



City Commission Workshop Minutes January 26, 2015

Mayor Gib Coerper
Vice Mayor Gary Hardacre
Commissioner Ben Boukari, Jr.
Commissioner Robert Wilford
Commissioner Shirley Green Brown

City Manager Traci Cain
City Attorney Marian Rush

The City Commission will conduct a
City Commission Workshop
At 5:00 PM
to address the item(s) below.

Meeting Date: January 26, 2015

Meeting Location: James A. Lewis Commission Chambers, City Hall

I.

WORKSHOP MEETING

Notice given pursuant to Section 286.0105, Florida Statutes. In order to appeal any decision made at this meeting, you will need a verbatim record of the proceedings. It will be your responsibility to ensure such a record is made.

II. CALL TO ORDER

Called to order by Mayor Gib Coerper.

III. AGENDA ITEM

A. Project Legacy Discussion

Assistant City Manager Adam Boukari introduced the item and presented the staff report.

He said the City did not construct the three-field complex on the Project Legacy site to meet the January first deadline as agreed in the interlocal with the County Commissioners for \$500,000 of Tourist Development Tax. He said the City did go to the County with a plan that did include construction plans to request an extension but by a 3-2 vote the County Commission declined to approve the extension.

He said the City could shortly expect to hear from the County on the plan to repay the \$500,000. He said the plan defined a six-year term with annual installments beginning December 2016 as part of FY2017.

He explained that with the County's decision not to extend the agreement the City is no longer bound by any of the previously agreed conditions for the development of the Project Legacy site. He said development of the site is at the discretion of the City.

He said City Manager Traci Cain requested the workshop meeting and staff presence is to answer any questions the Commission should have as it begins developing direction for moving forward.

Mayor Coerper asked for comments or questions from the commissioners.

Commissioner Ben Boukari, Jr., expressed his thanks to County Commissioners Lee Pinkoson and Charles Chestnut for trying to see the extension approved and for their support of recreation in Alachua County.

Commission Robert Wilford asked if it was the City's plan to go ahead with the plans in the agreement with the county or to come up with something new.

Assistant City Manager Boukari said that the workshop was more in the line of a policy development workshop. He directed the commissioners to one of the attachments provided as a framework for current recreational use so the Commission could determine if they would like to go ahead with developing the site as planned or develop something different.

He said that a needs assessment indicates to staff that the two largest needs for local residents are for open-fields for multiple use fields and a large indoor facility/gymnasium. He said there are also needs for attracting tournaments and providing the facilities for that usage.

Commissioner Wilford inquired if the plan still called for fundraising such as grants and naming-rights to continue the development of the project.

Assistant City Manager Boukari said that would be decided out of this workshop with staff doing as the Commission directed. He said that primary grant funding for recreation has been the Florida Recreation Development Assistance Program and it has recently been experiencing restored funding. He said staff has been reticent to put time into further work without direction from the Commission once the County made its decision.

Mayor Coerper said he wanted to keep the funding public. He said that other facilities in other areas have been built with organizational money but he did not think it was as open to the public as what is in Alachua. He said he has received multiple inquiries about the plans for lacrosse fields including colleges that would like to come down for tournament play. He said he still likes the idea of following the original plan for the fields because of this interest. He said he does understand the allure of more multipurpose fields for local teams but he does not think that more baseball quadplex fields are the way to go.

He said for him the important thing is for a good plan that thinks of the future. He says it could be that a future use could be determined with the initial goal being to apply the City efforts to the infrastructure that one day would be needed. He said he thought the naming-rights opportunity should still be pursued as the economy continues to improve. He asked if there was any particular interest being shown by anyone and indicated particularly the mentioned new indoor facility.

Assistant City Manager Boukari said that there was interest by all sports. He said that using football as an example, even if there is only one game per week played on the field the team still needs the field other days during the week for practice. He said this need for practice fields is something that is present in all the local sports.

He said that the current gym is the only indoor facility the City has. He said the need staff identified was a facility that could be used for basketball but also other activities and use by groups that are not sports. He pointed out that within the region there are such dual-purpose indoor facilities.

Mayor Coerper said that he likes the gym now that it has been improved. He asked if any thoughts had been given to the current maintenance facility and developing it outside as well because it is such a central location. He said he would like to see the City remain aggressive in pursuit of naming rights and fundraising.

