

# MINUTES

## KEY COLONY BEACH CITY COMMISSION TOWNHALL MEETING

Monday, March 18<sup>th</sup>, 2024 – 9:30 am  
Marble Hall, 600 W. Ocean Drive, Key Colony Beach  
& via Zoom Conferencing

- 1. Call to Order, Pledge of Allegiance, Prayer, Roll Call:** The Key Colony Beach City Commission Townhall Meeting was called to order by Mayor Joey Raspe followed by the Pledge of Allegiance, Prayer, and Rollcall. **Present:** Mayor Joey Raspe, Vice-Mayor Freddie Foster, Commissioner Tom Harding, Commissioner Tom DiFransico. **Also present:** Chief of Police Kris DiGiovanni, Administrative Assistant Cheryl Baker, City Clerk Silvia Gransee:

**Public Attendance:** Approximately 30

Mayor Raspe informed on the format of the day's meeting.

- 2. Introduction of Guests:** Mayor Raspe invited for guest speakers.

Marilyn Avery, 79 7<sup>th</sup> Street, spoke to the City Commission in opposition to solar panels at the retention pond.

- 3. Mayor Raspe**
  - a. Topic: Post Office**

Mayor Raspe updated that lease negotiations are being finalized and the Post Office to be moving out of the trailer back into the old building. Mayor Raspe informed that a new HVAC system was installed and new paint colors were received per USPS requirements. Mayor Raspe advised that once a new fully executed lease agreement is received, the USPS will install new counters and move the boxes back. Mayor Raspe informed for the projected move to be in May and for the Post Office staff to be excited to be back in the building.

Mayor Raspe further informed on the upcoming City Commission meeting agenda to include a recommendation to the Postal Service for the Mayor to hold negotiations for the City to expedite the proceedings.

- b. Public Comment & Commissioner Input:** There were no comments or questions.

Mayor Raspe informed for the Public Works Department having helped with the painting process to prepare the building for occupancy.

- 4. Commissioner Harding**
  - a. Topic: Review of the Special Magistrate Process**

Commissioner Harding gave a review of the Special Magistrate process which was implicated in June of 2023. Commissioner Harding informed that the purpose of the Special Magistrate is to review code issues that have been brought forward by the Code Officer and to make a decision on the next step. Commissioner Harding explained for the process being objective and neutral and appeals to be less likely because of improved legal knowledge. Commissioner Harding informed for the Florida League of Cities having found more efficiency, improved standards, and the elimination of conflict of neighbors judging neighbors. Commissioner Harding reported having attended all Special Magistrate meetings since implemented and stated to be impressed despite initial opposition. Commissioner Harding informed on fair billing, good

recovery cost, and more efficient meetings with no quorum concerns. Commissioner Harding stated for the judge to be objective and for meetings being scheduled on a regular basis. Commissioner Harding stated for the Special Magistrate to be fair in its process and cost the city less.

**b. Public Comment & Commissioner Input**

David McKeehan, 2 7<sup>th</sup> Street, questioned the efficiency and speed given by the demographics of the city and the concern not to be with residents but vacation renters.

Commissioner Harding agreed with David McKeehan’s concern on a quick response and spoke on the need for good code enforcement.

Joe Schmidt, 430 4<sup>th</sup> Street, asked Mayor Raspe for his opinion.

Mayor Raspe stated to have been against the process but has observed an expedited process and the emotional process from neighbors against neighbors having been taken out. Mayor Raspe informed for the Special Magistrate basing his facts on the rule of the City and the process being cost efficient. Mayor Raspe stated his initial main objection was concern for the small Hometown and government feel disappearing but stated for the process to be working okay in his opinion.

Sandy Bachman, 171 8<sup>th</sup> Street, asked on the schedule for the Special Magistrate. City Clerk Gransee explained for Code Hearings to be scheduled tentatively every second Wednesday a month.

Commissioner Harding explained prior Code Board procedures and frustrations with an unobjective process. Mayor Raspe added for the schedule of the Special Magistrate being the same as it was for the Code Board.

Laurie Swanson, 620 9<sup>th</sup> Street, spoke on having attended several hearings and observed for the Special Magistrate not being prepared prior to the hearing. Laurie Swanson gave further observations on the Special Magistrate and asked Commissioner Harding to elaborate on the Florida League of Cities comparisons with other cities.

Commissioner Harding explained that the Special Magistrate does not prepare before a meeting to not form a bias and not to review any materials prior. Commissioner Harding gave his observation of the Special Magistrate listening to the respondents and encouraging communication. Commissioner Harding informed that other cities vary in size but regardless of size the same problems having been observed.

Commissioner DiFransico stated for the Special Magistrate maintaining the rules of evidence and recalled the same rules of proceedings when he was on the Code Board.

**5. Vice-Mayor Foster**

**a. Topic: Retention Pond Solar Panels**

Vice-Mayor Foster spoke on the proposed plans to install solar panels at the retention pond with the intent to reduce or eliminate cost to run the sewer plant. Vice-Mayor Foster informed of the topic being on the upcoming City Commission agenda and invited input from residents on the topic.

**b. Public Comment & Commissioner Input**

Ted Bently, 980 Shelter Bay Drive, stated to be directly impacted by the proposed project and informed on challenges with solar in a salt environment. Ted Bentley stated for the system to require maintenance cost and spoke on the benefits of a cost benefit analysis. Ted Bentley informed for the retention pond being a drainage pond and spoke on its purpose to drain water. Ted Bently talked about reflection issues in homes, causing confusion with migratory birds, and vegetation most likely to survive due to heat accumulation. Ted Bentley stated for solar panels to be unpleasant to look at and predicted not to do well in the event of a

hurricane. Ted Bentley stated for there to be unintended consequences and asked residents to speak up against the project. Ted Bentley gave his opinion on placing solar panels on carports being too expensive due to hurricane requirements and reiterated not spending money on the proposed project.

