



City of Venice

401 West Venice Avenue
Venice, FL 34285
www.venicegov.com

Meeting Minutes City Council

Monday, February 3, 2025

8:30 AM

Village on the Isle
920 Tamiami Trail South, Venice, FL
Renaissance Room #6

Strategic Planning Workshop

CALL TO ORDER

Vice Mayor Boldt called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m.

ROLL CALL

Present: 6 - Ms. Joan Farrell, Vice Mayor Jim Boldt, Mrs. Rachel Frank, Mr. Ron Smith, Mr. Rick Howard and Mr. Kevin Engelke

Absent: 1 - Mayor Nick Pachota

ALSO PRESENT

City Attorney Kelly Fernandez, City Clerk Kelly Michaels, City Manager Ed Lavallee, Assistant City Manager James Clinch, Deputy City Clerk Toni Cone, Recording Secretary Amanda Hawkins-Brown and for certain items on the agenda: Fire Chief Frank Giddens, Police Chief Andy Lesienring, Building Official Derek Applegate, Utilities Director Javier Vargas, Assistant Utilities Director Patience Anastasio, Utilities Manager Jeff Sweater, Finance Director Linda Senne, Planning and Zoning Director Roger Clark, Director of Public Works and Asset Management Rick Simpson, Assistant Director of Public Works and Asset Management Ashlee Castle, Airport Director Mark Cervasio, Assistant City Engineer Jon Kramer, Information Technology Director Roger Navarro, Information Technology Manager Eric Tanner, and Director of Human Resources Alan Bullock.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mr. Engelke led the Pledge of Allegiance.

I. INTRODUCTION

[25-0051](#)

Strategic Planning Information

Betsy Steiner, Facilitator, made opening comments and spoke on the meeting schedule.

City Manager Ed Lavallee provided an introduction and spoke on the

purpose of strategic planning.

Assistant City Manager James Clinch spoke on the format of the meeting and the supporting documents provided.

II. PRESENTATIONS

[25-0052](#)

Human Resources Department

Human Resources Director Alan Bullock presented on union negotiations, classifications and pay ranges for new positions, new human resources information system, and answered Council questions regarding cost, and program selection.

[25-0053](#)

Information Technology Department

Information Technology Director Roger Navarro and Information Technology Manager Eric Tanner spoke on roles within the department, cybersecurity, resiliency, wireless systems, cell phone updates, use of Starlinks, video security, new City buildings technology needs, investing in artificial intelligence (AI) Technology, American with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements for the City website, and project management.

Discussion took place regarding integration with departments, the need to make investments in new technology, budget, and cell phone protocol.

[25-0054](#)

Planning & Zoning Department

Planning and Zoning Director Roger Clark presented on the Seaboard Master Plan, relocation of Fleet and Solid Waste, additional consultant work needed, funding opportunities, code language, public parking, Parks Master Plan, interlocal agreement, proposed airport rezoning, potential commerce center, consideration of the Transportation Master Plan and Airport Master Plan, resilience and sustainability plans, grant opportunities, and Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification.

There was support for moving forward with the Parks Master Plan.

Discussion took place regarding LEED certification, resiliency, proposed airport rezone, and Chuck Reiter Park.

Discussion continued regarding time frames for relocation of Fleet and Solid Waste, greenspaces in Seaboard area, time frame for redevelopment construction to begin in Seaboard, swing bridge for pedestrian traffic, having visual progress, coordination with other agencies, Council providing a letter of endorsement, rezoning impact on

business restorations, finalizing plan, consideration of existing businesses, having a swing bridge or dock, reasoning for review by Planning Commission before City Council, and timing of Northeast Park construction.

There were no objections to a swing bridge.

There was agreement that visual progress of Seaboard redevelopment is important.

There was support for moving forward with the Seaboard Master Plan.

Recess was taken from 10:00 a.m. to 10:10 a.m.

[25-0055](#)

Building Department

Building Official Derek Applegate provided a presentation on building permit review and rate study, hiring a consultant, land management program, automating the plan review and inspection process, outreach to public users.

Discussion took place regarding delays in processes due to Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) regulations, and the impact of private providers on City operations and funding.

There was support for moving forward with rate study, land management program, and automation of plan review and inspection process.

[25-0056](#)

Public Works Department

Public Works Director Simpson and Assistant Public works Director Castle presented on the Facility Condition Assessment, Parks Interlocal Agreement, staffing needs, the Venice Community Center, in-house operations versus outsourcing, prioritizing community events, and goals.

Discussion took place regarding the overall preference of outsourcing, profits from operations, cost of operations and in-house staffing, having profitable operations while providing community service, time constraints, and events booking two years in advance.

There was support for proceeding with a request for proposal (RFP) process to see if a private or non-profit provider is available and if not exploring in-house staffing and management.

[25-0057](#)

Police Department

Chief Leisenring presented on current staffing, staffing history, population growth, comparison to North Port staffing, standards used to

calculate staffing needs, staffing proposal, benefits of proper staffing, recruitment, traffic safety, and incorporation of technology to improve service and efficiency.

Discussion took place regarding a traffic officer, most prevalent types of crime, impact of growth in surrounding areas, and how season impacts police activity.

