

**CITY OF LABELLE  
REGULAR COMMISSION MEETING  
June 9, 2022**

**CALL TO ORDER**

Mayor Wilkins opened the regular June Commission meeting at 6:01 p.m. Commissioner Vargas led the opening prayer. Mayor Wilkins then led the Pledge of Allegiance. A roll call was taken. Commissioner Hugo Vargas, Commissioner Bobbie Spratt, Mayor Julie Wilkins, Commissioner Jackie Ratica, and Commissioner Daniel Akin were present.

**OPEN DISCUSSION (NON-PUBLIC HEARING ITEMS)**

Commissioner Ratica presented on the behalf of the LaBelle Downtown Revisitation Corporation (LDRC) a request for permission to construct a permanent copper sign in Barron Park that would be provided by funds from a Water Ways grant. She read the verbiage of the sign and described the desired location of the sign in the park, which was facing Desoto Avenue, by the "Christmas Oak". Discussion was had on the size of the sign, and the verbiage.

*Commissioner Akin made a motion to tentatively approve request, but requested more information about the verbiage and size of the sign.*

*Commissioner Spratt seconded the motion.*

*The motion carried 5-0*

**BARRON PARK PAVILION PLAQUES**

Commissioner Ratica again on behalf of the LDRC, informed the Commission of the LDRC's plan to begin accepting donations from non-profit organizations in the amount of \$3,000.00 each in exchange for placing memorial plaques on the new pavilions in Barron Park. The donations would total \$21,000.00 which would be utilized to provide needed updates within Barron Park.

There was then discussion about a request from a non-profit to install a donated fan in a pavilion.

Mayor Wilkins suggested doing so in one of the A.D.A. compliant pavilions.

Commissioner Vargas expressed his concern with the height of the pavilions and installing a fan. All Commissioners expressed concern about the liability of having a fan installed. It was the consensus that more information was needed before the fan installation, and the plaques could be approved. Discussion continued on the size of the plaques that would be placed on the pavilions, and the wording that would be used.

**LIEN RELIEF REQUEST**

Eduardo Bedolla addressed the Commission to ask for relief for existing liens placed on his property at 942 Fordson Avenue.

April Aguilar from the Utility Billing department of the City of LaBelle explained that Mr. Bedolla had owned the property since 2020, and had tried to get water services activated just recently. She explained why the charges had accumulated on the account.

Attorney Derek Rooney explained what fix demand charges were, and then explained that if the liens were forgiven, the funds would have to be provided by another source.

There was then discussion on the property being purchased at auction to be a rental property.

Mayor Wilkins brought it to the Commission's attention that the owner was remodeling the existing mobile home on the subject property without proper permitting. There was conversation about the due diligence when purchasing a property.

*Commissioner Vargas motioned to deny the request of the relief from the liens on the subject property.*

*Commissioner Akin seconded the motion.*

*The motion carried 5-0.*

Commissioner Spratt suggested the option of a possible payment plan in order to assist Mr. Bedolla in the payment of the liens.

**PUBLIC HEARINGS**

**FINAL READING OF PROPOSED ORDINANCE 2022-05 AMENDING THE LAND DEVELOPMENT CODE**

City of LaBelle attorney Derek Rooney asked that the final reading of proposed ordinance 2022-05 be continued until July 14, 2022 at 6:00 p.m. due to language concerns within Chapter 4 of the ordinance, and its compliance with the Florida Building Code.

*Commissioner Ratica made a motion to continue the final reading of the proposed ordinance to July 14, 2022 at 6:00 p.m.*

*Commissioner Vargas seconded the motion.  
The motion carried 5-0.*

**FIRST PUBLIC HEARING OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANTS (CDBG)**

Mayor Wilkins called upon Corbett Alday of Guardian Community Resource Management, the City of LaBelle's grant consulting firm.

Mr. Alday explained that he was there to discuss the what the grant was for and the types of grant applications and activities. He provided a Power Point presentation that explained the purpose of the grant and funding. His presentation noted the 3 category options, and the process for each of those.

Mayor Wilkins asked for any discussion from the public, there was none.

Commissioner Vargas asked about the total amount of funding for each category, and what is required of the applicants.