Lin Walsh, 755 W. Ocean Drive, former Utility Board Member, informed of a malfunction of the retention pond after Hurricane Irma and cautioned to check with State regulations to not interfere with the Sewer Plant. Lin Walsh recalled not receiving clear answers of the functioning of the pond in the past and to make sure not to violate State regulations.

Mayor Raspe informed on the last Beautification meeting discussing alternate uses for the pond which included functionality in addition to be aesthetically pleasing.

Lin Walsh recalled that it took time to bring back the pond back to where it is today and to understand the concept of solar but to be careful not to malfunction again.

Commissioner Harding explained the definition and designation of a dry and wet retention pond. Commissioner Harding informed that the city has a dry retention pond permit and that Jason Shepler reached out to the State to inquire about the requirements.

Lin Walsh further commented on the importance of how the neighbors feel about the proposal.

Commissioner Harding explained that trees and bushes would shield the solar panels and the cost could be part of a grant, however, the first question is to find out if the State approves.

Vice-Mayor Foster explained his intention to receive public input prior to any decision making.

Commissioner Harding explained the possibility of implementation of a smaller solar field within the plant as a first phase, followed by a phase 2 after.

David McKeehan, 2 7<sup>th</sup> Street, Beautification Committee Member, spoke on the City Commissions request to look into the beautification of the retention pond. David McKeehan informed on the current specifications of the pond and supported Mr. Bentley's view on being a drainage pond. David McKeehan recommended holding off on the discussion on solar panels until a recommendation can be made from the Beautification Committee.

Commissioner Harding spoke on having been on the Utility Board and gave details on prior considerations and decisions. Commissioner Harding informed on requirements for the type of plants to use and to be in the process of setting up a meeting with Jason Shepler. Mayor Raspe advised that the Beautification Committee received a list of salt tolerant plants.

Commissioner Harding informed that the South Florida Water Management District in West Palm Beach has dry and wet retention ponds in front of their office and to be available to look at by the public. David McKeehan thanked Commissioner Harding for his advice.

Chet Dunn, 101 E. Ocean Drive, congratulated the Commission on its first Commission meeting back in Marble Hall. Chet Dunn expressed his opinion that the retention pond is the most unpleasant thing in the city to look at and for solar panels to not improve the look. Chet Dunn gave caution on repairing electrical issues in a retention pond, supported the ideas of reeds, and gave further details on possible improvements.

Commissioner Harding spoke on prior drainage issues with the pond during his time on the Utility Board and suggested improvements could be done through grant funding.

Ted Bentley, 980 Shelter Bay, spoke on the area before and after Hurricane Irma, and recalled the pond draining properly before the hurricane. Ted Bentley informed for the trash and heavy equipment having compacted the area which created a dust bowl. Ted Bentley explained that prior planting of sad was not the

right solution and proposed, that a small amount of money could be allocated to dig out and change a small portion of the area to observe improvements. Ted Bentley gave further thoughts on cost and possible improvements.

Donald Steamer, 311 11<sup>th</sup> Street, Utility Board Member, asked for clarification on the topic being discussed at tomorrow's Utility Board meeting. City Clerk Gransee informed for the topic being on the City Commission agenda for a recommendation to the Utility Board on how to go forward.

**6. Commissioner DiFransico**

**a. Topic: Update on the City Charter Review**

Commissioner DiFransico spoke on the City Charter and informed on location and purpose of the document. Commissioner DiFransico reported meeting with Lynn Tipton from the Florida League of Cities alongside City Clerk Gransee and received recommendations on how to complete a review, what questions to ask, and the importance of taking your time during a review. Commissioner DiFransico suggested holding a Townhall meeting on the topic and explained for the meeting having to follow sunshine rules as well as the need for agendas and meeting minutes. Commissioner DiFransico further informed that recommended changes have to be put up for a referendum in an election and voted upon by the public. Commissioner DiFransico recommended to defer discussions until the beginning of the next season for more residents being able to participate as well as a busy current workload.

**b. Public Comment & Commissioner Input**

Mayor Raspe agreed with Commissioner DiFransico and talked on the importance of transparency with residents.

**7. Next Townhall Meeting:** Monday, April 15th, 2024 at 9:30 am: Mayor Raspe reminded of the next Townhall meeting and invited for comments and suggestions to be submitted to City Clerk Gransee.

Joe Turgeon. 310 9<sup>th</sup> Street, spoke on the upcoming 7-meter bridge run on Thursday after the City Commission meeting and informed for the event to be free of charge and for proceeds from shirt sales to go to the City for Sunset Park and beautification efforts. Joe Turgeon further informed for the Key Colony Inn having agreed to open Happy Hour at 2:15 pm and for participants to meet at 1:45 pm at the 'What's Your Hurry' sign. Joe Turgeon informed on the need to sign up, complete waivers, and further informed on planned surprises for the race. Joe Turgeon informed for shirts to be available at Sunset Park from 6pm until Sunset.

There were no other comments.

**8. Adjournment:** The meeting adjourned at 10:40 am.

Respectfully submitted,

*Silvia Gransee*

City Clerk

***ADOPTED: April 18, 2024***

*Silvia Gransee*

*City Clerk*