

March 11, 2021

**CITY OF LABELLE
SPECIAL MEETING/WORKSHOP**

Mayor Lyons called the Special Meeting to order at 4:30 p.m. A roll call was taken, and Commissioner Spratt, Commissioner Akin and Mayor Lyons were present. Commissioner Wilkins joined the meeting at 4:35 p.m. Commissioner Smith arrived at 4:48 p.m.

Mayor Lyons opened the meeting and asked Derek Rooney, City Attorney, to explain the purpose of the meeting.

Mr. Rooney explained the developer of the Old Florida RV Resort project would discuss their project and utility needs, followed by a broader discussion on City utilities and plant capacity.

Josh Evans, P.E., with JR Evans Engineering explained the intent to develop a 168-acre mixed use RV Resort with 435 RV lots with amenities and accessory uses on property located south of SR 80 and east of the Hendry/Lee County line. He noted the project would use approximately 70,000 gallons per day (GPD) of potable water and sanitary sewer and the 6 inch city water line would need to be extended approximately 6.5 miles west of their current location to serve the site. He noted the sanitary sewer line extension is approximately an 8-8.5-mile extension. He noted the extension would be a 10" water main and 6-8" force main. He clarified this would be an upgrade from what the project needs to serve additional users. He also noted a private on-site package plant could be constructed by the developer to provide sewer. He presented the project and information on the proposed community design. He discussed the lines would be constructed on the south side of SR 80.

Derek Rooney explained the Applicant's options to work with Florida Governmental Utility Authority (FGUA). It was noted the benefit of the project would open a large area to utilities connection and increase the number of rate payers to the City. He also explained the extension of utility service could be provided with or without annexing the property into the City, and that Staff is working with Hendry County to determine the best path forward, including a partnership with the County for helping finance the expansion through a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) district over western Hendry County, along with a special assessment on the property if there is insufficient funds provided through the TIF.

Commissioner Spratt asked what the initial outlay of funds would be required. Mr. Rooney noted there is no immediate outlay, but funding would be required to repay the owner in the short term, in the form of credits to the developer with the bulk of funding coming from the County. The timeframe was discussed within a 2-5-year timeframe. He explained the TIF funding mechanism in further detail, noting it does not require a raise in taxes. He noted this could be set up next month at the next Hendry County Commission meeting. It was also noted the alternative options for utility funding, such as USDA funding, are extremely long-term compared to this proposal.

Mr. Rooney noted additional consultants that are experts in this type of project is strongly recommended, adding the consultants could be funded through the TIF.

Commissioner Wilkins asked about capacity. Mr. Rooney noted there is capacity but there are some operational and maintenance issues with the plant that are being resolved and would be discussed later. He clarified that the City needs to start planning for additional capacity due to the approvals for development currently in place, such as South LaBelle Village. There was discussion on capacity and maintenance.

Commissioner Spratt asked if the sanitary sewer was being maintained properly. Gary Hull, Superintendent of Public Works, noted the efforts to react to current maintenance issues. She also asked if the water plant could support this extension. Mr. Hull noted the water plant can serve the project.

Following discussion, Mr. Rooney summarized the options for the City's utility capacity issues as follows:

- 1) Sell the sanitary sewer plant to a private operator;
- 2) Put out an RFQ to seek an outside Operations and Management operator for one or both of the plants to use their outside expertise to improve the facilities;
- 3) Conduct a Capacity, Management, Operations, and Maintenance assessment to audit the system, noting this can be expensive; OR
- 4) Continue to work internally with Staff to resolve the issues.

Commissioner Wilkins asked if the RV applicant required any further information from the City before the meeting focuses on capacity and maintenance issues.

Neale Montgomery, land use attorney for the RV Resort, noted the developer is seeking confirmation that the City will serve the project before the extension is designed by the project engineer.

Glenn Burden with Woodard and Curran made a presentation on the firm's expertise in design, building and operating wastewater treatment plants, as well as other support services for governmental utilities. He noted the City's water plant is in exceptional shape in terms of capacity and ease of expansion. He noted the City's wastewater treatment plant and collection system is antiquated and has capacity limited to dry weather. He noted his firm can develop a Capital Improvements Plan to remedy issues and train operators.

Following Mr. Burden's presentation there was further discussion. Commissioner Wilkins asked if there was an estimate on the fee to improve the collection system. Mr. Burden noted that could be provided but the estimate had not been prepared yet. Commissioner Spratt asked if the firm was able to get grants. Mr. Burden confirmed they do. There was further discussion on the role of Woodard Curran and steps to move forward, grant funding and the City's options.

Commissioner Wilkins made a motion to advertise a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for operations and maintenance of both utilities. Commissioner Spratt seconded the motion. Commissioner Akin clarified the motion calls for two (2) separate RFQs and it was affirmed. The motion carried 5-0.

Commissioner Wilkins made a motion to advertise a Request for Proposals for two (2) separate master plans for water and sewer services. Commissioner Akin seconded the motion. The motion carried 5-0.

Lastly, Mr. Rooney asked for direction on working with Old Florida RV to work with the Applicant on a developer's agreement to address the project's water and sewer needs.

Commissioner Wilkins made a motion to authorize staff to move forward with coordination with the County and working on a developer's agreement. Commissioner Spratt seconded the motion.

Commissioner Akin asked if the Applicant was comfortable with the information discussed. There was further discussion by the Staff and the Applicant on the timeline for the process.

Following the discussion Mayor Lyons called for the vote. The motion carried 5-0.

The workshop adjourned at 5:35 p.m.

APPROVED:

*****See Clerk for Original Signatures*****

David A. Lyons,
Mayor-Commissioner

Attest:

*****See Clerk for Original Signatures*****

Thomas A. Smith, Clerk-Commissioner