

**CITY OF LABELLE  
SPECIAL MEETING/WORKSHOP MEETING  
APRIL 14, 2022**

Mayor Wilkins opened the Special Meeting/Workshop at 4:00 p.m. A roll call was taken. Members present were Commissioner Bobbie Spratt, Commissioner Julie Wilkins, Commissioner Daniel Akin, and Commissioner Jackie Ratica.

Mayor Wilkins explained that the intent of the meeting was to get clarification on the procedure for permitting special events that occur within the City of LaBelle. She went into further detail on the confusion between the organizations that are involved. She noted that there were discrepancies between documents that needed to be addressed. She expressed that the Hendry-LaBelle Recreation Board had an excellent application, and documentation requirements. She expressed her desire for all involved to be on the same page.

Mayor Wilkins asked if a representative from any organization would like to address the Commission with any questions, concerns, or ideas.

Ramiro Rodriguez, Recreation Director for the Hendry-LaBelle Recreation Board (Rec Board) addressed the Commission with concern for the hours of operation for parks and events. He explained the different categories of parks and why each one differed in hours of operation.

Mayor Wilkins explained that signs had just been posted at the Nature Park to have the hours of dawn until dusk, and that security cameras may be installed in the future.

Mr. Rodriguez suggested that hours of operation should be established in an ordinance. He agreed that the Rec Board and City Commission need to be on the same page. Discussion was had on the closing time of all parks, and that none should be open past dark while there is not sufficient lighting.

City of LaBelle Attorney, Derek Rooney interjected that Mr. Rodriguez should continue to explain his issues, and that the Commission should then hear from other organizations. Mr. Rooney suggested that the Rec Board and City Commission develop their own rules on a park-by-park basis. Discussion continued on the closing hours of parks, as well as the two organizations working together.

Attorney Rooney asked Mr. Rodriguez what the minimum standards were for maintenance of the parks. Mr. Rodriguez stated that all parks are mowed at least once a week.

Kelly Boone, from the LaBelle Downtown Revitalization Corporation (LDRC), addressed the Commission to confirm whether alcohol would continue to be permitted at events in the future with appropriate approval. She noted that it brought in needed funds.

Commissioner Ratica noted that the State statute allowed non-profits to allow alcohol with the proper approval. Commissioner Spratt asked if that included hard liquor. Mrs. Boone clarified that the LDRC only sold beer and wine at events. She also noted that the Sheriff's Office was at all LDRC events with alcohol.

Mayor Wilkins explained that the City's allowances for alcohol was contradictory of itself, and that it needed to be clarified. Discussion was had on possibly removing the "No Alcohol Sign" from Barron Park. It was suggested to amend the sign, rather than remove it.

Stephanie Sposato interjected that the City's code was clear that the use of alcohol was dependent on approval from the Commission.

Mayor Wilkins recommended that when a road closure was needed for an event, that it be noted on the event application and that the applicant be responsible for notifying those affected by the road closure.

Kelly Boone asked what the parameter was for notification, and how those affected should be notified. Mayor Wilkins mentioned notifying by letter.

Shary Weckwerth asked if the City maintained a calendar of events. Mayor Wilkins explained that the calendar used for scheduling events was not published.

Mayor Wilkins asked Lt. Ben Rowe of the Hendry County Sheriff's Department for any comments.

Lt. Rowe mentioned that at the previous meeting he attended, he had requested that pedestrian barricades be purchased to aid in control of pedestrian traffic along S.R. 29 during events at Barron Park. He expressed concern that events were outgrowing the park. Mayor Wilkins inquired about the cost of the barricades. Lt. Rowe suggested that there may be grants available to help offset the cost of the barricades. He then listed his concerns with the most recent Swamp Cabbage Festival, which included parade line-up confusion, pedestrian traffic crossing the bridge, the abundance of people within the park, parking, and traffic congestion. He suggested that conversation be had in the future for an alternate location or different venue for the festival.

Ramiro Rodriguez advised that The LaBelle Sports Park, or LaBelle Rodeo Grounds could be utilized for events. Mayor Wilkins noted that she was not in favor of moving the Swamp Cabbage Festival. Discussion was had on vendor parking, and safety hazards due to congestion.

Attorney Rooney asked if Lt. Rowe was satisfied with the amount of coordination prior to the event. Lt. Rowe explained that issues are the same every year, that the event has outgrown the park, and the idea of relocating the event to a larger park needs to be investigated. Discussion was had on options to mitigate the event.

Shelly Lowe, Chair for the Swamp Cabbage Festival Committee, confirmed that parade staging was an issue. She noted that not allowing pedestrians to cross at the foot of the bridge worked very well. She suggested to move portions of the festival to other locations. More discussion was had on expanding the festival throughout the City, and the possible locations.

Commissioner Ratica noted that another event is held at The LaBelle Sports Park the same weekend that may conflict with moving portions of the festival to that location. Discussion continued on using The LaBelle Sports Park, or the LaBelle Rodeo Grounds for portions of the festival, and scheduling conflicts with other events.

Kathryn Meador suggested utilizing the Wharf to stage the more popular vendors to spread out the festival.

Ms. Lowe mentioned that more volunteers were needed. Discussion was had on how to recruit more volunteers.

Mayor Wilkins moved on to discuss event hours of operation. She noted that currently, an event lasting less than six hours with no alcohol did not need a permit. She suggested minimizing that window of time.

Mayor Wilkins then took up the topic of insurance requirements.

Deputy City Clerk, Jessi Zubaty, clarified that if an event is had on City property that Special Event Insurance should be required with the City of LaBelle listed as an additional insured.