[25-0058](#)

Fire Department

Fire Chief Giddens provided a presentation to include a facilities assessment, Fire Station 52 update, data comparison from 2023 to 2024, call volume, population growth, call response heat map, staffing request, fire prevention program, collection rate, and answered Council questions regarding emergency vans "vanbulances", fire versus medical calls, hospital hold times, community paramedicine, and use of engines on medical calls.

[25-0059](#)

Utilities Department

Utilities Director Javier Vargas, Assistant Director Patience Anastasio, and Project Manager Jeff Sweater presented on current projects including the second sewer main under I-75, the new water booster pump station in Northeast Venice, the water treatment Plant Supply Well RO-8E, intracoastal second sewer force main, water main replacement program on Tarpon Center.

They also provided information on future strategic projects, including the Water Production Well 10E, water reclamation facility equalization tank, water reclamation facility floating solar system, water treatment plant master plan and feasibility study.

Discussion took place regarding the booster station construction status, capacity compared to usage, source of water, impact of Sarasota County's usage on the City, appreciation for communication from department, the ability for current plants to serve development within City limits, and concerns for return on investment for floating solar system.

Recess was taken from 11:54 a.m. to 12:45 p.m.

[25-0060](#)

Engineering Department

Assistant City Engineer Jon Kramer presented on the Multimodal Transportation Master Plan, the Stormwater Master Plan, the Flamingo Ditch Feasibility Study and community outreach, the Northeast Venice Park, Venice Beach Nourishment, Hecksher Park pickleball, and beach

parking.

Discussion took place regarding the potential swing bridge in Seaboard, Community Rating System (CRS rating) improvements and costs, storm events and flooding, Southwest Regional Planning Council (SWRPC), Northeast Venice Park build date, and potential to move beach parking project forward.

[25-0061](#)

Venice Municipal Airport

Airport Director Mark Cervasio presented on areas of responsibility, current projects, including Airport Master Plan, administration/terminal building, secured access, electrical upgrades, community outreach, and noise abatement.

Discussion took place regarding potential commercial park acreage, hotel lease project status, tree loss, and the Southwest Florida Long-term Recovery Group.

[25-0062](#)

Finance Department

Finance Director Linda Senne presented on areas of responsibility to include administration & budget, accounting, Utility Billing, procurement, financial reporting, operational process, budget development, finance awards issued by the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA), customer service/cashier's office, and strategic targets.

Discussion took place regarding emergency loans, staffing levels, pension plan funding, capital improvement plan (CIP) amounts.

There was support for obtaining a cost to learn what it would take to buyout the Police and Fire Pension funds.

There was support for increasing the Capital Improvement (CIP) dollar threshold.

III. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

There was no public comment.

IV. REVIEW AND UPDATE OF STRATEGIC PLAN

Discussion took place regarding Community Development Block Grant (CBDG) funding for affordable housing, and the Bayshore Drive sidewalk project future.

Recess was taken from 2:23 p.m. to 2:30 p.m.

Discussion continued regarding the joint meeting with Sarasota County, the hospital on the Island, The Venice Theatre rebuild and funding, evacuation centers, affordable housing, and homelessness.

City Manager Lavallee thanked Village on the Isle Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Doug Foeller for the organization's hospitality.

Ms. Steiner provided a review of the discussion and recommendations:

- Regarding Seaboard, we have direction that the council is eager for to see visual progress and while we know certainly that there is work that must happen to move facilities before there can be streetscaping there is an eagerness to see progress visually.
- There was also support from the Council to pursue the opportunity for a swing bridge at the Seaboard area.
- Regarding the Venice Community Center, the direction was to start with potentially an outside vendor by using an RFP process to identify opportunities with an outside vendor as the first choice. If that was not successful, the second choice would be to identify an in-house solution with city run staffing and operations.
- The other part of that discussion focused on the sentiment to not lose money or to at least break even and to look at opportunities to generate a profitable revenue growth path.
- It was highlighted that we want to make sure there is public input into the Parks planning process from our citizens.
- The "Vanbulance" Fleet received accolades and hopes that that continues to be part of our emergency response going forward.
- There was an interest in what possibilities there might be to obtain improvement of the flood rating and staff recognized that there was some priority, though it might be challenging to increase to the next level.
- The issue of Flamingo ditch was raised and a sense of urgency around funding opportunities was expressed as it relates to a meeting coming up on the 19th of February.
- It was discussed that beach parking is also a priority and that the topic will be an item for consideration with the agenda at the forthcoming meeting with the county.

- Another issue that may go on the agenda relates to the county trees along Airport Road that were lost or damaged due to recent hurricanes.
- There is interest in exploring or doing a pension review to determine if there is a significant cost or whether to assess the pension situation for an opportunity to buy them out with the first step being what the cost would be to review that situation.
- There was support for Finance to consider the current CIP Threshold Policy to raise the dollar levels needed for approval and authorization through the CIP process.
- The topic of affordable housing was raised. Particularly knowing that in the future, there may be opportunities with city property related to Seaboard and Legacy Park and that of property that is contiguous to the current Housing Authority properties at Venetian Walk.
- Interest in the Bayshore Drive safety issue relating to a sidewalk project.

V. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before Council, the meeting was adjourned at 3:07 p.m.

ATTEST:

Mayor - City of Venice

City Clerk