

**JOINT CITY OF VERO BEACH/INDIAN RIVER COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS WORKSHOP
MINUTES
OCTOBER 24, 2023 2:00 P.M.
INDIAN RIVER COUNTY MAIN LIBRARY
1600 21st Street
Vero Beach, Florida 32960**

PRESENT VERO BEACH CITY COUNCIL: John Cotugno, Mayor; Linda Moore, Vice Mayor; Tracey Zudans, Councilmember; John Carroll, Councilmember and Rey Neville, Councilmember **Also Present:** Monte Falls, City Manager; John Turner, City Attorney and Tammy Bursick, City Clerk

PRESENT BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS: Joe Earman, Chairman; Susan Adams, Vice Chairman; Deryl Loar, Commissioner; Joe Flescher, Commissioner and Laura Moss, Commissioner **Also Present:** John Titkanich, County Administrator and Bill DeBrall, County Attorney

1. Call to Order & Introductions

The Board of County Commissioners and City Council introduced themselves. The City and County staff also introduced themselves as well as Mr. Tom Lanahan, Executive Director of the Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council (TCRPC), who facilitated the meeting today.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

Mr. Lanahan led the City Council, Board of County Commissioners, and the audience in the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag.

3. Topics for Discussion:

A) Utilities

- 1) Service Territory**
- 2) Plant Capacity**
- 3) Septic to Sewer**

Mr. Monte Falls, City Manager, commented that there are two (2) utility providers in this County and they are the City of Vero Beach and Indian River County. He understands that the State has put in a mandate that all homes in the State of Florida need to be hooked up to sewer by 2030. He said that the City is in the process of building a new Water Reclamation Facility and decommissioning their old facility off the Lagoon. He asked if Indian River County would need some capacity from their new Water Reclamation Facility.

Mr. John Titkanich, County Administrator, commented that this same matter about the sewer connections was brought up when the County Commissioners met with the City of Sebastian. He said that they would like to explore this opportunity to see how it would work. He would like to continue having conversations at the administration level.

Mrs. Moss commented on how expensive it would be to build a new facility and this would save the community some money. She said saving money was a good thing to do.

Mrs. Adams had some questions on how this partnership would work. She asked Mr. Falls how much extra capacity will be available and what the City's future needs are.

Mr. Falls explained they would have a capacity of 5 million and need 4 ½ million, but the Plant can be expanded to 7 million if it needs to be.

Mrs. Adams commented by expanding the Plant the cost would go up. Mr. Falls agreed that it would.

Mr. Loar asked what the timeline was for the Plant.

Mr. Falls stated that construction would begin in the summer of 2024.

Mayor Cotugno added that the City has a septic to sewer solution that warrants further discussion.

Mrs. Zudans hoped that by having this meeting today it would be a start for better communications not only with the County, but with the other surrounding municipalities.

Mr. Carroll asked the County if their plans were to continue serving the same residents or would they be adding Indian River Shores as their customers.

Chairman Earman explained their intention is to work together to meet whatever needs are in the community. It would be up to Indian River Shores to decide what they want to do. That is their decision and theirs alone.

It was agreed that both the County Commission and the City Council will continue the discussion concerning capacity through the administration.

B) Recreation

1) Parks

Ms. Beth Powell, Indian River County Recreation Director, went over the County's different Park facilities and showed them on the County's updated website.

2) Boat Ramps

Mr. Falls brought up the need for more boat ramps in Indian River County. He said the City's boat ramp located at Riverside Park was damaged by the last hurricane and will not be fully operational until next summer. He said this has put a lot of pressure and more traffic at the boat ramp at MacWilliams Park. He said that the Three Corners project will not have a boat ramp, but it will have a small Marina.

Chairman Earman agreed there was a need on the West side of town for a boat ramp and this is something that they could work together on.

Mr. Falls brought up that the Indian River Land Trust owns a lot of property and maybe both the City and the County could work with them on this matter.

Mr. Carroll passed out a picture of a boat ramp (attached to the original minutes) located in Boca Raton. He said that is the nicest boat ramp that he has ever seen.

Mrs. Zudans reiterated about the wear and tear on the other boat ramp in the City located at MacWilliams Park. She said because the boat ramp at Riverside Park is not available, people are using the boat ramp at MacWilliams Park. She said that they need to have this conversation sooner than later.

Mrs. Moss asked if the MacWilliams Park boat ramp was a part of the Marina project. Mr. Falls answered no.

Mr. Titkanich noted that there was a study done 15 years ago concerning boat ramps. He would look at updating that and then they can look at where a suitable boat ramp site could be located.

Mr. Falls added that it is costing the City a half million dollars to repair the boat ramp and they are hopeful that FEMA will pay for half of the cost.

Mr. Titkanich thanked the City for getting their Ordinance back to the County on the Anchoring Limitation Areas. He is working with the legal staff to move that forward.