Commissioner Wilford said in the development of any indoor facility he would like to see incorporated within that a use for arts for the kids. He said he thought if a new facility was built it could be cost effective to build in from the ground floor a place for plays and concerts and things. He pondered use by the Scouts or any of the other programs and groups already existing in the City.

He said he thinks adding onto an existing facility might be the more cost effective way to go but he does think there is a need for a new indoor facility. He said if building a new indoor facility from the ground floor is the way to go it does not need to be just something for volleyball and basketball but something that meets multiple needs. He said he would not support a swimming pool.

Commissioner Shirley Green Brown inquired if the high schools have lacrosse teams. Assistant City Manager Boukari said that Santa Fe High School does not but there are approximately four or five teams in Gainesville. He said he does not know the season for the sport but there are many year-round seasons for sports. Mayor Coerper said that with the fields available they would be used by various teams year-round.

Commissioner Brown said she would support any kind of arts and music program as well as a tutoring center but asked if there had been any thought given to a skating complex such as used to be at the recreation center.

Assistant City Manager Boukari said he remembered using the skating facility as a youth but has not heard any discussion of that in the present situation. He said that four years ago in the initial design conception conversation a multi-use indoor facility was extensively discussed for the property.

Mayor Coerper said there had also been interest from cross-country running and biking organizations. He said these groups go out to Progress Park for such activities. He suggested that the City should at least get on an interest-list from Progress Park to know what is going on out there and pointed out that the property would support those same kind of activities.

Commissioner Brown said she would like to see some kind of nature trail included in the finished design of the property.

Commissioner Boukari said in many conversations he has had since his first election he has heard repeatedly the need for an indoor facility that could serve for recreation beyond sports. He said he thinks if a rendering could be contracted that illustrated the vision of a structure the fundraising to sell it would be much easier. He pointed out with the centerpiece structure the land remaining could be developed in some of the other ways discussed. He said that the original plan came from the conditions arising out of using the money that now must be returned so the City is no longer bound to that original plan.

Commissioner Wilford said he has met the same resistance to past projects with people responding that they have no interest because they do not play sports. He said he thinks the relationships out at Progress Park should be developed by the Commission as a group to include them in the funding/fundraising for the development.

Vice Mayor Gary Hardacre said he thought smaller things should be done to develop the property so locals can be using it. He suggested running and biking trails and perhaps lights so it could be safely used at night.

He said he would rather see the money previously set aside for the design of the lacrosse fields returned to the general fund to provide the assurance of that first payment that is due in 2016/2017. He said he thinks it is too early to be coming up with another big plan and spending the money for developing it before that first payment has been made.

He would like to see part of the design money set aside to cover that first payment then the rest to develop some of the smaller scale ideas put forward. He said it's important to utilize the facilities now and have that first payment put away.

Assistant City Manager Boukari confirmed the payments would be six equal installments at approximately \$83,000 with the first payment due FY 2016/2017. He confirmed the amount budgeted for FY2015 for design of the lacrosse complex was \$150,000 and none of this has been used. He said it would be returned to the General Fund without restrictions unless the Commission pledged some or all of it to other use.

Commissioner Boukari said the property is already being utilized for 5Ks, cross-country runs, soccer practice, with the City keeping it mowed. He said this is a large property, it is the epicenter for recreation in Alachua, and it is a large project. He said that the City's financial situation is not such that it has to put off moving ahead with planning how to develop this property to protect the pot.

Mayor Coerper said the City is no longer constrained in how or when the property must be developed. He said there is no reason why it has to all be developed at once but he said it is time to figure out the needs and which of those uses the land or the City can support. He pointed out the need for parking at some of the signature events.

He said just the idea of a multi-purpose building was a good example. He said if they decided to do that then the next decision would be if it had to be concrete or some other material. He said the future elected officials may be the ones to finish the work, but he felt it was the present Commission's responsibility to determine how best to develop the project for the future and at least get in that infrastructure.

Commissioner Wilford said he agreed with a multi-stage development as a possibility and he understood the need to save money and Vice Mayor Hardacre's concerns. He said that staff needed the concept of where the City wanted to go so they could begin the planning that would allow the most effective phasing-in and give the citizens as well as future Commissions something to look at and work from as the project moved forward. He said he thought the need for a multi-purpose facility was critical.

Commissioner Brown said she thought it was essential that input on the project's development come from the citizens whether from surveys or using utility bills or community forums. She also used the example of a multi-purpose building saying input from the youth and other citizens should be used to determine what uses/functions would be made of that building as well as the property over the next 5 to 10 years.

