

City of Port St. Lucie

Special City Council

Meeting Minutes - Draft

121 SW Port St. Lucie
Blvd.
Port St. Lucie, Florida
34984

Shannon M. Martin, Mayor

Jolien Caraballo, Vice Mayor, District IV
Stephanie Morgan, Councilwoman, District I
Dave Pickett, Councilman, District II
Anthony Bonna, Councilman, District III

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Monday, September 18, 2023

9:30 AM

Council Chambers, City Hall

1. Meeting Called to Order

A Special Meeting of the CITY COUNCIL of the City of Port St. Lucie was called to order by Mayor Martin on September 18, 2023 at 9:30 AM, at Port St. Lucie City Hall, Council Chambers, 121 SW Port St. Lucie Boulevard, Port St. Lucie, Florida.

2. Roll Call

Council Members Present:
Mayor Shannon Martin
Vice Mayor Jolien Caraballo
Councilwoman Stephanie Morgan
Councilman Dave Pickett
Councilman Anthony Bonna

3. Pledge of Allegiance

Mayor Martin led the assembly in the Pledge of Allegiance.

4. Public to be Heard

No one signed up to speak for this portion of the Agenda.

5. Special Presentations

5.a Port St. Lucie Police Department Presenting Plaque to Spirit
of Blue Foundation

[2023-799](#)

Police Chief Richard Del Toro advised that the Spirit of Blue Foundation awarded the Police Department a \$25,000 grant to equip every Law Enforcement Officer with a Guardian Angel Light.

5.b Approve PSL/Floresta Art Park Concept[2023-854](#)

Dr. Kim DeLaney, Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council introduced the PSL/Floresta Art Park Concept to the City Council and introduced Emily O'Mahoney.

Emily O'Mahoney, 2GHO, provided an overview of the PSL/Floresta Art Park Conceptual Layout Plan and Conceptual Landscape Plan for Parcels 1, 2, and 3.

Dr. DeLaney discussed the funding options for the City on this project and provided a cost estimate for these concepts.

Mayor Martin stated she agreed to seek grants for this project but did not agree with spending tax payer dollars for the project. She explained this was not a priority project for the City and encouraged grant funding. Mayor Martin vocalized that she did not wish to utilize stormwater funds for this project. She stated she had concern over the utilization of this project and noted it needed to be scaled down.

Councilwoman Morgan agreed that tax payer funds should not be utilized for this project. She stated she did not believe it should be called a park based on the lack of parking and additional bathroom amenities. Councilwoman Morgan noted that the neighbor barrier next to these parcels should be secure.

Councilman Pickett stated he liked the concept but agreed tax payer dollars should not be utilized for this project. He discussed issues with parking to visit the site and noted the bicycle safety concerns at the intersection.

Vice Mayor Caraballo stated this project was better suited in an area such as Crosstown Parkway. She also discussed the underutilization of this project. Vice Mayor Caraballo noted that on Port St. Lucie Boulevard there were issues with mobility such as heat and accessibility to amenities. She suggested that maybe this is a project for future City Councils to follow as there may need to be an acquisition of homes. Vice Mayor Caraballo stated she would like to see the area well landscaped and available passing art. She added that the City Council should wait for the correct time for this project.

Councilman Bonna stated he echoed the concerns raised by the Council Members. He noted he had sticker shock based on the cost associated with this project.

Dr. DeLaney addressed the parking concern and stated the City would have 12 parking spots on Floresta Drive. She stated she would be happy to come back with landscaping and public art as a first phase.

Mayor Martin stated she would not have an issue with a modified concept. She added that the speaker's corner should be in a plaza rather than next to a storm water pond on an intersection of Port St. Lucie Boulevard. Mayor Martin requested that the Speaker's Corner be removed from Parcel 2 and move the speaker's corner elsewhere, such as Parcel 3. She advised she did not have an issue with the Poincianas placement. Vice Mayor Caraballo stated she inquired about the Speaker's Corner when she met with staff. Dr. DeLaney advised they received direction by staff not to remove the Speaker's Corner. Vice Mayor Caraballo stated she thought money was tied to that corner barring removal.

