

**CITY OF PUNTA GORDA, FLORIDA  
CITY COUNCIL WORKSHOP MINUTES  
WEDNESDAY, JUNE 27, 2018, 6:00 P.M.**

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

**COUNCILMEMBERS EXCUSED:** Wein

**CITY EMPLOYEES PRESENT:** Joan LeBeau, David Hilston, Mitchell Austin, Julie Ryan, Urban Design; City Manager Kunik; Deputy City Clerk Kelly

**Mayor Keesling** called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m., followed by the Pledge of Allegiance. She welcomed all in attendance, stating Councilmembers intended to gain input in an effort to attract new and support existing businesses. She explained Council was in the process of updating the Citizens Master Plan with an aim toward retaining Punta Gorda's hometown hospitality while encouraging smart growth.

Ms. Patti Allen, Fishermen's Village General Manager, announced 41 businesses were currently operating at Fishermen's Village, stating same was an excellent example of the City and developers working together. She pointed out the community initially had much opposition to the development of Fishermen's Village; however, a great working relationship with the City had grown. She encouraged all business owners to attend City Council meetings and to support the Punta Gorda Chamber of Commerce (PGCC) and Charlotte County Chamber of Commerce (CCCC).

Mr. Richard Liebel stated he was a resident of Englewood, displaying a model of a universal urinal. He explained the urinal would save water in that each flush used only 15 ounces of water, thus saving approximately 1,000 gallons per month on average. He described the urinal's specifications, noting same had been patented in 2014.

Mr. Kevin Doyle announced he was the owner of the Celtic Ray bar and restaurant located on Marion Avenue. He contended the east side of Punta Gorda was neglected in comparison to the west side, citing examples of fewer repairs and less holiday decorations. He urged the City to become more business friendly, asserting building permits were costly.

Mr. Lindsay Harrington stated City Council was faced with tough choices, adding leadership was necessary for positive growth. He agreed the City was friendlier than Charlotte County in terms of development, asserting growth and higher taxes were necessary to survive. He urged continued annexation, encouragement of working families to relocate to the City and expansion of rail and air facilities. He opined the

City's new logo was unattractive, and the placement of same throughout the City was a waste of money.

Mr. Ron Thomas stated he and his wife owned and operated an ice cream shop in Laishley Park, adding they both were quite happy overall. He mentioned a number of people were overheard inquiring about Punta Gorda's history, suggesting information could be provided via markers along the Harborwalk. He urged consideration be given to reconfiguring Marion and Olympia Avenues to two-way streets.

Mr. John Gardner commented positively on the small town atmosphere in Punta Gorda, speaking in favor of establishment of a strong retail area within City limits. He voiced a desire to not be forced to travel to Port Charlotte to shop; however, some residents objected to any and all development. He opined additional commercial operations would not bring tax relief.

Mr. Michael Colgan stated he and others operated a non-profit agency to feed the hungry, adding he helped organize the "Pub Crawl" event, thanking the City and PGCC for their assistance.

Mr. Jim Stone commented favorably on Mr. Thomas' earlier suggestion to educate people on the City's history via the Harborwalk. He voiced concern with excessive density and resulting congestion.

Ms. Kim Mostellar spoke in favor of smart growth but voiced her preference for a small town/old Florida feel. She stated it would be a shame to see 84 foot tall buildings, opining the new Springhill Suites had a box-like appearance.

Mr. Michael Hirsch asserted the City's goal of 75% residential/25% commercial would only save residential property owners approximately \$25 annually. He argued businesses must provide real jobs with real benefits.

Ms. Kim Devine expressed support of Mr. Thomas' signage idea along the Harborwalk. She opined increased building height would create a diverse landscape. She pointed out she owned commercial property which had been under contract four times over the past year; however, each sale fell through due to the restrictive nature of Punta Gorda's regulations.

Ms. Debbie Bales spoke in favor of the manner in which the City was moving, noting she had operated a business in the City for 44 years. She voiced support of retail in the downtown.

Mr. Roy Ziegler stated he would not like to see Punta Gorda become similar to Miami, pointing out the City was a quiet, safe, healthy community.

Mr. Kurt Brown, Scotty's Brewhouse General Manager, advised retail was needed desperately as was affordable housing for employees of the service industry which made up the majority of employment in the area.

Mr. Steve Lineberry commented favorably on the many events which took place in Punta Gorda, particularly those which benefited non-profit agencies.

Ms. Nancy Johnson, TEAM Punta Gorda (TPG) Chief Executive Officer, outlined the origins of TPG, urging the recapture of Punta Gorda's spirit.

Ms. Kimmy Correll stated she was born in Miami, opining Punta Gorda was a bedroom community. She further stated affordable housing was needed.

Mr. T. J. Thornberry maintained the discussion of additional building height must continue. He opined millennials represented the future of the City.

Mr. Tony Smith spoke in favor of height restrictions but clarified he was open to growth.

Mr. Jim Getz stated he had lived in the City since 2002, adding Punta Gorda was a walkable community. He then spoke at length regarding the Service Corps of Retired Executives.

Ms. Julie Mathis and Mr. John Wright, CCCC and PGCC Executive Directors, announced their organizations were united, working together to benefit the community. They urged the community's involvement as volunteers were needed.

Ms. Brenda Smith voiced opposition to the proposed Sunseeker Resort development in nearby Port Charlotte.

Mr. Bob Helper asserted the City must listen to not only the business community but residents as well.

Mr. Bob Burns expressed an objection to this workshop being geared to business owners only, adding he hoped progress would be made through smart growth.

Ms. Cathy Robinson noted the City must attract development and affordable housing, asserting both would cause Punta Gorda to flourish. She voiced appreciation to Council for their efforts.

Ms. Julie McGillivray commented on the possible annexation of property near Tuckers Grade, stating the owner of same also owned the vacant City Marketplace property.

Mr. Chris Evans expressed appreciation for the support of local businesses by Punta Gorda's retirees. He reminded everyone of the concept of a free market, noting City Council's job was not to ensure residents' employment. He cautioned Councilmembers to not be hijacked by negative comments.

Ms. Cherie George, Gettel Automotive, spoke positively regarding increased growth.

Ms. Jessica McGregor, Higher Power Outfitters, stated Punta Gorda was not just a retirement community, reiterating the need for affordable housing. She expressed hope the City would help businesses thrive, adding employees of those businesses would in turn provide the services on which retirees depended.

Ms. Charlene Duggan, realtor, commented favorably on Punta Gorda's small town feel. City Manager Howard Kunik summarized participants' comments as follows: City/private partnerships; need input from businesses; City must reach out; more attention needed to east side businesses; tough decisions ahead; maintain the Urban Design Division's Design Studio; annexation; partnership with local airport; educate the public on Punta Gorda's "story"; two-way traffic on Marion and Olympia Avenues; residents need to hear input from businesses; emphasis on events, particularly those which supported non-profit agencies; historical markers; keep small town feel; varying opinions on building height; employment needed; wayfinding signage; affordable housing; continue building height discussion; small businesses struggle; impact of Sunseeker Resort; wonderful town.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:49 p.m.

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Mayor

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City Clerk