

VENICE CITY COUNCIL

FEBRUARY 12, 2016 – 11:00 A.M.

VILLAGE ON THE ISLE

Mayor Holic called the workshop meeting on Vision for Venice Schools and Think Tank to order at 11:03 a.m. Ms. Ebaugh led the pledge of allegiance.

Present: Mayor John Holic, Vice Mayor Kit McKeon, Council members Deborah Anderson, Rich Cautero, Bob Daniels, Fred Fraize, and Jeanette Gates.

Others Present: Assistant City Manager Len Bramble, City Clerk Lori Stelzer, Kathie Ebaugh, Director of Planning, Sarasota School District, Dr. Bill Bolander, Taylor Ranch Elementary School principal and Betsy Steiner, Facilitator.

Ms. Ebaugh noted her outreach to the community to determine the community's needs and the best use of the schools and that Venice Middle School (VMS) will be an updated campus.

Ms. Ebaugh presented the first question: What is your vision for the Venice area, looking forward into the next 20-25 years?

Council members responded with the topics of increasing partnerships, security, location, purchasing land, enrollment, workforce housing, walkable communities, community atmosphere on campuses, including libraries and literacy uses, Venice High School supported by the community, after school programs, Gulf Coast Community Foundation property availability, developers role in paying for growth rather than burdening taxpayers, state of the art facilities, and environmental and energy demonstration center for the youth.

Ms. Ebaugh reported on growth, student populations, families choosing Sarasota County schools, planning schools, and serving the community, 25 acres being required for an elementary school, and timeline for school construction.

Ms. Ebaugh presented the second question: What is the gap between what is envisioned for working families and the City of Venice and where we are today?

Council members responded that younger families are moving to the area when Venice has been predominantly a retirement community, lack of workforce housing, safety of portables, and involving the retirement community in the school system.

Dr. Bolander noted that families are moving to the Venice area because of the quality of the school system and education experience.

Discussion ensued on the future including technology.

Ms. Ebaugh discussed developing partnerships with Sarasota County to share fields at VMS for the community and changing to LED in schools within the next five years.

Ms. Ebaugh presented the third question: How do we as a school district, in the Venice community, do better to fill this gap?

Council member responses included placing fencing so the parks/fields are accessible to the public, inviting seniors to participate with the schools, satisfaction with the current path of the school system, involving students in community meetings, such as homeowners associations, and student volunteerism in the middle and high schools.

Ms. Ebaugh reported that Venice High School students have been involved in Venice's comprehensive plan update.

Ms. Ebaugh confirmed that council members feel the school district is doing a good job, but there is a need to build on partnerships between the city, county and school board.

Recess was taken from 12:04 p.m. to 12:58 p.m.

Mayor Holic welcomed participants to the Think Tank.

Ms. Steiner stated the Think Tank is part of the strategic planning process, noted that written statements may be provided for council review prior to the strategic planning workshops, and explained the meeting process.

Group 1:

Larry Humes discussed Venice Heritage, Inc.'s involvement in a community speaking series, importance of being pedestrian friendly, sponsoring a visions committee to discuss issues of importance with historic preservation, unification of the various historic organizations, and Nolen's concepts and principles should be shared throughout Venice, not just the island.

Tony Pinzone discussed parking, need for a study prior to building a parking garage, suggested a study on solid waste and recycling collection frequency, growth, affordable and workforce housing being a priority, and considering mobile home communities for affordable/workforce housing and consideration of manufactured homes for density factors.

Jerry Jasper spoke on irritation associated with growth, north Venice growing, and transition areas for residential and commercial neighborhoods.

Erin Silk, Venice MainStreet (VMS), spoke to special events, specifically events interfering with each other, need for more summer events, encouraging events to be held outside the downtown area, putting restrictions on events, i.e. time frame and location, parking spaces, and wayfinding signs for off-site parking, and recommended a survey for the trolley and reevaluating for next year. She also commented on growth, housing needs, John Nolen plan, tourism is key to sustaining lifestyle, bicycle rentals, hotel close to downtown, marketing summer time and day trippers.

Paul Hollowell noted the airport is an asset for tourism, marketing the circus arena property, to include an upscale motel/hotel which includes parking for the hotel and major public parking with a shuttle

service, off-season events could be marketed, and the need to accelerate finding a new location for events that are held at the temporary festival grounds.

Mack Wilcox, chair, Economic Development Advisory Board, spoke to special events, not needing to attract more people, not all events presented have to be approved, need for events to be properly sized for the Venice community, traffic being an issue, especially during special events and in season, problem with bridges opening on demand, controlling growth through the comprehensive plan, and the need to properly manage growth.

Joel Anderson, Village on the Isle, suggested maintaining the attributes that makes Venice special with modernization, spoke on traffic, special events creating a community and opportunities, focusing on quality and experience of events vs. quantity, the trolley service being a positive, preserving green spaces and limiting walking distances, having flexibility for sustainability and that the city cannot be all things to all people.

