

EXCERPT EXCERPT EXCERPT

CITY OF PUNTA GORDA, FLORIDA
REGULAR CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES
WEDNESDAY, MAY 16, 2018, 9:00 A.M.

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

CITY EMPLOYEES PRESENT: Kristin Simeone, 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

Citizen Comments - Regular Agenda Items Only

Ms. Connie Cantor stated City Council had previously made a commitment to the Boy Scouts by allowing the Louis Culver Scout House to be constructed at the west end of Gilchrist Park, requesting that commitment be honored by ensuring any development of the area include a fully operational and dedicated scouting facility. She requested the Boy Scouts be given an opportunity to provide input, noting they had several ideas for funding.

Ms. Sheila Yaeger objected to losing four mature trees in exchange for a single parking space in Gilchrist Park.

Ms. Sheri Lenore, Smart Growth Punta Gorda (SGPG), explained SGPG was a citizens group whose mission was to assist the City in retaining Punta Gorda's small, hometown Florida feel while promoting smart growth and economic stability via citizen participation in a comprehensive planning process. She stressed citizens should be allowed to voice their opinion regarding the scope and consulting firm selection criteria for the update to the Citizens Master Plan.

Ms. Lisa Wager suggested several criteria for selection of a consulting firm.

Mr. John Burn, Punta Gorda Boat Club (PGBC), spoke regarding the Gilchrist Park Waterfront Activity Center (WAC) request for proposal, stating the PGBC looked forward to being involved in the process and had been discussing how to make the future use of Gilchrist Park most beneficial for the community. He stated the design should focus on affordability both from an initial cost perspective and ongoing operating expenses.

Mayor Keesling noted the WAC discussion had been removed from the agenda and would be rescheduled for a future meeting.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Note: The Master Plan was heard following Harborwalk at Gilchrist Park.

Master Plan – Draft Request for Proposal

Ms. Joan LeBeau, Urban Design Manager, drew Council's attention to the draft scope of services prepared for City Council's input.

Councilmember Cummings stated Council should be acting upon the advice of licensed professionals and not upon perceived popular opinion. He opined the City could build upon the 2005 Citizens Master Plan, adding Aqua's branding study essentially constituted a 2017 update to the community's vision. He expressed a desire to hold a workshop with business owners to obtain a picture of the current business environment. He explained staff could then design a technical study, providing a detailed explanation of what same might consist of. He spoke in favor of performing a comparison of the conclusions of the Citizens Master Plan, the branding study and business owner workshop with the current Land Development Regulations (LDRs) followed by a series of renderings of cityscapes based on those conclusions along with staff recommendations to be accompanied by draft LDRs. He stated a public outreach campaign could be conducted at the same time, followed by facilitation of a number of all-inclusive public education and review sessions. He stressed City Council was building the City's architectural and economic foundations for the next 50 years, adding like any other great American city, Punta Gorda needed to hire the best licensed professionals to provide residents with the best solutions rather than leaving it to guesswork. He stated the focus should be on effectiveness rather than appeasement, reiterating residents empowered with education on zoning laws and best practices would be able to provide the best comments so that the LDR framework can be accommodated to meet the best long term needs of the City. He concluded it would then be possible to rebuild the downtown with the appropriate architecture for accentuating its historic identity while providing an optimum environment for business to thrive.

Councilmember Cummings **MOVED** to take no further action regarding the Citizens Master Plan until an assessment was conducted of the effectiveness of the 2005 Plan and a Council workshop was held with the business community. He stated an economic study was needed on what businesses would work in Punta Gorda in addition to renderings of cityscapes, cultivation of expanded public constituencies and civic education seminars on Florida zoning laws and best practices in urban design.

MOTION DIED FOR LACK OF A SECOND.

Mayor Keesling stated she was open to holding a workshop with the business community; however, she questioned whether business owners would speak freely.

Councilmember Prafke stated business owners had no need for a special workshop as they felt they were being heard, adding the effectiveness of the original Citizens Master Plan was already known. She stressed the City retained only licensed professionals with excellent credentials, adding there was an economic development group which worked through the Chamber who could assist the City. She opined Aqua's work was simply not the same as that of the Citizens Master Plan, voicing concern regarding not moving forward.

Mayor Keesling stated while staff had done a cursory review of the 2005 Plan's results, the effectiveness of same was uncertain.

Councilmember Wein stated the Master Plan was a living plan which should have been evaluated. He stated if the City issued an RFP, it should include 3D renderings based on certain architectural criteria, proffering the idea of a perpetual proposal which allowed addendums to be made. He agreed additional outreach was necessary.

Ms. Pace advised the entire process of retaining professional services was strictly guided by State Statute.

Discussion ensued regarding the procurement process.

Mayor Keesling opined the draft RFP should be more closed ended.

Councilmember Matthews stated hiring an outside consultant was critical, adding it was imperative to involve all residents, both full- and part-time, in the planning process. She explained an outside consultant would bring fresh ideas and comparative information.

Councilmember Prafke commented one major goal missing from the proposed RFP was to preserve the historic character of the community. She suggested the RFP could be more focused more toward an architectural vision.

Councilmembers expressed agreement with same.

Councilmember Wein discouraged members from discussing too much minutia at this point, adding it was agreed the goal was to preserve the historic character in a more modern tone. He stated a professional consultant was needed to assist with developing an appropriate plan and then to maintain and help the plan evolve.

Councilmember Cummings reiterated his desire for Council to hold a workshop with the business community in order to determine the effect of the 2005 LDRs on same.

City Attorney Levin reminded Council the agenda item was a "Draft RFP", stating perhaps Punta Gorda could model its RFP after that of a similar municipality which had been successful in their process.

City Manager Kunik stated the City of Fort Myers was one such community, adding their downtown core was a walkable community with residences as well as a vibrant commercial sector.

Mayor Keesling noted Fort Myers' downtown was comprised of existing historic structures needing gentrification while Punta Gorda's issues were more related to empty lots.

Councilmember Prafke opined the RFP submitted by staff should be refined and simplified based on comments made this date, the result being a more streamlined version.

Mayor Keesling recommended including draft changes to the LDRs to act as a framework.

Councilmember Matthews stated the 2005 Citizens Master Plan should be specifically referenced in the RFP as should the ideas expressed earlier by SGPG.

Councilmember Cummings **MOVED** to hold a workshop with business people, **SECONDED** by Councilmember Wein.

VOTING AYE: Cummings, Wein, Keesling.

VOTING NAY: Matthews, Prafke.

MOTION CARRIED.

City Manager Kunik summarized staff would provide a scaled down RFP and would research other communities for sample scopes.

Councilmember Matthews suggested developing a list of criteria, confirming City Council would interview and select the consultant. She recommended including the WAC RFP in the Citizens Master Plan funding.

Councilmember Cummings and **Mayor Keesling** disagreed.

Councilmember Wein countered the vision for the City should be considered holistically.

Councilmember Matthews asserted groups such as the Punta Gorda Boat Club and all those who met at the Bayfront Center should also be included so as to make this a community project.

Councilmember Wein clarified the consultant retained for the Citizens Master Plan should be made aware of the WAC and should incorporate existing projects into the plan.

City Manager Kunik concluded a scope and draft RFP for the WAC would be presented to Council at a future meeting.