Heath Daniels noted that the Swamp Cabbage Festival requires all vendors to have insurance.

Mayor Wilkins asked for any comments from the Commission.

Commissioner Ratica mentioned that at a recent event she noticed that the parking may have been a hazard. That events parking issues were discussed.

Ramiro Rodriguez asked if the insurance requirement was based on the number of people attending the park. Discussion was had on the criteria for insurance requirements.

Attorney Rooney elaborated on the possible criteria.

Mr. Rodriguez reported that any time there is an event permitted through the Recreation Board that has alcohol, that Sheriff's Deputies were involved. He also explained that they required insurance for any event with over 100 people. He then noted that he would be in contact with the Fire Department to ensure that buildings do not exceed capacity.

Brent Stevens, City of LaBelle, then explained the need for a crowd manager at any permitted event held within a building that is occupied by more than 50 people.

Mayor Wilkins asked if Sheriff's Deputies trained in crowd management would suffice. Chief Stevens confirmed that they would.

Chief Stevens then explained at outdoor events with 1,000 people or more, an Emergency Action Plan is necessary, and he then explained that process.

Kelly Boone asked Chief Stevens about fire extinguisher requirements for vendors. Chief Stevens informed Mrs. Boone that he had conferred with Ms. Lowe from the Swamp Cabbage Festival, and that they would work together next year on fire and safety issues in advance. More discussion was had on fire extinguisher requirements.

Attorney Rooney presented a question to both Gary Hull, and Ramiro Rodriguez, of what the process was for each organization for special event permitting. Mr. Hull proceeded to explain the City's process. Mr. Rodriguez then explained that large events are directed to Captain Reed with the Sheriff's Department and Captain Reed then determines how many deputies would be needed at the event. He also noted that for very large events he meets with the organizers several times prior to the event.

Attorney Rooney suggested that an event had in any facility or park managed by the Rec Board that a single decision path.

Mr. Hull suggested that there should be follow up meetings after special events.

Chief Stevens mentioned that all special events should carry insurance not only to cover injury, but also to cover damages incurred to City property.

Mr. Rodriguez noted that the Rec Board requires a \$500 deposit for large events to help cover possible property damage. There was additional dialogue on insurance requirements.

There was conversation to develop an alcohol policy that the Rec Board and City Commission would both agree upon so that approval is not needed by both organizations.

Mayor Wilkins voiced her concern on monitoring underage drinking.

Mr. Rodriguez requested that the Interlocal Agreement between the organizations be reviewed in order to clarify any confusion.

Attorney Rooney stated that he had been in discussion with the attorney for the County, Mark Lapp, on the subject.

Discussion was had on why the rules and leasing criteria were different for certain properties owned. It was the consensus of the Commission that all permitted events carry Special Event Insurance.

Attorney Rooney gave an overall description of what the possible process could be. Brief discussion was had on where, and how a temporary alcohol license could be acquired.

Mayor Wilkins stated that staff would be directed to coordinate with the Rec Board to resolve the topics of discussion.

There was consideration of increasing the fees to lease City facilities.

Shary Weckwerth asked where a City event calendar would be located, once available. Mayor Wilkins clarified it would be on the City's website.

Mayor Wilkins called upon Shelly Lowe with the Swamp Cabbage Committee to address the Commission.

Ms. Lowe described the staffing challenges the Swamp Cabbage Festival incurred with the most recent festival. Discussion was had on the composition of the Board of Directors for the festival, and how to obtain more volunteers for the event.

Commissioner Spratt suggested for Ms. Lowe to attend meetings for other organizations to ask for their participation to help with the event.

Ramiro Rodriguez listed all events and grounds the Hendry-LaBelle Recreation Board maintain during the festival.

Keitha Daniels stated that the Swamp Cabbage Committee has in the past, asked other organizations to volunteer, but they were not able to do so due to commitments the day of the festival to their own businesses or organizations. Discussion was had on how the City and staff would be able to help with the festival.

Mavis Rodriguez of the Hendry County Cattlemen's Association confirmed that most organizations are having their own events the same weekend, which is why they cannot volunteer.

Commissioner Ratica asked how much money the Swamp Cabbage Festival profited from the most recent festival. Ms. Lowe stated that no money was profited.

There was more brief discussion on City staff efforts to help the festival.

Ms. Lowe then gave an overview of the fees charged to vendors.

Commissioner Spratt suggested reaching out to the Indians to partner with the festival.

Ms. Lowe then gave an overview of the income for the festival generated from advertising, sponsorships, and grants.

Chief Stevens noted that the Edison Festival of Lights charges for parade participation. Discussion was had on the charging for parking, parade entry, and a shuttle during the festival.

Ms. Lowe stated that reducing the number of vendors may be a result of lack of volunteers. Discount pricing for local vendors was discussed.


Kelly Boone suggested that the City contribute funds that a marketing firm would charge the festival for additional advertising. Commissioner Spratt stated that she would not be comfortable doing so.

Keitha Daniels expressed that having support from the City staff would make a difference. Kelly Boone agreed, and stated that LDRC events should have support as well.


Mayor Wilkins stated that she would direct staff to work with the Swamp Cabbage Committee. Discussion was had on how staff would help the committee, as well as the financial possibilities of aiding the festival.

Mayor Wilkins adjourned the meeting at 5:41 p.m.

**APPROVED:**

  
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Julie C. Wilkins, Mayor

**Attest:**

  
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Jessi Zubaty, Deputy City Clerk