

Agenda Item

Enforcement of State, County, Laws and City of Venice Ordinances.

Background

Often people who live in our City have asked me why we as a city do not consistently enforce the laws and ordinances that are commonly known and often posted around the city in public places.

I believe the simple answer is we do not have adequate funding to staff law enforcement and code enforcement to achieve the desired result. State and County laws and City Ordinances require staffing.

I believe we need to ask ourselves do we really want to enforce all of the laws and ordinances that are currently active and apply to our City? Not to turn our City into a police state, but to protect the public safety and insure a high quality of life.

The laws were enacted to protect public safety, improves the quality of life and to insure the tranquility of the residents and visitors to our City. The question is how much tax payer dollars are we willing to spend, should we spend or can we afford to spend?

I will name a few ordinances to begin the thought process; Dogs are not allowed on the public beach outside the area set aside for Dogs and their owners, yet I see dogs on and off leash on the public beach on a regular basis. No bicycles on the Venice Pier, I observe bicycles on the pier often. No bicycles on the side walk in the down town area of Tampa Avenue, Venice Avenue and Miami Avenue, however I observe bicycles on the sidewalk often. We have posted parking time limits in the downtown area, Enforcement is not consistent are the time limits appropriate? The parking regulations in seaboard are not enforced and in my opinion the only way the businesses can operate effectively in the Seaboard area is to ignore the street parking laws.

No alcohol may to be consumed on the public beach, Many residents enjoy a glass of wine and watch the sunset from our beautiful beaches, others enjoy a cold beer on a hot summer day. Do we want to enforce that ordinances? The space between the tables for outdoor dining in the downtown area, ADA access, in down town Venice is often violated. The Canine dining regulations are not consistently adhered to by restaurant owners or pet owners.

Enforcement;

I am guessing to enforce the posted laws that apply to the beaches and the Venice fishing pier may require 112 hours of police patrol each week and a ATV to allow the officers to move efficiently north and south on the beach for patrol. Examples of these laws are no fishing from the beach near swimmers. No swimming within 150ft of the pier. No boating or similar activity within 150 ft of the pier. No shark fishing. Limits on fishing lines by each fisherman from the pier. No littering, bring it in take it out, No dogs on the

public beach. No alcohol consumption on the public beach or fishing pier.

To enforce the time limited parking, use of public sidewalks, and safety in the downtown area may require the use of a Segway or ATV and staffing by Police officers and or Code enforcement staff.

However it is not the role of City Council to develop a plan to achieve the desired result, Staff is the subject expert that can give City Council the information and data to make policy decisions. Fact based recommendations regarding the applicable Laws and ordinances, what should be enforced, what should or can be eliminated? What is the recommended process and cost to enforce the laws, ensure public safety, protect the quality of life in the City and the tranquility for all citizens. As the population in south west Florida grows what action should this council take to insure the highest quality of life possible.

Request:

Council to Direct Staff to prepare a cost analysis and recommendations on enforcement of our Laws and ordinances to be vetted in the planning meeting and or budget work shop to be directed by the City Manager. What should be enforced and the cost. What should not be enforced and why, then should we as a City remove those Ordinances? Why have the law or ordinances if it is not practical or desirable to enforce?

There are likely good answers to these and additional questions that staff can supply.

The City Manager and Staff Directors have managed the budget with great skill. Much of the budget expense is of course staffing. Nothing is free, are we as a council willing to staff the city to consistently enforce the laws.

A regularly Scheduled City Council meeting does not supply the environment to explore this issue.