

MINUTES
CITY COMMISSION MEETING
May 9, 2022

The City Commission met this date for a workshop in the Commission Chambers. A quorum being present, the meeting was called to order around 5:30 PM with the following in attendance.

Mayor	:	Hubert B Smith
Commissioners	:	Kay Hamilton
	:	Christine Wasdin
	:	Edward Crosby
	:	Clark (Tom) Browning, IV
City Clerk	:	Tammy Johnson
Police Chief	:	Joe Hart
Public Works Director:		Nathan Kelley
Recorder	:	Beth Millsaps

Others in attendance: (Not inclusive) Donna Hastings, Laura Palmer, Patrick Palmer, Joyce and Bert Marthis, Micki Miller, Michael and Jackie Gilliam, Jonathan and Amanda Hicks, Mark Norris, Shayne Betts, Jack Gill, David Nichols, Bob Bachelor, Terry Emley, Tom Jackley, Daniel Irwin, Janet Fox, Bo Pharr, Rhonda Pharr, Tara Sandlin, Neal Shermer, Trish Rowe, Annie and John Cameron, Brandon Wood, Joe Cobb, Tonya Harris, Burtons, Les Chambers

Workshop – Senior Center/Community Center

Mayor Smith said Mr. Dykes, the city’s attorney, has prepared a lease agreement for the Senior Center. Mr. Dykes said he would like to remind everyone that this meeting is a workshop and there will be no vote taken in this session, but in the regular meeting there can be. Mr. Dykes said the first question is does the Commission want to establish another board or have a 3rd party lease the building and property as is and then the city would not have to run it. Mr. Dykes said the city can lease the building for a dollar, the committee will establish itself as a 501c3 and that will get the city out of the business. Mr. Dykes said we would also need to work out a lease with the Council on Aging. He said the lease option is a starting point, shifts the responsibility to the tenants. Comm. Wasdin said she had read all the paperwork from the last meeting, it looks like city hall will schedule the events and handle the financials, the Board of Directors would run the events. She said that way the responsibility will fall on the board. Comm. Wasdin said in her opinion it comes down to how much responsibility the citizens’ committee will have or that the city wants to give. Mayor Smith said 501c3 would run the community center, the city would still donate the money for the electric and water bills and keep track of the citizens donations. He said the comments that he has seen from next door neighbor have been very one sided, the lease is for a commercial building, and he has rented commercial buildings before, and the city’s lease agreement is standard for rentals. Comm. Browning said the liability insurance at \$1 million is like a kick in the teeth. Comm. Browning answering yes to Comm Wasdin’s question will they need seed money to startup? Comm. Browning said they need to be able to get started. Mayor Smith asked what bills does the city pay for the center? Mrs. Johnson said the city pays the cable and the utilities, we have received \$6,003.95 since we have had the option to donate on the city bills along with the \$8,000 from Ms. Shirley. Mrs. Johnson said she believes senior citizen center has

1 a budget around \$8,000 this year. Comm. Wasdin said they want to revive activities and with baby
2 boomers getting older it will definitely be something good for the community. Comm. Wasdin said
3 she sees the senior center growing, the draw back with making community center a 501c3 is that the
4 center would need to find their own accountant. Comm. Wasdin suggests Ms. Miller, with the Council
5 on Aging, handle the calendar. Mrs. Johnson said the Community Center is looking to make into a
6 venue, host events, to take it from senior center to a community center when the Council on Aging is
7 not using the building. Comm. Hamilton said we would need to have a strong lease where the senior
8 citizen center has priority over the community center. Mayor Smith said he would not want the seniors
9 thrown out as the community center takes over. Comm. Hamilton said any lease agreement or event
10 agreement would need to state clearly and strongly no alcohol, which is an issue you will need to have
11 control over.

12 Mr. Jack Gill, 263 Glenview Avenue, said with the event lease, the first line states the
13 Valparaiso Community Center is available for use outside the hours of usage of the Walton-Okaloosa
14 Council on Aging for senior activities, which is Monday through Friday 8am to 12pm. We want to
15 hold events for everyone, no one will be excluded, hold events for the entire community, including
16 seniors. He said with the event lease, he wrote it or more copied it from others, plagiarize if you will.
17 There would be no event held after 10 pm. Comm. Hamilton asked who would babysit building when
18 events are going on. Mr. Gill said someone will be there to be responsible for the event.