3) Lifeguards

Mr. Falls brought up how the City is built out and their population remains around 17,000 people and the County is continuing to grow with a population of 180,000 people. He said the residents of the City and the County continue to use their beaches and it is costing the City close to \$800,000 a year for their lifeguards.

Mr. Flescher felt this was something that they could work together on. He said that is a lot of money to spend for the City to have to guard their three (3) beaches.

Mrs. Zudans brought up that public safety was the number one issue. She said that if they decide to have all the lifeguards under one umbrella they need to make sure that the public is safe.

Mrs. Moss recalled when the County gave money to the City for their Recreation Department activities. She was told at that time it was a County/City Recreation Department.

Chairman Earman agreed that public safety was priority number one. He said the County has the ability at their facilities to train the lifeguards. He said bottom line is the beaches are protected whether they are in the County or the City. He said if they had trained professionals at a reasonable price they might be able to save some money.

Mr. Carroll reminded everyone that City residents are also County residents and are paying for any services that the County provides.

Mrs. Moore made it clear that the City lifeguards are trained professionals. She said that the City is interested in working with the County on this, but the costs would need to be worked out.

C) Regional Growth Impact on the City of Vero Beach

1) Roadways

Mr. Falls brought up the impact that growth is having on their roads. He brought up the Aviation Boulevard project and expanding Aviation Boulevard. He would like to see that project brought back up

and on the drawing board. He said right now it is not even in the five-year plan. He knows that the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) brings it up from time to time.

Chairman Earman agreed that the Aviation Boulevard project needs to be looked at.

Mrs. Adams thought that the right-of-way needed to go through the Airport. Mr. Falls said since the City is a partner they feel that they would get agreement to facilitate a right-of-way in that area.

2) Building Department

3) Fire Marshall

Mayor Cotugno brought up the Three Corners Project and the new Water Reclamation Facility. He said that these two (2) projects are very significant in Vero Beach and there are some concerns that both the Building Department and the Fire Marshall are going to hold up these projects. He said they want to be ready to move on the project when the shovels go in the ground and want to be reassured that these two departments are working at their peak performance.

Mr. Titkanich expressed that the County is aware that these departments have not been as effective or efficient as they could be. Since he was hired he has been doing some reorganization within many of the departments in the County, which has been crucial. A new system has been implemented in the Building Department, which should help with efficiency once all the kinks have been worked out. He said they need some time to work these things out, but he understands everyone's frustration. They are committed to fixing the problems.

Mrs. Moore commented that since the County continues to grow that maybe it is time that the City looks at having their own Building Director and Fire Marshall to take some of the pressure off of the County.

Mr. Titkanich felt that it would be a challenge if the City was to do this on their own. He said part of the solution is that they work together. He said one of the top priorities that have been made is fixing these problems.

The County Commission all agreed that this is one of their biggest issues with their constituents and they know the problems that exist.

Mrs. Adams brought up that the City of Fellsmere has their own Building Director who works for them part time and has another job. She said it is hard to get him out to inspect something and it is expensive. They also contract out their Fire Marshall who comes out to approve the events held in Fellsmere and charges \$250.00, which is also very expensive.

Mrs. Moore hoped that with the County's growth that the administration will be able to solve these problems.

Mayor Cotugno wondered if the County would consider dedicating a team to handle the Three Corners project. This would be advantageous both for the City and the County.

Mr. Titkanich said that they would consider it and understood that delays cost money.

Mrs. Zudans complimented Mr. Titkanich on what he has done in the six (6) months that he has been County Administrator. She asked Mr. Titkanich if he would provide them with updates on the projects that he is working on or have been completed, which would be helpful to the City as they move forward.

Mr. Flescher commented that what the County Administrator has done so far has greatly improved the problems that have been occurring.

Mayor Cotugno reiterated how important these two (2) City projects were and they need to move along expeditiously.

Chairman Earman suggested asking the two Attorneys and Administrators to work these things out. He said the Three Corners project is very important to the County as well. He said if there is anything they can do to help with this project to please give them a chance.

Mr. Loar commented that they get asked for things from all of the municipalities located in the County and they have to be mindful of their "pocketbook" because they can't pay for it all. He thought today's meeting went well and wondered what was the potential of meeting again.

Chairman Earman stated that the City of Sebastain agreed to meeting twice a year and he wondered if the City of Vero Beach wanted to do the same.

The City Council all agreed that was a good idea.

Mrs. Zudans asked that the City be notified when the County is meeting with the other municipalities. She attended the meeting held in Sebastian and learned a lot. She said it is good for them all to know what is going on.

4. Closing Comments/Next Steps

The Board of County Commissioners and the City Council will hold joint meetings twice a year.

5. Adjournment

Today's meeting adjourned at 3:38 p.m.

/tb