Mayor Martin noted she had never heard of it being referred to as a "Speaker's Corner".

Frank Knott, Public Works, noted he was advised that area was designated for protestors.

Vice Mayor Caraballo inquired about the assignment of a protest location to Senior City Attorney, Richard Berrios. Attorney Berrios stated he was unaware of the historical background of the Speaker's Corner in question but generally in a public gathering place the public has first amendment protections.

It was the consensus of the City Council to obtain background information regarding the "Speaker's Corner" located on the corner of Parcel 2 and have follow-up one-on-ones with each Council Member to discuss.

Mayor Martin indicated she had never heard of the area being designated as a "Speaker's Corner".

Councilwoman Morgan noted she had heard of the designation of the area being a "Speaker's Corner".

Vice Mayor Caraballo discussed the Crosstown Pond and possibly adding additional parking to the area.

Mary Dunham-Savage, Planning and Zoning Director, stated the City could use Tree Preservation and Public Art Funds to supplement any grants awarded for this project. She clarified the City Council's direction regarding the project was to take a longer approach on the phasing aspect of this

project or possibly changing the design. She asked the City Council what their desire was for this project. Vice Mayor Caraballo indicated she did not wish to use Tree Preservation funds. Councilwoman Morgan stated she was okay with a phased Parcel 1, 2, and finally 3 was okay with her. She noted that this was the second time Parcel 2 will be redeveloped. Mayor Martin stated the project needed to be modified and scaled down.

It was the consensus of the City Council to scale down the overall design of the parcels, complete in phased approach by parcel and only use grant funding for this project once approved.

5.c Approve the Proposed 2024 Port St. Lucie State Legislative Program

[2023-838](#)

Ella Gilbert, Interim Risk Management Director, presented an overview of the Proposed 2024 Port St. Lucie State Legislative Program.

Mayor Martin inquired about the Before and After Care Funding in conjunction with the St. Lucie Public Schools priority. Attorney Gilbert stated this was for before and after school care for children in St. Lucie County Schools Students such as the Boys and Girls Club. She went on to discuss the 2024 State Policy Statements, Supporting Policies and Programs, and 2024 State Legislature Important Dates.

Vice Mayor Caraballo encouraged the City Council Members to be involved in the discussion on providing a solution to the mobility fee legislation of the State Policy Statements.

There being no further discussion, Vice Mayor Caraballo moved to Adopt the Approved 2024 Port St. Lucie State Legislation Program. Councilwoman Morgan seconded the motion, which passed unanimously by voice vote.

6. New Business

6.a Adopt the 2023/24 City of Port St. Lucie Federal Program

[2023-832](#)

Kate Parmelee, Director of Strategic Initiatives & Innovation provided an update and overview of the 2023/2024 City of Port St. Lucie Federal Program.

Director Parmelee advised there was a constituent request to improve the Jessica Clinton Park and that she would be confirming the appropriation information for that request.

Mayor Martin mentioned she had a previous conversation with Brad Keen and the president of the softball league. She asked Ms. Parmelee to

discuss the matter further. Director Parmelee stated they would bring forward the appropriation request in a few months.

Vice Mayor Caraballo stated she spoke to president of the softball league and discussed the concerns with not having the concession stand. She advised that Mr. Keen offered to potentially provide a temporary concession stand. Vice Mayor Caraballo reported that the president had spoken to Congressman Mast and that he advised he would be willing to help assist the City to attain funding. She confirmed that she told the softball president that Congressman Mast was more than welcome to reach out and have him confirm that information. Vice Mayor Caraballo advised that if confirmation was received, she would be able to support and assist during the process. She reported she spoke to Angel Robertson, Outreach Coordinator for Congressman Brian Mast, who indicated she was unaware of such request and the City would need to verify that the request was made and supported by the Congressman. Vice Mayor Caraballo noted that the Congressman would have to provide information as to where the City would be seeking funds from to be able to support this request.