19 Mr. Patrick Palmer, 266 Edge Avenue, said he understands concerns the Commission has about
20 dealing with events, we can what if a situation to death, what may or may not happen. Mr. Palmer said
21 we want to give to the community. He said when he was running for office, he knows that Mayor
22 Smith and Comm. Browning have heard similar things, people are concerned that opening the city up
23 could cause it to become another Panama City Beach or some sort of party town. He said that is not
24 going to happen, Valparaiso will not be a party town. Comm. Hamilton said we are trying to avoid any
25 pit falls, any type of event venue should be very fluid. Mr. Palmer said he has run security for some
26 bars, he understands that people can get out of hand. Comm. Wasdin asked do you want a 501c3 or for
27 the city to run? She asked if the board of the community center would setup the events, oversee the
28 building? Mr. Palmer said the board would want to make sure the building was ready for the seniors
29 in, and any money would go to the city to be put in the appropriate account. Comm. Wasdin said
30 would a name change to community center affect the city's relationship with Council on Aging? Mr.
31 Palmer said the idea to rebrand to community center is for the events – such as special event at the
32 community center instead of at the senior center. Chief Hart says on the event lease it says events end
33 at 10pm. Mr. Palmer said yes, that is according to ordinance. Chief Hart said the building is right in
34 the middle of a residential neighborhood area for so much to be going on into the evening hours. Mr.
35 Palmer said that is something they could look at amending. Comm Hamilton said another thing that is

1 difficult to handle is keeping noise under control. Mr. Palmer said we could set the time to end event
2 by 9pm out by 10pm. Mr. Palmer said that is why the committee wanted the Commission to look at
3 the event lease to tweak it. Mr. Palmer said we need the agreement to be solid.

4 Mayor Smith said he sees things posted on the next door neighbor chat line people are driving
5 this rumor that the city's lease agreement was driven by him and the city attorney, he said him and the
6 attorney never discussed a lease agreement and what the contents were. Mayor Smith said if we were
7 selecting a committee that was representing the city there would be people I would not support. Mayor
8 Smith said he does not appreciate people pointing fingers at him, he did not have anything to do with
9 the lease. Mayor Smith said if you are on a city board you should not be allowed to post negative
10 things about the leadership or the city. Mr. Palmer said that goes against the rights of free speech. Mr.
11 Palmer said when you have an agreement and the two names on that agreement are the mayor and the
12 attorney, you assume they made it up. Comm. Wasdin said we are all your neighbors here, to say
13 mean things on any social media platform is not a good idea. She said the Commission are also
14 volunteers. Mr. Bob Bachelor, 154 Grandview Avenue, said what is being implied is wrong, the
15 mayor signs everything because he is the mayor. Mr. Daniel Irwin, 184 Chicago Avenue, said this
16 would have been alleviated if the document said drafted by with a date and noted as draft. Mr. Dykes
17 said so the fact that it says insert name and blank spaces on the document is not good enough for you,
18 it has to say draft in order to be a draft otherwise it is not a draft? Mr. Dykes said this is not a legal
19 requirement. There were multiple people speaking at the same time. Chief Hart stood up at the dais
20 and called the meeting to order. He said we all want what is best for the city, we are neighbors and
21 should act as such. Mrs. Joyce Marthis, 142 Chicago Avenue, said we wouldn't be discussing this if
22 the Commission hadn't wanted to raze the building. Mayor Smith said that is not true it was not a city
23 decision to close the Senior Center and closed the workshop at 6:12PM.

24 **ADJOURN**

25 Mayor Smith closed the workshop at 6:12PM.

26
27
28 _____
29 Hubert B. Smith
30 Mayor

31
32 _____
33 Catherine Hamilton
34 Chair, VCA

35 ATTEST:

36 _____
37 Tammy Johnson, CMC
38 City Clerk

39 ***A recording of the May 9, 2022, Commission workshop will be kept on the City's secure
40 file server as a permanent part of these minutes.***