Walter Rossman spoke on the success of special events and suggested doing more youthful events, traffic problems, looking at more environmental and conservation protection, and the need for affordable housing.

Tom Pendergrass commented that community growth and change creates more traffic and tourists, growth must be well planned, parking solution will become more acute as more homes are built, workforce needs, keeping Venice beautiful, concern with multiple special events at the same time, and suggested holding events during the off season, a free shuttle to the downtown area and a traffic study.

Peg Magee stated she left a planned community because it became too crowded and did not follow its master plan, and commented on affordable housing, her concern about attraction of more people and events, crowding, congestion, and impact of stress on individuals, need to consider wildlife corridors, and consider growth impacts.

John Ryan, Venice Area Chamber of Commerce, commented that the majority of special events are benefiting businesses and non-profits and the need to be monitored and not conflicting, need for off-season events, review of festival grounds, promoting identified parking spaces, promoting the John Nolen walkable community, community growth and change, and warned of the impact if marketing stops.

Discussion ensued on growth and wildlife corridors.

Recess was taken from 1:45 p.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Group 2:

Doug Kerr, executive director, Venice Symphony, commented on the Venice Performing Arts Center (VPAC) and his belief that the facility is not being used to its best ability, his concern that the facility can only be used by school board standards, i.e. no alcohol for fund raising events, and would like to better utilize this resource.

Barbara Quinn, Women's Sertoma Club, reported on the Sun Fiesta's success and positive impact on the community, use of local vendors and suppliers, her concern with scheduling the event and the application wording, and asked council to reconsider taking away public safety services.

Charles Alfano, Parks and Recreation Advisory Board member, discussed traffic congestion and parking, bridge openings impact, growth is inevitable, adaptation and attention to underlying support system is paramount to safety, security and success, the need to stay ahead of the curve, and increased tourism challenges quality lifestyle.

Ron Fazzalano, Waterford Master Owner's Association, and chair of the Traffic Advisory Task Force, noted the need to determine if there is a parking and traffic problem, the need to control traffic to an acceptable level and to think beyond the island, Wellfield Park should be preserved as the central part of Venice, community growth and managing growth.

Bob Vedder, Venice Area Beautification, Inc. spoke on special events and suggested giving more money because the money comes back to the community, promoting events promotes tourism, suggested having a formula on the return to the city in the form of taxes vs. other benefits, his concern with duplication of dates, community growth, and lack of affordable housing, and suggested creating a solution for employee parking downtown, such as a shuttle, payment, or a garage.

Brett Stephens advocated for safe and quality events, cautioned how they are scheduled and integrated into the community, noted his concern for attracting more people and its effect on traffic and parking, suggested the industrial portion of the post office be moved off the island, redeveloping Seaboard district as an alternative venue, and the use of the airport for tourism and his support for a hotel on the airport.

Don Fisher, Suncoast BBQ Bluegrass Bash, reported on the success of the BBQ Bash and its effect on the economy, noted that change brings challenges and challenges bring issues, community partnerships, quality vs. quantity, need for hotel rooms and suggested retaining quality events.

Jill Corey, city resident, Pedro St., discussed the historic district, quality vs. quantity special events, controlled and managed growth, parking garage issues in Sarasota, cautioned city council about a parking garage and suggested there were other ways to solve the issue, special events, suggested Blalock Park could be used more often and that the VPAC is not utilized enough.

Discussion ensued on available parking spaces, VPAC issues, and parking for special events.

Recess was taken from 2:48 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Ms. Gates did not return to the meeting.

Group 3:

Venice High School (VHS) students Madison Culligan, Arianna Murdocca, Jessica Taylor, Michelle Unger, and Liz Mogford individually noted the positive aspects of living in Venice and attending VHS, which

included a safe environment, activities offered, access to events, homey feeling, nature, rural areas, paradise, sense of community, small town aspect, good mix between tourism and residents, beach, jetties, and special events.

In response to Ms. Steiner, the students listed items that would make life better for teenagers in the community, including hosting a Venice area movie night downtown, varying the activities held downtown, and holding more events for kids/teenagers, especially during the summer.

The students discussed their plans after graduation. They continued to discuss student needs, which were beach and water activities and non-alcoholic alternatives.

Ms. Mogford suggested council members ask college graduates why they came back to Venice.

Other topics discussed by the students were traffic concerns, controlling bridge openings, programs offered at VHS, on the job training programs, Venice Public Library closure, and involving the youth in designing the new library.

Recess was taken from 3:55 p.m. to 3:59 p.m.

Dan Boone, city resident, discussed the recurring theme being education, schools, and maintaining the education level as high as possible.

Ms. Steiner noted that any written documentation will be provided to council members.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:02 p.m.

John W. Holic, Mayor

ATTEST:

City Clerk