Mayor Wilkins asked for Mr. Alday to explain the process of the housing category grant. Mr. Alday then gave a step-by-step explanation of the process.

There was conversation on which category would be the best option to choose. Mr. Alday stated that his recommendation for the City was to choose the housing rehabilitation category. Discussion was had on the possibility of the need to change policies in order to meet the requirements of the grants.

*Commissioner Spratt made a motion to authorize staff to pursue the housing rehabilitation category option.  
Commissioner Ratica seconded the motion.  
The motion carried 5-0.*

Mr. Alday then gave a brief presentation on the Fair Housing Act.

**FIRST READING OF PROPOSED ORDINANCE 2022-06 LIBERTY VILLAGE PLANNED UNIT DEVELOPMENT**

Attorney Derek Rooney read the proposed ordinance into the record.

Mayor Wilkins asked for comments or concerns from the Commissioners. There was discussion on whether or not a golf course and driving range would be required to be built, if approved.

Rich Galvano, the developer for the project approached the podium. Mayor Wilkins stated that she had seen an ad in that paper for the development, although it had not been approved yet. Mr. Galvano responded that the ad was to expedite the process of the development, and to gauge the interest of the public.

Mayor Wilkins voiced her concerned that the multi-family element would replace the commercial intent within the mixed-use portion of the development. Mr. Galvano confirmed that the intent was to have residential and commercial both in the mixed-use portion, and noted that a walkable community was the goal.

Commissioner Ratica expressed her concern of the lot sizes being sufficient for the size of the homes, and how close in proximity the homes were to each other. She asked Brent Stevens, Chief of the LaBelle Fire Department, if the distance between the homes would be fire safe. Chief Stevens explained that development would have to be built to Florida Building and Fire Code standards.

Attorney Rooney requested that Mr. Galvano provide engineering evidence before the final hearing.

Commissioner Spratt asked for the verbiage submitted at the second hearing reflect the specific intentions of the development, she also requested that it be stated that the golf course shall be built.

Commissioner Ratica asked if Jack Paul Properties Inc, was also the owner of the property located near the city water plant that was having horticultural debris delivered to the site.

John Paul, the owner of Jack Paul Properties Inc., clarified that he was the owner and leased the property to MSW Horticulture for farming. There was discussion about the type of farming being done at the site, and compliance of the farming.

Mayor Wilkins noted that they had gotten off topic and tried to steer the conversation back to the agenda point. She noted that there were members of the public that would like to speak on the topic and called upon Bryan Paul.

Mr. Paul expressed his concern about how the property has been managed previously, and how it will be managed in the future.

Mayor Wilkins then called Neal Montgomery to the podium to address the Commission. Mrs. Montgomery cited conditions listed within the staff report and then submitted suggestions on how to make them more detailed, and specific.

Mayor Wilkins then asked Scott Lyons to address the Commission. He stated he recently purchased an adjacent property, and that he was in the process of building a master plan community.

Fire Chief Brent Stevens stated that with the amount of increasing population in the South LaBelle Village area, that land should be set aside for an additional fire station to be built.

Scott Lyons noted that his future development had plans to allow for a fire station and new schools.

Attorney Rooney interjected that at a future meeting, the fire consultant for the County would be present to discuss impact fees and change policy for South LaBelle Village in order to build a station in the area.

Mr. Galvano, gave an overview of the plan for the golf course in the proposed development. Discussion continued on the type of proposed housing and the golf course.

Attorney Rooney summarized that it should be designed and developed as a large master concept design project, and that the Commission should review the requirements of the future developments of South LaBelle Village.

Mayor Wilkins requested a variety of appearances with the modular homes in the community. There was discussion on the integrity of the modular homes.

There was more discussion on the size of the lots and the proximity to the neighboring home.

John Paul expressed his desire for flexibility in the project.

Commissioner Vargas asked Mr. Paul if there were investors already interested in the project. Mr. Paul replied that he had a list of investors. Commissioner Vargas then asked about the timeline for the project. Mr. Paul stated that they were currently in the process of getting permits and surveys.

Mr. Paul noted that the development was focused around the golf course.

#### UTILITY UPDATE

Mayor Wilkins gave a brief introduction of Laura Constantino with Four Waters Engineering.

