



**MINUTES OF THE CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION
CITY OF NEW PORT RICHEY**

**NEW PORT RICHEY CITY HALL COUNCIL CHAMBERS
5919 MAIN STREET, NEW PORT RICHEY, FLORIDA**

January 2, 2019

5:00 PM

**ORDER OF
BUSINESS**

1 Call to Order - Roll Call

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Rob Marlowe at 5:00 pm. Those in attendance were, Deputy Mayor Jeff Starkey, Councilman Chopper Davis, Councilman Peter Altman and Councilman Matt Murphy. Also in attendance were City Manager Debbie Manns, City Clerk Judy Meyers, Economic Development Director Mario Iezzoni, Development Director George Romagnoli and Technology Solutions Director Bryan Weed.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

2 Main Street Program Discussion - Page 2

City Manager Manns introduced the item to Council. City Manager Manns began her presentation by stating the purpose of the Main Street Program. She stated the organization is for the betterment of a downtown area. The City's program has been in operation for thirty years. The program is operated by a Board of Directors and committee. She then highlighted the four tenets of the program. In the current scenario, the Main Street program is lacking in volunteers and staff and as a result of that the program has gone dormant. She stated the purpose of the work session was to discuss the City's role moving forward in regards to the Main Street Program. City Manager Manns stated that up until September 2018 the City was in an agreement with Main Street. The last quarter they received payment was June 2018.

Councilman Davis asked if any Main Street representatives were in attendance and City Manager Manns stated Bob Smallwood was here. Mr. Smallwood came to the podium to give the state of the organization. He stated that there are currently four Board members. He stated there is a positive balance in funds. The organization has been in discussions with the Chamber since the summer. He stated the organization needs to refocus on critical needs. The program is basically at a restructuring point.

Liz Juffin from the West Pasco Chamber of Commerce came forward and stated they have been exploring the option of working with the Main Street Program. She stated the Chamber and

Main Street's missions are similar. There are opportunities to enhance the downtown and surrounding areas. The business model of how the Chamber operates is similar to the Main Street model. Councilman Davis stated that Main Street has two 501C3's whereas the Chamber has a 501C6 so there is a slight difference in operating models. Deputy Mayor Starkey asked if the Chamber would take over the program without any funding from the City. Ms. Juffin stated that it is not a matter of money it is a matter of implementation.

John Gilliss came forward and stated that Main Street has been there when he needed them and it has been a wonderful relationship. He thinks that it could be great to have the Chamber and Main Street together.

Kelly Hackman came forward and stated that she believes in the prongs of the Main Street program but has not had the support. She stated there definitely needs to be support from an organization as we grow.

Don Cadle came forward and stated that he has been a downtown business owner for forty-five years. He stated the City has done a great deal to make the city vibrant since Mr. Iezzoni came to the city. There has to be a well defined benefit for New Port Richey.

Kira Atkinson came forward and stated that the City should consider funding events hosted by the downtown business owners that they are currently funding on their own. The bigger picture is to create a downtown business alliance. The purpose of the alliance is to provide leadership in addition to marketing and promotion efforts. She referenced letters of support from businesses. Councilman Davis asked about the upcoming promotion in January. Lia Gallegos came forward and stated that the January event is to promote businesses that are open on Sunday. Ms. Atkinson stated that all City events are shared on the Rock the Boat page. Ms. Gallegos stated that these promotions are set up to directly benefit the businesses.

Liz Juffin came forward and stated there are other parts to Main Street program being successful besides events. There is grant funding available. It cannot just be about events. She stated there is a disconnect between the Chamber and the City which she would like to bridge. The natural collaboration between the Chamber and Main Street falls logically in place.

Jeff Wright came forward and stated they will be celebrating twenty-five years in the city this month. He stated what works for him is not large events. If you close off Main Street or the downtown you hurt businesses. He is interested in an alliance of business owners who have come together to work on promotions and cross-merchandising.

David Maharajh came forward and stated he moved his practice to the downtown about four years ago. The Main Street association asked him to be a member. He pays dues each year but does not get any support. He was approached to join the Rock the Boat alliance. He sees value of being part of a group that will support. Rock the Boat has rebranded how people see events downtown over the last eight months.

Maria Reza came forward and stated the four point methodology is very important. The director should be the community liaison. New Port Richey is fortunate to have a such great downtown. The key is having stakeholders.

Denise Johnson came forward and stated that she loves the downtown and likes what is happening. When she was putting together the Pride festival she tried to contact Main Street but never heard from them. She wound up going to each business and speaking to them. She stated that Rock the Boat has a proven history of making events happen.

Frank Starkey came forward and stated that in the last year the tune has changed about the town. Events are a quick goal. The purpose of promoting downtown is to get people into the businesses everyday not just during an event. Big events in the park pull business away from downtown and do not generate new customers to come back. He is concerned that local population will be

tapped out with events. We need to be a regional draw. We have a story to tell now and we need to get it out through marketing and advertising.

Anthony Avila came forward and stated that Pride is a downtown event but he does not want to be an event in a downtown that is not thriving. The Pride event will continue to focus on bringing people into the downtown businesses.

Joe Karl, III came forward and stated it is his vision to make downtown the original music district of Tampa Bay. He stated Rock the Boat has a unique perspective. They have vision for the downtown. Rock the Boat helped him sculpt the idea for locals night. He encouraged Council to empower them in any way.

