and restroom maintenance, drainage, wildlife, landscaping, equipment storage, and lighting.

Discussion ensued regarding drainage, league agreements, field maintenance, and usage fees.

Mr. Colligan commented on usage fees, field maintenance, drainage, landscaping, revenue sources, league agreements, and restroom maintenance.

III. VENICE VIKINGS/POP WARNER FOOTBALL: JAY THINNES, PRESIDENT

Mr. Thinnes expressed concerns relating to drainage and parking, and noted that scholarship awards are a large portion of their program. Mr. Thinnes stated that Sarasota County parks were not up to the standards of other state parks, pointing out problems with insects, building maintenance, lighting, drainage, and the lack of handicap access.

Discussion followed regarding usage agreements, field size regulations and striping, maintaining open space, usage fees, parking, water fountains, practice fields, multi-purpose usage, kids involved in the program, field maintenance, and cleanup after events.

IV. VENICE AREA YOUTH SOCCER: MARK REESE, PRESIDENT

Mr. Reese stated the soccer fields were in good shape with new sod and irrigation, but added the need for additional lighting, parking, fields, shade landscaping and structures, and netting to prevent soccer balls from going into ponds.

Mr. McKeon arrived at 10:29 p.m.

Mr. Reese commented on lighting costs and concession and restroom maintenance.

Ms. Gates and Mr. Carlesimo left the meeting at 10:34 a.m.

Mr. Colligan responded to questions concerning closing fields to provide the grass a chance to reproduce and indicated that county staff would review issues relating to the restrooms.

Mr. Carlesimo returned to the meeting at 10:37 a.m.

V. SARASOTA COUNTY CROQUET CLUB: BOB LENTZ, PRESIDENT

Mr. Lentz noted the croquet club sponsors tournaments that bring in visitors to Venice, and they also provide free clinics to the public. Mr. Lentz stated the club had no maintenance issues, however the screen installed to reduce glare was in need of repair and there was a drainage issue. He added the club was satisfied with their relationship with county staff.

Discussion followed regarding parking along Lucaya Avenue, the croquet course not being appropriate for other activities, usage agreements, screening, drainage, and widening of Pinebrook Avenue.

VI. CHALLENGER BASEBALL: STEVE BOONE AND RICH CARROLL

Mr. Boone and Mr. Carroll provided historical background on the program that serves developmentally handicapped children. The group currently uses Chuck Reiter facilities, which they have outgrown. Mr. Boone and Mr. Carroll displayed a diagram of the proposed new facility and discussed possible locations.

Responding to council member questions, Mr. Minor indicated there was no delineation between Pinebrook Park and Wellfield Park.

Discussion followed regarding options for relocating the proposed three fields, the concession stand providing free food and being utilized as a storage facility, cost of removing the lime pits, lighting configuration, field maintenance, and existing retention ponds.

VII. FRIENDS OF PINEBROOK PARK: JOE MCKEE, HOLLY LAIRD, RICHARD HOLDER, BOB O'CONNOR, KEN TYLER, AND TOM PENDERGRASS

(11:24) Mr. McKee, resident of Bridle Oaks subdivision, spoke in support of retaining the existing Pinebrook Park area of the facility as a nature preserve.

Holly Laird, resident of Pinebrook South subdivision, urged council members to preserve the Pinebrook Park area.

Richard Holder, Venice Area Audubon Society past president, favored preserving Pinebrook Park as a wildlife sanctuary.

Bob O'Connor, speaking on behalf of the Friends of Pinebrook Park, expressed concerns regarding the Challenger Baseball proposal and urged council members to retain the park.

Discussion followed regarding support for the Friends of Pinebrook Park and how long the group has been in existence, cost to replace existing natural areas in Wellfield Park, Challenger Baseball participants that are not Venice residents, the park being maintained by the Friends of Pinebrook Park, and Wellfield Park being located in the center of Venice.

Recess was taken from 11:51 a.m. until 1:15 p.m.

VIII. CITY MANAGER ED LAVALLEE

Mr. Lavallee provided an overview of existing facilities at Wellfield Park, and discussions concerning the possibility of relocating Fire Station No. 2 and the Water Treatment Plant to the complex, strategic planning, capital improvement projects, and chronic problems such as the existing lime pits.

Mr. Bramble provided historic background relating to the lime pits and gopher tortoise habitat in the area.

Discussion ensued regarding Wellfield Park never being used at a landfill.

Ms. Weeden explained it was not unusual to convert construction debris areas into parks, and explained that brownfield grants are not available because lime pits are not considered hazardous material. Ms. Weeden answered questions relating to resolving drainage issues, and budgeting Wellfield Park improvements.

Mr. Bramble commented on possible relocation of Fire Station No. 2 and the water treatment plant facilities.

Discussion followed regarding grant eligibility, legislative priorities, relocation of city facilities, flood elevation, and existing facilities being energy efficient.

Chief Warman and Battalion Chief Carvey discussed distribution of fire stations and response times. They also reviewed existing training facilities and relocation costs and sites.

Mr. Minor and Ms. Weeden briefed council members on visits to possible facility relocation sites.

(2:31) Mr. Minor displayed the most recent site plans for Challenger Baseball facilities and discussed alternate options for layout and location.

Discussion followed regarding obtaining feedback from neighborhoods adjacent to proposed sites, funding, obtaining a business plan, public/private partnerships, landscaping, environmental issues, and Friends of Pinebrook Park opposing any development.

Ms. Gates and Mr. Carlesimo left the meeting at 3:06 p.m.

Chief McNulty discussed relocating the firing range, noting that a cost study indicated that maintaining the range as is was the most cost effective option.

Mr. Carlesimo returned to the meeting at 3:07 p.m.

Mr. Lavallee reviewed firing range operating costs.

Ms. Gates returned to the meeting at 3:10 p.m.

Ms. DiFabbio answered council member questions relating to park inspections and maintenance, tracking maintenance issues, and identifying funding needs.

Discussion followed regarding drainage, consultant costs, and relocation of the water treatment plant to the Laurel Road/Knights Trail area.

IX. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION (5 minutes each speaker)

Tom Pendergrass, 787 Bridle Oaks Drive, stated his opinion that council members could determine the makeup of parks because the parks are zoned Government Use (GU).

Ken Tyler, 786 Bridle Oaks Drive, urged council members to maintain the Pinebrook Park area as a natural habitat.

Grace Grote, 1267 Lakeside Woods Drive, spoke in support of maintaining the Pinebrook Park area as a natural habitat.

William Fairbank, 1237 Pinebrook Way, stated that Pinebrook Park should be excluded as a proposed location for the water treatment plant.

Mr. Bramble responded an appropriate location for the water treatment plant would be east of Interstate 75.

Joe McKee, city resident, spoke in support of maintaining Pinebrook Park area as a natural habitat.

X. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 4:03 p.m.

ATTEST:

Mayor – City of Venice

City Clerk