

**CITY OF PUNTA GORDA, FLORIDA  
REGULAR CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES  
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 7, 2018, 9:00 A.M.**

**COUNCILMEMBERS PRESENT:** Cummings, Keesling, Matthews, Prafke

**COUNCILMEMBERS EXCUSED:** Wein

**CITY EMPLOYEES PRESENT:** Dave Drury, Finance; Rick Keeney, Public Works; Tom Jackson, Utilities; Phil Wickstrom, Human Resources; Joan LeBeau, Urban Design; Pamela Davis, Police; Ray Briggs, Fire; City Attorney Levin; City Manager Kunik; City Clerk Smith

**Award of Amendment 25 to Weiler Engineering, Punta Gorda, FL, for the design of Harborwalk West Phase II Construction Plans - Areas 2a and 2b Gill Street to Berry Street**

City Manager Kunik requested Council delay action on this item to allow time to review the Gilchrist Park restroom plans, which were only just received.

Consensus was to do so.

**Mayor Keesling** then invited public comment on Regular Agenda items.

Mr. John Burn, Punta Gorda Boat Club (PGBC), commented on the Gilchrist Park Activity Center Research Report (GPACRR), stressing the City was a boating community. He requested the City involve the PGBC in any future discussions regarding the GPAC.

Mr. David Martin opined it was inappropriate to give away public park land for the purpose of commercial development, adding waterfront property was a treasure and should be kept as same.

Mr. Robin Adair urged City Council to approve closing the Harborwalk for the Taste of Punta, explaining same was a paid event.

Ms. Connie Kantor read a prepared statement and distributed information regarding local Boy Scouts, as delineated in the agenda material, requesting consideration be given to establishing a Boy Scout facility in the GPAC.

Mr. Ron Ludvig, Peace River Sail and Power Squadron Commander, stated the Squadron had been a part of Punta Gorda since 1972 and had been teaching classes at the Bayfront Center since 1993. He contended no other location was available.

Ms. Sharon Rommel stated any park given to the public should be protected.

Mr. Bob Fritz commented on the budget, asserting an increase in the millage rate would discourage annexation. He then voiced objection to inviting public comment on

a presentation which had not yet been provided. He spoke in opposition to construction of a large restaurant facility at Gilchrist Park.

Ms. Lori Lanehart stated Gilchrist Park had drawn her to reside in Punta Gorda, voicing concern commercial development would greatly change its nature.

Ms. M. J. Atkinson spoke regarding the Sanibel Sea School as a potential program for the GPAC, submitting a brochure regarding same into the record.

Mr. Dave Blair stated a ramp was critical for teaching children how to sail, thus the need to retain same at the Bayfront Center.

Mr. Gary Skillicorn expressed support of Team Punta Gorda (TPG), acknowledging the work involved in the GPACRR, the outcome of which represented the community's desire for waterfront activities and a multi-purpose meeting facility. He suggested the current Punta Gorda Library site could be used for the latter.

Ms. Dawn MacGibbon spoke regarding stewardship of Gilchrist Park as a historical City location.

Mr. Larry Yaeger asserted a park should be a grassy area with trees for children to play in the sunshine rather than a place for a mammoth structure for people to eat and drink.

**Note: A short recess was called at 10:46 a.m.**

#### **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

##### **Gilchrist Park Activity Center Research Report**

City Manager Kunik stated two years earlier the City asked TPG to assist in researching the need for an activity center in Gilchrist Park. He pointed out the PGBC lease expired in 2021, and the Bayfront Lease expired in 2019.

Mr. Charlie Wally, TPG, provided a PowerPoint presentation on TPG's research findings and recommendations, as delineated in the agenda material, explaining the former were based on stakeholder interviews and community input. He outlined the next steps as follows: review current water related infrastructure; form focus group; identify potential public-private partnerships; relate desired activities to facility design; identify infrastructure and facility costs.

City Manager Kunik relayed Councilmember Wein's positive comments on the thoroughness of TPG's report.

**Councilmember Cummings** suggested scheduling future discussions with the YMCA, stating perhaps certain programs could be implemented at the present time. He reminded everyone Gilchrist Park was essentially located in a residential neighborhood; thus, consideration must be given to incorporating future plans into a true urban park design to be integrated into both the neighborhood and Gilchrist Park.

**Mayor Keesling** noted the site was a VE coastal high hazard area, which required very strict building constraints which in turn would significantly impact construction costs.

**Councilmember Prafke** stated it was necessary to first determine the site's most appropriate use.

**Councilmember Cummings** stated it was also necessary to work out the financial details, opening operations should be self-sustaining.

**Councilmember Prafke** pointed out the City did not have a parks and recreation department, adding same could not be established and staffed unless the public was in favor of a tax increase to do so.

**Mayor Keesling** opined it might be necessary to seek planning expertise to determine the appropriate type of construction for the site without negatively impacting the neighborhood.

City Manager Kunik advised sales tax funds were available to hire someone to develop a conceptual plan.

Consensus was to do so.

City Manager Kunik concluded staff would develop a scope of services.

**Councilmember Cummings** recommended the consultant be required to have experience in urban park planning, offering to assist in the selection process.