Mrs. Constantino presented an update on the Zone A Part 1 & 2 septic to sewer conversion. She noted that Accurate Drilling System (ADS) was the lowest responsible bidder for the Part 2 construction services. She presented the different phases of the project. She provided a breakdown of the cost and funding of each phase.

Commissioner Akin asked for clarification on if the advertised bid was for water, or water and sewer. Mrs.

Constantino clarified that the bid was for both water and sewer.

***Commissioner Ratica motioned to approve the proceeding of the Zone A, Part 2 conversion, as well as approval of ADS as the lowest responsible bidder, Commissioner Spratt seconded the motion. The motion passed 5-0.***

Commissioner Vargas asked if all of the funding would be from grants. Mrs. Constantino stated that part would come from grants, and part would come from American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding.

Discussion was had on the purpose of the ARPA funding. Attorney Rooney clarified that the requested motion would be to approve ADS as the lowest responsible bidder.

Discussion continued on the construction within the zones.

There was discussion on the ARPA funding.

Mrs. Constantino continued updating the Commission on the other septic to sewer projects in process within the city.

Mayor Wilkins gave an update on the requested government funding.

#### NIKKI YEAGER

Nikki Yeager stated that she would like to defer her comments until next month.

Mayor Wilkins explained that Mrs. Yeager's concerns were in reference to the traffic through the Moss Landing area that was redirected through a development in the construction process, and a road that had been closed in the area. Mayor Wilkins expressed that she would like to look into the possible opening of the subject road again. There was discussion on the original reasoning of closing the road, as well as traffic flow through the area. Commissioner Akin suggested that the Commission to reach out to the developer with concerns. Ramiro Rodriguez suggested for the Commission to ask the developer how many cars were available per unit for the proposed development in the area in order to gauge the amount of future traffic. There was discussion on truck traffic on Bridge Street.

### **CONSENT AGENDA**

Commissioner Akin requested that the Sheriff's office report be pulled from the consent agenda for discussion. Commissioner Akin asked Lt. Ben Rowe, of the Hendry County Sheriff's Office about the issues that occurred at the Black Heritage Festival. Lt. Rowe reported that there were complaints about the loud music, and that they had video clips for viewing. Mayor Wilkins noted that the noise complaints were regarding volume and content of the music at the festival. There was discussion about noise ordinance enforcement, and the hostility of the citizens that attended the festival towards the officers dispatched to the event. Fire Chief Stevens interjected that the event was not approved by him due to lack of an emergency action plan. Discussion continued about the activities that occurred at the festival. Lt. Rowe invited the Commission to view the videos taken by the officers that were present at the event.

Conversation was had about Fourth of July festivities at Barron Park for the fireworks display. Mayor Wilkins noted that Lt. Rowe had expressed that officers should be present at the park during the display.

*Commissioner Ratica made a motion to authorize Mayor Wilkins to execute a contract with the Sheriff's Office for their services during the event,  
Commissioner Vargas seconded the motion.  
The motion carried 5-0.*

Lt. Rowe gave a report of the speeding survey done on Ft. Thompson Avenue. He stated that 3,000 vehicles traveled the road in the two-week period, and that the average speed was 21-22 mile per hour. He noted that based on the data collected, there did not seem to be a speeding problem in the area. There was discussion on monitoring the speed on Belmont Avenue in the future.

*Commissioner Akin motioned to accept the Consent Agenda.  
Commissioner Spratt seconded the motion.  
The motion carried 5-0.*

### **OLD BUSINESS**

Mayor Wilkins took up the Recreation Board discussion. She stated that a master plan for the parks was needed, and gave a list of reasons why she felt it was necessary.

Ramiro Rodriguez, Director of the Hendry County Recreational Board, asked that the Commission recognize Orlando Commancho with a letter of appreciation for the removal of the tennis courts at Barron Park at no cost. He also acknowledged Gary Hull who aided in the efforts to remove the tennis court as well. He noted that ADS was a local company and that they should be acknowledged for their community services. He then stated that there was a master plan for Forrey Park, and that the construction was being done in phases due to funding. Mayor Wilkins asked to continue discussion on the recreation issues later in the meeting.

### **SPECIAL EVENTS FEES & PROCEDURES**

Mayor Wilkins presented the current fees, and proposed future fees for City facility rentals. There was discussion on

the current fees for each facility, the amenities, and what the fees should be raised to in order to accommodate the needed future updates to the facilities.