Vice Mayor Caraballo asked the Council how they felt about the City attaining more passive ballfields. She advised that Jessica Clinton Park was a unique park that contains a ballfield but it is in the middle of a neighborhood. Vice Mayor Caraballo noted it was a passive park, and inquired if the City Council would offer the girls softball league ability to relocate from Jessica Clinton Park. She asked if it would be a better solution to have them relocate to a park that already offers the requested amenities. Vice Mayor Caraballo inquired if the City Council would be interested in making Jessica Clinton Park a passive ballfield that offers recreational play.

Mayor Martin indicated that she had a similar conversation when she met with the president of the softball league along with Mike and Brad. She noted that the softball league would continue to grow and added that she has received non-stop calls due to the growth of the league. Mayor Martin advised she had a similar conversation and noted that Tradition Regional Park included a brand-new concession stand. She stated she was okay with a temporary concession stand and added that the drainage issue at Jessica Clinton Park would soon be fixed. Mayor Martin agreed that the City Council should follow Vice Mayor Caraballo's recommendation. She advised that she prefers to keep Jessica Clinton Park for passive play. Mayor Martin indicated the City would soon have four softball fields, where tournaments could be held. She stated that they should move to Tradition Regional once it becomes available. Mayor Martin advised the City to try to

obtain a grant for the drainage problem. She inquired about the design process regarding the drainage issue at the Jessica Clinton Park. And stated that in order to move forward with seeking a grant the City must have a shovel ready project. Mayor Martin added that it was important to always have shovel ready projects. She advised that DEP and all the State agencies look for shovel ready projects. Mayor Martin indicated there were no park projects for this year. She inquired as to why there are none and stated the drainage project at Jessica Clinton Park should be one of those projects.

Vice Mayor Caraballo discussed Recognized User Groups. She stated that she requested Sherman Conrad, Director of Parks and Recreation, to provide a Field and Park Usage Report. Vice Mayor Caraballo indicated she would like the report to include the field and park that each Recognized User Group utilizes. She stated she would like to better understand the amount of time each is utilized, so that the City Council can have a deeper conversation. Vice Mayor Caraballo advised she respected that the leagues continue to grow but noted that she did not think that the City had the ability to build park space based on their membership growth. She noted that the organizations need to understand that there should be capacity cut off. Vice Mayor Caraballo stated that she wanted to make sure field time is allotted fairly. She inquired if there was any way to even the field time usage for each Recognized User Group. Vice Mayor Caraballo stated she would like to better understand the field usage because additional discussions need to be had.

Mayor Martin stated that 2 years ago they had a similar conversation and stated they needed to address the Recognized User Group Program but nothing came forward. She stated it was time to research this item to resolve the on-going issues. Mayor Martin advised she would like to move forward and have staff continue to be mindful as to how they would address the issues.

Councilman Pickett noted that City Council should consider that once Torino and Tradition Park become available the Recognized Users Groups would likely request to expand. He stated there was potential for District 17 to want to grow their program. Councilman Pickett noted that the leagues make money and inquired why the City had to provide the amenities that they request. He asked if the leagues could partner with the City to aid with their requests.

Mayor Martin stated that Councilman Pickett's question could be part of the overall general discussion. She stated there were leagues in the past that had contributed in different ways. Mayor Martin indicated they would

need the historical information to better understand.

Vice Mayor Caraballo indicated that currently the Parks and Recreation Department was completely responsible for the concession stand. She stated if something stops working, the department currently is responsible and inquired if that was something the City wants to continue to be responsible for or if they wished to lease the concession stand. Vice Mayor Caraballo indicated that a full discussion needs to occur on these issues. She stated the City Council needs to better understand how these groups work in other cities.

Director Conrad stated this conversation was held at the Winter Retreat due to both soccer Recognized User Groups are in disagreement. He advised that in a month or 2 he would be able to provide comparable results as to how cities handle their own Recognized User Groups. Director Conrad reported that the early results indicate that every city handles them differently. He added that Recognized User Groups had been beneficial to the City. Director Conrad stated the only time they have contributed was in 2008 during the economic recession. He confirmed that he hoped that with this new report they would be able to provide additional information to the City Council. Director Conrad reported there were not many cities that handle Recognized User Groups Programs due to how cumbersome the program can be.

