

CITY COMMISSION WORKSHOP MEETING

March 1, 2021

4:30 pm

This Commission Meeting was conducted utilizing Communications Media Technology. Staff members were present in the Commission Chambers while others were present via the Zoom application to respect the social distancing guidelines.

ELECTED OFFICIALS PRESENT IN CHAMBERS:

Shirley Groover Bryant, Mayor
Brian Williams, Vice Mayor, Commissioner, Ward 3
Sheldon Jones, Commissioner-at-Large 1
Harold Smith, Commissioner, Ward 1
Tambra Varnadore, Commissioner, Ward 2
Tamara Cornwell, Commissioner-at-Large 2

STAFF PRESENT IN CHAMBERS:

Mark Barnebey, City Attorney (Entered the Meeting at 4:33 p.m.)
Mohammed Rayan, Public Works Director
Scott Tyler, Chief of Police
Jim Freeman, City Clerk
Jeff Burton, CRA Director
Penny Johnston, Executive Administrative Assistant
Vanessa Cochran, Assistant City Clerk

STAFF PRESENT ELECTRONICALLY:

Todd Williams, Information Technology (IT) Consultant

Mayor Bryant called the meeting to order at 4:31 p.m.

1. ORDINANCE 2020-11 PARK RESTROOM HOURS (S.Tyler)

The discussion is a continuation of the proposed Park Hours for Riverside Park that was presented to the Board in December 2020.

Chief Tyler stated that the proposed Park Hours for Riverside Park is closure at 10:00 p.m. and reopen a 1/2 hour before sunrise. He added that the item is being presented again because the Board did not vote on it.

Commissioner Jones acknowledged that he thought that it was decided that Riverside Park's restrooms would not close at 10:00 p.m.

Commissioner Williams reported that he visited the site, and traffic was not busy to warrant the restrooms not closing at 10:00 p.m.

Commissioner Smith commented that traffic was busy when he visited the site and asserted that the Riverside Park's restrooms should not close at 10:00 p.m. Then, he inquired about the cleaning of the restrooms, and Mr. Rayan responded that it is a budget matter, which is causing overtime. Commissioner Smith suggested to have the cleaning schedule rearranged for the Riverside Park restrooms.

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Commissioner Jones expressed that Covid-19 is still present and agreed with Commissioner Smith that the cleaning schedule at Riverside Park should be adjusted.

Mayor Bryant stated that a decision needs to be made and suggested that the Commissioners consider their staff as well when making their decision. And, she reminded the Board that the Riverside Park restrooms are open 24 hours, and there is a budget issue.

2. CONNOR PARK (J. Burton)

Mr. Burton, CRA Director, stated that this is a continuation of the discussion that was presented at the February 22, 2021 Workshop Meeting. Mayor Bryant communicated that letters were received from the community expressing support for the Connor Park Project and addressed the article about Connor Park that was listed on the front page of the North River News dated September 12 – 18, 2019. The article is a part of the minutes.

Mr. Gause, Gause and Associates, Inc., discussed concerns that the Board provided during the last meeting held February 22, 2021 for the Connor Park Project. Also, Bob Wronski, Applied Science, Joe Marsh, Hazardous Impact Soil Consultant, and John Moore, Moore 2 Design, telephoned into the Zoom Meeting to assist in the discussion. Mr. Gause briefed the Board on the below cited concerns.

- He expressed that if elements are changed or added to the project, the review process starts again. Per Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP), it is encouraged not to delay too long because the project is currently behind schedule.
- Mr. Gause visited the site to confirm the wet line location. He reported that at the railroad side of the property there is a steep slope, where black mangroves are present, he found an old survey tape that is used to verify wet line locations. And, Mr. Gause agreed where the survey tape marked the wet line location. He asserted that it is not a good idea to put a boardwalk near black mangroves, or in an area hidden that may cause unsafe dilemmas.

Commissioner Cornwell communicated concerns that the path and the boardwalk does not connect. She stated that the path is flat with no elevation and no distance markers. Mr. Gause responded that adding markers to designate the distance, and the looping are good points to consider. Also, the boardwalk is elevated to 14 feet.

Commissioner Smith asked if the 5 foot return sidewalk would delay the project, and Mr. Gause replied no.

Commissioner Williams opined that construction would not begin for 6 to 8 months, and the people should have the opportunity to present their ideas regarding the project. He disagreed about the wet line location, and that the black mangroves prevents the location for the boardwalk. Mr. Gause responded that the pavilion is there because of the American Disability Act (ADA) regulations that do not allow elevation without a ramp. To move the boardwalk to the west edge of the mangroves, a modification permit will have to be submitted to Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD).

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John Moore, Moore 2 Design, informed the Board that he has not seen Commissioner Williams' drawings and will review it and get back to the Board. Also, all the restraints were addressed regarding the walkway.

Mayor Bryant questioned the cost if the phases are split. Mr. Gause answered that he recommends that Stellar Development do the project and include the change to the Boardwalk. Also, the project's cost will be reevaluated, and SWFWMD contacted. Most importantly, this will be a modification, so he does not know if it will affect the SWFWMD grant or not.

Commissioner Smith agreed with Commissioners Cornwell and Williams. Also, he asked if there were changes to the project would it cause a delay and requested to see Commissioner Williams' drawing. Then, Commissioner Williams inquired about the timeframe to start the project. Mr. Gause answered that it could take 1 to 2 months depending on negotiations with the developer, the architect, and SWFWMD.

Mayor Bryant suggested to have a Zoom Meeting for the people to ask questions or give recommendations concerning the Connor Park Project because it is very important not to lose the funding if there is a delay.

Mr. Burton, CRA Director, informed the Board that a 12 foot width is the boardwalk's requirement for the grant. He pointed out that Connor Park is not a singular project because it will be linked to the MLK Park, the downtown, the bridges, Lincoln Trail, the tunnel, and the pool. Also, Mr. Burton addressed the trail's distance and touched upon the details of the project in the CRA Plan.

Commissioner Jones asked if there was availability to walk from the east side of the Green Bridge to Connor Park, and Mr. Burton replied yes. Then, Commissioner Jones asserted that the project needs to move forward before we lose the funding.

Attorney Barnebey reminded the Board that the contract has to be reviewed first by the City Attorney then signed by the Mayor. Commissioner Williams asked if the SWFWMD funding would be lost if items were added or changed to the project. Mr. Gause responded that he will check with SWFWMD and bring their answer back to the Board at an April meeting.

Mayor Bryant adjourned the meeting at 6:02 pm

MINUTES APPROVED: APRIL 5, 2021

JAMES R. FREEMAN

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CITY CLERK