Commissioner Wilford said he attended the Youth Advisory Council and it already had something of

this sort already in the works with a man-in-the-streets campaign and surveys and such. He also recalled the City had used a similar strategy in the past on another project list. Commissioner Boukari recalled it was a visioning charette at Santa Fe College at the Perry Center that was well attended. Commissioners Wilford and Brown agreed this was an idea/strategy that should be resurrected and updated for developing the plans for the property.

Commissioner Hardacre asked for a reminder of how much was determined that would be needed to complete the project as it was originally designed before the tourism tax money was taken off the table and what was the plan for coming up with the funds to build those three multipurpose fields.

Assistant City Manager Boukari stated the amount was between \$1.8-2 million dollars to develop the lacrosse complex. He said the Commission's direction was to take the \$150,000 to have the design work completed to take to the County to ask for an extension on the construction. He said staff's understanding was that the Commission pledged to complete funding for the project whether by the means discussed already or general funds or taking out a loan.

Vice Mayor Hardacre asked if the Commission wanted to push ahead with the development was the City in the position to move ahead and develop these three multipurpose fields within that budget as originally decided?

Mayor Coerper pointed out that developing the lacrosse complex was mandated by the bed tax and County for the use of its money.

Assistant City Manager said it was staff's directive to follow the instructions of the Commission. He said the question staff asks when receiving this direction is to determine where the funding will come from. He said in this case it was staff's understanding that the funding would come from some kind of future note.

He said the particulars would have been, and would be, worked out with the Finance Department to determine the best way to proceed but that if the question was did staff think this \$2 million could be budgeted to complete the project, the answer was yes. He said the Finance Department is already looking at some strategies for leveraging, naming rights, notes, and other instruments.

Vice Mayor Hardacre said as the project is already set up for the three fields and it has already been approved by the Commission why not just move ahead with it?

Mayor Coerper said that the refusal of the extension by the County provided a chance to at least have the conversation about the vision the City might have for the property instead of something others mandated if the City wanted to use its money.

Assistant City Manager Boukari suggested using part of the design money to create a more complete conceptual rendering of what is possible at the property to begin the planning. He said that it could be that it could work out as a multipurpose building and a multipurpose field since that seems to be something the Commission all agrees is needed or that it could end up being the original mandated plan is the way to proceed. He said determining what would and would not work, creating the beginning of the plan and developing the vision would require a use of some of the funds allocated to the project.

City Manager Traci Cain said that this was the way she would like to proceed. She said staff now has a good indication of how the commissioners think and their concerns as well as desires for the development of the property. She would like staff to have more input, possibly using the input from the Senior Resources Advisory Board and the Youth Advisory Council, and the opportunity to gather more information before scheduling the next workshop but she believes staff has a good indication of the direction the Commission wants the City to follow.

Mayor Coerper said there were already a lot of good ideas on paper and he wanted to see staff work from what it already has where possible without spending a lot of that money. He said he wanted them to also explore the possibility of using existing structures and facilities in this process. He said to consider the little things that could be changed and tweaked to work in concert with a total recreational plan that would go along with or improve the long-term or overall productivity of the Legacy property.

Assistant City Manager Boukari said this would require the use of the money that has already been approved for the design part of Project Legacy and would require the engagement of the City's architectural and engineering partners. He said that beyond the conceptualization the planning would also have to take into account the topography and what was possible on the property within the ideas discussed by the commissioners.

Commissioner Boukari said he wanted to see Commissioner Wilford's idea to reach out to the tech partners out at Progress Park and other sectors of the community to get their input. He believes more of this engagement will only make the project end up better. Mayor Coerper said he wanted the Chamber included as well.

Commissioner Wilford asked if the name should stay Project Legacy. Assistant City Manager Boukari confirmed it was the acquisition of the property that was Project Legacy and that was completed. Mayor Coerper said that once there was a Phase I perhaps that was a question that could be addressed but he also wanted to see the advisory boards involvement and input.

Assistant City Manager Boukari asked for consensus that the Commission wanted staff to move ahead as outlined by the City Manager and himself. The commissioners confirmed this was an accurate understanding.

IV. ADJOURN

Mayor Coerper called the workshop closed.

ATTEST:

CITY COMMISSION OF THE
CITY OF ALACHUA, FLORIDA

Traci L. Cain, City Manager/Clerk

Gib Coerper, Mayor