

Orange Park, Florida

January 3, 2012

The workshop of the Orange Park Town Council was called to order in the Town Hall Council Chambers at 4:00 p.m. with Mayor Pete Morgan presiding.

Other Councilmen present were Vice-Mayor Meeks, Councilman Renninger, Councilman Howard, and Council Woman Hutton. Also in attendance were Town Manager Cindy Hall, Town Attorney Rob Bradley, and Town Clerk Sarah Campbell.

WATERFRONT PROPERTY UPDATE

Ms. Hall stated that Council has indicated in the past a high priority for acquisition of waterfront property for park use. There are current opportunities for land on Nelson Drive along Doctors Lake, the end of Kingsley Avenue along the St. Johns River, and the street ends along River Road.

She stated that as improvements are planned along Kingsley Avenue the possibility of closing some driveways was discussed. This will likely not happen but there may be opportunities to expand to the north in front of Moosehaven. Cars would be prohibited in this area and only pedestrians would be allowed. There may also be some possibility to purchase the Mason's property on the south side of Kingsley Avenue.

Another option is to construct pocket parks along River Road where the roads dead-end into the river. Title work would be necessary to confirm that the Town is the owner of the right-of-way to the water's edge.

Ms. Hall asked for direction from the Council on whether to move forward with: working with Moosehaven to close a portion of River Road; proceeding with title work for the River Road intersection rights-of-way; and parameters for a purchase agreement for land on Doctors Lake.

Council continued in a discussion of small, medium, and large scale projects and title work.

Councilman Howard expressed opposition to the construction of pocket parks. He prefers the Mason property or the Nelson property.

Vice-Mayor Meeks questioned the funding source for these acquisitions. Ms. Hall stated that there are reserves in the sales tax fund, but that all capital projects compete for those dollars. She stated that a funding plan would be part of a separate discussion.

Council continued in a discussion of the Moosehaven dock. Executive Director John Capes stated that its use was proscribed by the Women of the Moose for use by Moosehaven residents and their guests. He would need to seek permission from them for public access. They also fund the improvements. He did not think the chances were likely that they would approve such a change. Mr. Capes expressed concern with the condition of the road and their attempts to keep vehicles off of the sea wall.

Council Woman Hutton expressed opposition to the pocket parks. She wanted to focus on medium and large scale projects. She stated that the projects need budgets and long range plans.

Mayor Morgan opened the meeting for public comment.

Mr. Don Fone, 145 River Road, expressed concern regarding the poor condition of River Road.

Mr. Mike Choate, 940 River Road, stated that he supports the road closure and is against the pocket parks.

Mr. Vincent Schuppert, 1212 River Road, stated that there is a lift station at one road end and that the Town is not caring for the other road ends. He questioned who the Council was serving with these parks. He expressed opposition to the closing of River Road. He stated that he sent an email to the Town on December 8 regarding the condition of River Road. His home has been burglarized three times.

Mr. Eugene Nix, 862 River Road, asked why River Road would be closed, as the traffic would still come there. He questioned how much of the Nelson property is useable and at what cost. He stated that the Town would need to have a pier 800 feet out in the river to see the manatee. He stated that the Mason property would make a nice park.

Mr. John (unknown surname and address), stated that the Town has given up on past Comprehensive Plans that did not designate River Road as a through street. He has counted over 200 cars there in one time period. He is opposed to the street end parks and supports closing a portion of River Road.

Ms. Caroline Foulk, 1024 River Road, stated that there are barriers at the street ends and no room for benches.

Mr. Hank Racer, 1050 River Road, stated that in 1990 when the Town was given the right-of-way, the Town Attorney stated that there would only be a road and sidewalk; not benches, garbage cans, etc. He stated that former Chief Nelson studied this issue and stated that there were public safety concerns with closing a portion of River Road.

Mr. Jack Watson, 634 River Road, questioned the purpose of the Mason Property.

Mr. John Capes Moosehaven Executive Director, 1522 River Road, stated that dock sharing was not likely to be approved. He is opposed to the construction of a dock as there is no parking, although the Kingsley project will add some. He stated that a walking path and modest seating would not impact Moosehaven. His main concerns are traffic on the road and parking along the seawall. He thinks a park is a good idea and would present a reasonable plan for public use.

No one else was present to address the Council on this issue.

Ms. Hall asked for Council support to move forward with discussions with Moosehaven for a joint park including closure of a portion of River Road and scheduling of a workshop with the residents on this topic.

Councilman Howard moved to pursue park properties with Moosehaven, the Masons, and the Nelson property. Councilman Renninger seconded the motion. Vice-Mayor Meeks announced

his intention to abstain from this vote as the Nelson property includes property owned by him. The motion passed unanimously, 4 to 0.

Mayor Morgan moved to schedule a public hearing regarding the closure of the end of River Road during a regular Council Meeting. Council Woman Hutton seconded the motion, which passed unanimously, 5 to 0.

Ms. Hall discussed the timing and coordination of the three project areas. Council continued in a discussion of the two general locations, and the eminence of making a decision.

Mayor Morgan moved to discard the idea of developing pocket parks on River Road. Council Woman Hutton seconded the motion, which passed unanimously, 5 to 0.

Attorney Bradley expressed concern about separating out the discussion of River Road closure from the larger discussion of the Kingsley area.

Councilman Renninger stated that he is looking for staff reports on the Moosehaven, Mason property, and Kingsley Avenue area as one option and the Nelson property as a second option.

CITIZEN COMMITTEES

Ms. Hall asked for a review of the five committees named in the Standing Rules and appointed on an annual basis. She sought clarification on their purpose and effectiveness. She expressed concern that they are not being used effectively as some have not met at all.

Council Woman Hutton stated that she supports dissolution of the Land Use Planning & Policy Committee as it will no longer be a part of the Land Development Regulations site approval process.

Council Woman Hutton moved to abolish the Land Use Planning & Policy Committee. Mayor Morgan seconded the motion.

Attorney Bradley advised that the Committee would not be abolished immediately, but the Standing Rules would need to be amended and come back before the Council. Council continued in a discussion of the Land Development Regulation changes and the timing of those changes.

Ms. Hall stated that she would like clarification on the goals of the committees and recommended that the committees be amended. Councilman Renninger requested a review of all of the committees and their roles followed by recommendations for change from staff.

Council Woman Hutton stated that she is very confident after discussions with Ms. Ray that there will not be a need for this committee.

The motion to abolish the Land Use Planning & Policy Committee failed in a 2 to 3 vote, with Councilmen Howard, Renninger and Meeks dissenting.

Ms. Hall stated that she would like to see citizen committees participate in a strategic visioning process. Other areas might be economic & community development, customer service, strategic planning and other short term task forces.

Mr. Frank Ricketts, 2253 Marcia Court, stated that he did a thorough evaluation of the Town's committees and made several recommendations in the past. He will provide the material to Ms. Hall for review.

Ms. Hall stated that she would bring back a review of all of the committees with pros and cons for each.

Councilman Howard noted the need for a Town mission and vision statement.

TOWN PRIORITIES

Ms. Hall provided a list of possible priorities for the Council to rank as high, medium, or low. She asked them to complete the list and submit it to her.

OTHER ITEMS TO DISCUSS OR PROVIDE DIRECTION

Ms. Campbell stated that the Charter Review Committee recommended seven changes to the Town Charter. These will be brought to the Council for consideration at the February 7 meeting. She asked if there are other Charter modifications that the Council would like to address in this year's election. Council asked for a staff report on suggested Charter amendments.

There being no further discussion by the Council, Mayor Morgan adjourned the meeting at 5:55 p.m.