Fire Chief Stevens noted that a sprinkler system was needed in the Civic Center. Discussion continued on how much to raise the fees, and what the fees would be for non-profit organizations.

Yordanys Ramirez of the City of LaBelle staff, informed the Commission that the Civic Center was already booked out for the next year.

Discussion was had on the insurance requirements for renting the facilities, as well as the licensing for having alcohol at the events.

Ramiro Rodriquez informed the Commission of the Recreation Board's procedure for renting the Rodeo Grounds.

Yordanys Ramirez noted that the fees for non-profit organizations have been waived in the past.

Discussion continued on the fees charged to non-profits.

Attorney Rooney recommended that non-profits should come before the Commission for permission to have fees waived if desired.

Mrs. Ramirez noted her concern of not having a deposit fee to cover the costs for lost keys.

Conversation turned towards the fees, and rules for the Captain Hendry House, and Barron Park.

### RECREATION BOARD BUDGET

Mayor Wilkins deferred the review of the Recreation Board budget.

Attorney Rooney noted that he had spoken to Jennifer Davis, Hendry County Administrator, about the City's involvement in a capital improvement plan for Forrey Park.

Commissioner Spratt encouraged the Commission to have Mr. Rodriguez take them on a tour of the city parks, and expressed her appreciation for Mr. Rodriguez and his staff. Commissioner Vargas also commended Mr. Rodriguez and staff for a job well done.

Commissioner Spratt informed the Commission that Mr. Rodriguez had offered to do a landscaping project with pavers that welcomed people to LaBelle at the foot of the bridge.

Commissioner Akin encouraged the County Commission to match the extra funds given by the City into the Recreation Budget. There was discussion on which parks the funds would go to.

### GENERAL CORRESPONDENCE

Mayor Wilkins informed the Commission that changes to the noise ordinance would be discussed at the next commission meeting in July.

Attorney Rooney noted that the issue with the noise ordinance was enforcement. There was discussion on how to work with the Sheriff's Office in order to enforce the ordinance, and the use of decibel readers.

### PROPERTY SALES POLICY

There was discussion of developing a property sales policy. Commissioner Akin noted that the delay in developing a policy was the need for stormwater master plan. There was conversation on if the City had to pay taxes on City owned property.

### AMENDING ORDINANCE 98-6

Mayor Wilkins discussed the need to amend Ordinance 98-6 in order to allow for electronic funds transfers.

Gracie Morton addressed the Commission with her reasonings for the need to amend the ordinance.

Mrs. Morton also informed the Commission of the funds received from auctioning off the surplus equipment from the maintenance department, and what they would purchase in the future.

### AREA HOUSING COMMISSION

Mayor Wilkins informed the Commission of the need to appoint someone to be on the Area Housing Commission.

### BUSINESS BY COMMISSIONERS

Commissioner Ratica had no further business.

Commissioner Akin suggested starting the Commission meetings earlier. There was discussion on changing the time of the Commission meetings to 5:30.

*Commissioner Akin made a motion to change the time of future Commission meetings to 5:30 p.m.  
Commissioner Vargas seconded the motion.  
The motion carried 5-0.*

Commissioner Spratt expressed her concern on the amount of people that attended the Black Heritage Festival, versus the amount of police presence. Chief Stevens added that the Fire Department could not gain access to roads due to the amount of people in attendance that were blocking the roadways. There was discussion on how to provide more police presence at the festival in the future.

Commissioner Vargas gave an overview of the tours of City facilities that he had taken and thanked his tour guides.

*Commissioner Ratica motioned to adjourn the meeting.  
Commissioner Spratt seconded the motion.  
The motion carried 5-0.*

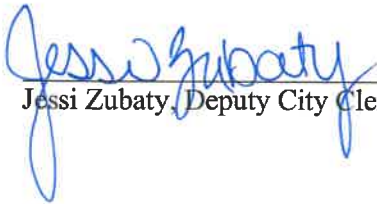
The meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:04 p.m.

**APPROVED:**



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Commissioner Daniel Akin, Vice Mayor

**Attest:**



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Jessi Zubaty, Deputy City Clerk