Mayor Martin stated that the soccer Recognized User Groups had not been happy for years.

Director Conrad stated the City only had a limited amount of space. He advised they would be able to provide the report as soon as possible. Director Conrad stated he was not against the girls moving to Tradition Park because then that would open 2 fields at Jessica Clinton Park. He added there was a problem with the expansion of Recognized Users Groups. Director Conrad stated he would provide the Council with the report and information.

City Clerk Walsh inquired if there was consensus to have City staff compile a Park/Field Usage Report. Mayor Martin confirmed there was consensus from the City Council to have staff compile a Park/Field Usage Report. She indicated she would like to have a workshop after receiving the report. Mayor Martin requested that the report be sent via memo and for it to be followed up with a conversation at a Special City Council Meeting. It was the consensus of the City Council to be provided with a Park Utilization Report and schedule a City Council Workshop to discuss Recognized User Groups.

The City Manager stated that by the time of the completion of both parks: Torino and Tradition, the City would still not have enough space for the growth happening in the City, however, he stated it would allow the City an opportunity to take a step back and look at the parks within the City. The City Manager advised it would allow staff to provide a holistic review of each park, location and activity that occurs within the City. He stated there may be an opportunity to shift activities throughout the parks in the City.

Director Conrad noted that previously they had to access the fields due to not having a field available for rent or recreational family play. He stated that the City only has so much space to try to accommodate everyone. Director Conrad added that one of the major problems was practice consisted of 2 or 3 days per week and suggested that maybe they should only practice once or twice a week and maybe the third practice day, they go to Turtle Run Park. He advised the City Council that he would provide a report and discuss it in the future.

Vice Mayor Caraballo also requested that staff provide the different thresholds for how they will designate field time for each group. She recognized there was no best practice as to how to go about this issue. Vice Mayor Caraballo stated she did not like the membership numbers being used as the currency for field usage. She stated there needed to be a way to make it about the kids and not about the league, to make field access time as fair as possible.

Mayor Martin stated the City Council would need to find a balance as various sports leagues are growing throughout the City.

Vice Mayor Caraballo suggested having a list of Recognized Users Groups that the City looks at every 5 years for approval . She added that during those 5 years the groups would be allotted a certain amount of field time while other access was made available on a rotating basis.

Councilman Bonna stated he looked forward to obtaining the data and reviewing the information. He added that whatever solution the City Council provides should be flexible to ensure that the space is used efficiently. Councilman Bonna advised he would like for the various Recognized User Groups to be allotted fair use of field time and take demand into consideration.

Director Conrad stated that baseball usually does not present a problem as they were under District 17 so they would be dispersed around three different areas. He advised the issues were with the soccer leagues as

they separated into two leagues 30 years ago and continue to grow. Director Conrad added there should only be one soccer league in the Recognized User Group. He stated he believed there are plenty of fields but it becomes difficult when there are two leagues competing for field space and that is when it becomes challenging for the City to manage. Director Conrad stated they would return with the report and provide the requested information to the City Council. He added that he believed Recognized User Groups can work but the way it works needs to be modified so that the City can better control and provide guidelines to the groups. Director Conrad noted that due to the City's growth the groups are also growing which leads them to outgrow the amount of field space made available.

Mayor Martin advised she looked forward to seeing the information and recommendations.

Director Parmelee continued with the overview of the City's Federal Program. She announced the City was recently awarded Urban Forestry in the amount of \$1 Million dollars.

It was the consensus of the City Council to communicate the newly awarded grant of 1 Million Dollars to plant trees throughout the City and communicate about all the other grants the City has been awarded.

It was the consensus of the City Council to have the City's Youth Council participate in the tree planting program for the City.

There being no further discussion, Councilman Pickett moved to Adopt the 2023/24 City of Port St. Lucie Federal Program. Vice Mayor Caraballo seconded the motion, which passed unanimously by voice vote.

7. Adjourn

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:07 AM.

Daisy Ruiz, Deputy City Clerk

Sally Walsh, City Clerk