Councilman Altman began his comments by thanking everyone in the audience for attending. The Main Street program has been a long process. The Main Street program is operated in conjunction with the Florida League of Cities and the Florida Redevelopment Association. The City paid money on the Gibbs Study. The Harbors Plan won an award for one of the best urban plans. It is redevelopment for West Pasco. Wherever we look everyone has tried to improve the city. There is over \$2million a year going into the CRA. Those funds can only be used to engage the plan and is currently working on the next thirty years. There is an excitement about the downtown. The Main Street program was initially for smaller cities. In his view, the allocation of funds was changed during the budget. Find a way to support and fund. He stated that the thirty year plan coming up there is no funds budgeted and \$15k budgeted in the CRA so the CRA has to meet again and no decisions will be made here today. We cannot afford to lose the support of the County or the Chamber or the Main Street program if it still exists. What will really solve the City's problems is residential growth who will support local businesses on a daily basis.

Deputy Mayor Starkey asked Councilman Altman what is his view on Main Street. Every year Main Street comes and asks for money. The organization itself has made questionable business decisions. Councilman Altman stated that with the City acting as the CRA we are responsible for what happens. Councilman Altman stated we need to use our CRA to outsource to Rock the Boat to do what everyone is asking to be done. He stated the Chamber is sitting on valuable property right now. We need to have dialogue with everyone. Councilman Altman stated the gateway is a monstrous opportunity to reach out to US19. He stated that Rock the Boat should get the funds in the budget now to do what the community is asking for. He stated we need to sit back and talk with the Chamber so there is no win-loss.

Councilman Davis stated that Main Street as it exists today is dead. He challenges the Chamber and Rock the Boat to work together for the city instead of dividing it. They need to build an entity that the City can back.

Councilman Murphy stated that we need something new and fresh. He would love to see a hybrid between the Chamber and Rock the Boat. He thanked Rock the Boat for taking the initiative on promotions. He would like to see the City more involved. Doing the same old thing is not working.

Mayor Marlowe stated he has been impressed over the past eight to nine months with the business owners who have gotten together for locals night and shop & sip. We have had a downtown business owners group that has been meeting and putting plans together most notably NPR After Dark and the Halloween event. The Main Street organization has just fallen apart. He loves the concept of the Main Street program. The Main Street organization has put on fairly large events most notably the KIAFest. The downtown is changing. There are a lot of things changing that will impact events. He stated we need to concentrate on local promotions. We grossly under use Railroad Crossing. We can do things to make the business community get more involved. There is money currently allocated for events that may not move forward. He thanked everyone who was in attendance.

Deputy Mayor Starkey stated that he applauds the Chamber for wanting to take over the Main

Street program but he does not feel it is a good fit. We are talking about keeping an organization in force that basically is not in force right now. Rock the Boat has gotten the business community to come together and he thanked the twins for all of their hard work. Timing is everything. He stated he is not saying that Main Street needs to go away forever but we need to start from scratch. What is happening downtown is not done by just one organization. To attract the residents we want we need to keep doing the things we are doing together.

3 Adjournment

There being no further business to consider, upon proper motion, the meeting adjourned at 6:30 p.m.

Approved: _____ (date)

_____ (signed)


Initialed: _____

Judy Meyers, CMC, City Clerk

Esteemed Mayor and Members of Council,

As a business manager/owner I feel it is vital to the success of my business and other businesses in the downtown to have an organization working with us that understands the challenges small business owners face and has a proven track record of successful promotions that are changing the image of our downtown district. What has been tried in the past by other organizations has been ineffective in creating an experience that makes the downtown a part of everyday life for people in the surrounding communities.

I strongly recommend that the City provide financial backing for the creation of a not for profit Downtown Alliance which will partner with Rock the Boat Productions to increase visibility, marketing, and events that help local businesses flourish while creating a desire for more people to visit, shop, and enjoy the revitalization of downtown New Port Richey on a regular basis.

Name: CRISTIANO SARONA Business name: CRISTIANO'S
Signature:  1-2-19 CRISTIANO'S
PIZZA & PASTA

Esteemed Mayor and Members of Council,

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Name: Peter Girouard

Business name: The Barber Shop /

Signature: 

Salon DC


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Name: Brett Ciper

Business name: Ordinance One

Signature: 

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Name: Jeffrey Wright

Business name: Wright's Natural Market


Signature: Jeffrey Wright

Esteemed Mayor and Members of Council,

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Name: *Drowne U. Blaszczyk, Esq* Business name: *Drowne Blaszczyk, PA*

Signature: 

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Name: *Ron Breton*

Business name: *Breton's Handcrafted Soap*
6317 Adams St.

Signature:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Ron Breton", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Esteemed Mayor and Members of Council,

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Name: *Denise Johnson*

Business name:

Signature:



FLORIDA TRANS PROUD

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Name: *DAVID MAHARASHA*

Business name: *MAHARASHA ACUPUNCTURE
and HERB SHOPPE*

Signature:



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Name: *Bret Grist*

Business name: *East Main Street Coffee*

Signature:



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Name: Kathy Wright

Business name: Wright's Natural Market

Signature: Kathy Wright

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Name: Anthony J. Avila

Business name: Pasco Pride

Signature: 

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Name: PETER J. MARTIN

Business name: PETE'S GRAND CENTRAL

Signature:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Peter J. Martin". The signature is stylized and cursive.