

**CITY OF PALMETTO
CITY COMMISSION WORKSHOP MEETING
APRIL 16, 2012
4:30 PM**

Commission Members Present

Shirley Groover Bryant, Mayor
Brian Williams, Vice Mayor, Commissioner, Ward 3
Tamara Cornwell, Commissioner-at-Large 1
Charles Smith, Commissioner, Ward 1
Tambra Varnadore, Commissioner, Ward 2
Alan Zirkelbach, Commissioner-at-Large 2 (departed the meeting at 5:30 p.m.)

Staff Present

Mark Barnebey, City Attorney
Jim Freeman, City Clerk
Rick Wells, Chief of Police
Allen Tusing, Public Works Director
Deanna Roberts, Administrative Assistant

Mayor Bryant called the April 16, 2012 Workshop meeting to order at 4:32 p.m.

1. REPRESENTATIVE JIM BOYD: LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Representative Boyd introduced his legislative aide Kathy Gallea telling Commission she has been in the district office for fourteen years and has the knowledge and experience to help the City with any needs.

The two big issues for this legislative session were redistricting and the budget. District 68, which includes Palmetto, will become District 71. In order to meet population requirements, the boundaries were moved south to include the northwestern part of Sarasota County to Ringling Causeway. It will include the Sarasota side of Longboat Key, Bird Key and parts of downtown Sarasota by Selby, as well as a portion of Siesta Key. The addition will comprise 11% of the district. It is still essentially a Manatee County district.

This year, the legislature faced a \$2 billion shortfall, and tough decisions had to be made. The University of South Florida picked up about \$2 million and MTI about \$100,000. Another \$1 billion overall was added to the budget for education. He remarked that this should be a key priority for us as a state.

Rep. Boyd stated he worked on automobile insurance or PIP reform again this year, and this year progress was made. This is a \$1 billion fraud problem in Florida, with Hillsborough County being the hardest hit. This increases automobile insurance rates for constituents. The reform rolled back the mandated coverage for PIP. You can still go to the hospital for true emergency care up to \$10,000, or with smaller injuries, you can go to your own doctor or a chiropractor with a \$2,500 cap. This should cut premiums by 10% this coming year and overall by 25% in 2014 in the PIP area. Insurance companies that do not pass on the savings to the consumer must give a rate justification.

He said that he was pleased the legislature passed the Violent Felons Bill. Violent felons caught with a firearm will receive a 10-year minimum mandatory sentence; no questions asked. This was a collaborative effort with the Attorney General, the Police Chiefs' Association, the Sheriffs' Association and prosecutors.

Mayor Bryant asked if PIP reform will be made tighter. Mr. Boyd commented that special interest groups are opposing reform, but it is good public policy that will save money. The past two years premiums were up 66%, and if nothing had been done they would have gone up 30% this year. It will take time to see if

the reforms truly make a difference. He said there was a strong sentiment for getting rid of PIP altogether, and it remains a possibility if the fraud and cost cannot be solved.

Mayor Bryant asked about internet cafes. He said that will come back to the legislature next year. From a criminal activity aspect, it is a problem for communities.

2. DISTINGUISHED BUDGET PRESENTATION AWARD

Mr. Freeman recognized Finance Director Karen Simpson and her staff for receiving the Distinguished Budget Presentation Award for the third year in a row. She accepted the award on behalf of the entire Finance staff.

Mrs. Simpson informed Commission that she hopes to get the CIP to them by August for approval in September, and she asked them to send their goals and objectives for the 2013 budget to her.

3. DISCUSSION: PROPOSED ORDINANCE FOR PORTABLE, TEMPORARY AND POLITICAL SIGNS

This item will be carried forward to the 7:00 p.m. agenda for First Read.

Mr. Barnebey informed Commission that this was a revision to a small part of the sign code addressing portable, temporary and political signs. He had asked Commission at the last workshop to send comments, and he has not received any. It is ready to go to first reading.

A lengthy discussion ensued.

Commissioners expressed concern over the impact the ordinance would have on businesses during these hard economic times.

Mr. Barnebey said there are some signs now in violation of the code, and the City has not been enforcing them.

Commissioner Zirkelbach stated this tries to bring some conformity in the sign code. He encouraged Commission to find common ground so that everyone can buy into it. Commissioner Varnadore said she would like to see a change in the definition of a temporary sign, as the current definition is too broad. She opined that every business in the City would be impacted if this passes as is.

Commissioner Zirkelbach asked to meet with Mr. Barnebey prior to the next workshop to discuss language he has from other municipalities that could be added to the draft. Mayor Bryant said she had no problem with that and would like to sit in on the meeting.

Mr. Barnebey explained that since the signs are temporary they must have time frames. Without them, they become permanent signs.

Following comments from Commissioner Cornwell, Mr. Barnebey said that if there is no objection he will add a provision that allows for temporary commercial signs for sponsors of schools on exterior fencing at the schools.

Commissioner Varnadore said she does not support moving the ordinance forward for advertising. Based on tonight's comments, it could be reworked and Commissioner Zirkelbach may have some helpful language to add.

Mayor Bryant asked Commissioners to let her know what types of signs they find objectionable as they drive through the city. She will meet with Mr. Barnebey and Commissioner Zirkelbach. She would like to take a look at the International Sign Code as well. Commissioner Varnadore asked for a copy.

Mr. Barnebey reported the rest of the sign code has been worked by staff and sent to his office. It will go to the Planning and Zoning Board next for review, but political signs will have to be addressed now. He said this could go to first reading next meeting. He commented that it would not take effect right away. There would be a grace period so that businesses could get prepared for it.

There was consensus not to move it forward to the 7:00 p.m. meeting tonight. It will be brought back at the next meeting.

County Commissioner Whitmore was present at the meeting. Mrs. Varnadore asked if the ball field meeting had been rescheduled.

Mayor Bryant said the meeting has not been rescheduled, but she has had communication with the County and they are waiting on the conceptual plan. Mrs. Varnadore expressed concern that the fields would not be ready for spring baseball next year.

Commissioner Whitmore thanked Commission for the last work session. The question came up at that meeting whether the County had ever taken a formal vote on 7th Street. She found no record, so she made a motion that the County support the extension of 7th and the motion was approved 4-3. So, the County has made a policy statement and the City can move forward.

Meeting adjourned at 6:06 p.m.

Minutes approved: May 7, 2012

James R. Freeman

James R. Freeman, City Clerk