



**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 15, 2019  
5:00 PM**

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**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, Police Chief Kim Bogart, Fire Chief Chris Fitch, Economic Development Director Mario Iezzoni, Public Works Director Robert Rivera, Parks and Recreation Director Elaine Smith and Technology Solutions Director Bryan Weed.

**DISCUSSION ITEMS**

**2 Discussion on Special Events - Page 2**

City Manager Manns introduced the item to Council. She stated that the purpose of this agenda item was to discuss special events in Sims Park. City Manager Manns stated that the popularity of Sims Park has grown over the years due to the improvements and therefore the use has increased. It has been Council's desire to keep the park in proper order in addition to attracting family-oriented events. She stated that events held in Sims Park should be economically beneficial to the community.

Councilman Davis stated this has been a topic of discussion for years. He stated that currently the park is used for 49 days for events. He stated that events should not be a competition between organizers. He asked Mario Iezzoni to come forward to speak about economic value. Mr. Iezzoni stated the report forwarded to Council on economic benefit of festivals was a great report and had a lot of useful information. Councilman Davis stated that he wants the downtown businesses to be included and not excluded when events are happening in the park. Mr. Iezzoni then discussed the difference between relational and transactional buyers.

Councilman Altman stated the benefit that needs to be discussed is the benefit to the public.

Events need to create a sense of community. He referenced an old ordinance where if a civic organization had an event and was city sponsored then the city would not charge for crowd control. As a result of hard times, that ordinance was replaced with special event procedures. He would like to see the larger events go back to the old strategy of having the city not charge for costs. He would like to revisit the issue of charging for costs. Mayor Marlowe stated that he was there at the time and it appears that the City did not have a handle on what events cost. He stated we cannot give event organizers a blank check.

Councilman Murphy stated it is a balancing act. He tells anyone putting on an event to look at how it will benefit the city and downtown businesses. He also tells business owners what can they do to embrace the events.

Deputy Mayor Starkey stated his greatest concern is that events in Sims Park be family-friendly. It is his job to help regulate the events held in the park and whether they are beneficial to the city. The number of large events held in the park is another concern. Another concern is the commercialization of the park during events. He is seeing more and more of it as events grow. His last concern is if events are beneficial to city residents and business owners. There are a lot of people who speak who are not city residents and do not pay city taxes. Large events have an impact on the Sims Park. The landscaping and look of the park is slipping. We need to take a step back and reassess our goals for the park.

Mayor Marlowe stated he is concerned that events be family-oriented. There are vendors selling items that are illegal or are of adult nature. One of his concerns regarding the appearance of the park is when events take place. Chasco takes place in the early part of the dry season with the seafood festival immediately following. There are three big events that take place during the dry season. The park needs time to recover. There was a period back where people were coming from Pinellas to run carnivals and there were about twelve weeks of street closures. The Chasco committee is aware this will be the last year to have a carnival downtown.

Mayor Marlowe then opened the floor for public comment. Greg Armstrong came forward and stated that he is proud of where New Port Richey has come from. Once we had leadership in place we started to grow. Growth and change go hand in hand. There are two things that concern him as we move forward, one is negativity especially during the holiday parade. He never encountered such negativity about the parade. He would like to see the parade go back to be the City's parade. He was disturbed at the last work session he attended regarding events. A city needs both small and large events.

Victor McCluskey came forward and stated he brought forth his opposition for the Gay Pride festival last year. What do we expect when we bring in an event that is sexually oriented. The City should not be promoting these type of events. Our country was founded on the Bible.

Nina Borders came forward and stated the Pasco Pride event was a family event. They invited people to visit the downtown businesses after the event. They have come up with a plan to partner with Rock the Boat in order for businesses to be involved.

Matt Stidham came forward and stated that the Pasco Pride event was not an event he could bring his child to.

Jennifer Eichenberger came forward and stated when she first moved here she was concerned over the lack of diversity. She has seen New Port Richey change over the years. We should have a choice of what events we want to attend. The more diverse events are the more people they will attract.

Gene Sullivan came forward and stated that when we have events there is a lot of underage drinking. The bars in the downtown always have bar men. He enjoys the events and they are beneficial to the downtown.

Lisa Virgilio came forward and stated that her organization volunteers for events and holds fundraisers for her organization to provide services for those who cannot afford it.

Charlie Russo came forward and stated that the Pride festival was geared towards families. There are plans in place to prevent things from happening again as Pride moves forward. The job of the city is to represent everyone in the community.

Bonita Buria came forward and stated that economic growth at the expense of children is not worth it. Children in a park should not be exposed to that.

Jeff Wright came forward and stated that there is a place for all events. His concern as a business owner is to find a win-win situation as large events are hurting downtown businesses. We need to rethink how we are doing things. We need to make sure events improve the image of New Port Richey.

Frank Starkey came forward and stated that there are activities in the park that enrich the life of our residents. They tend to have a great spillover into downtown. Cultural events enrich the diversity of our community. There are events that take place in the downtown that promote the downtown businesses. There are events that take place in the park and in the downtown and will tend to drive away regular customers. Events should express community pride, promote businesses and attract tourists.

Ryan Rapp came forward and stated that he was renovating a house on Grand over the last year and a half. We have done a good job rebranding the downtown. The best thing to do to rebrand is to eliminate Bikefest. He would like to see it replaced with some type of eco-festival. Events downtown do not promote or force what they are promoting. Just because something is going on that you don't like then don't go to it.

Judy Spaith came forward and stated usually when something big is going on down in Sims Park we don't see too much result from it. If you are looking to benefit the downtown events need to offer more incentive to bring people downtown.

Carmen Passarella came forward and stated that small events do not do anything for the city. The large events puts eyes on us which will help the city grow. Everyone benefits when there is something in the park.

Denise Johnson came forward and stated that Pasco Pride was a family-friendly event. The rules were explicit in the packet received from the Rec Center. It was promoted as such. A lot of lessons were learned. She encouraged Council to let the event continue. If you do not like the events that are happening then do not go to them.

Jacob Fears came forward and stated that Pride events tend to evolve into more inappropriate things. If this event is allowed to continue the rules can be relaxed over time. There are a lot of children who visit the park unsupervised. There are a lot of negative effects that can happen when a Pride event occurs. Support of these types of events could have an economic draw back.

Timothy Fussell came forward and stated he thought the work session was to discuss special events and not the LGBTQ community. The main events downtown is what keeps him in business. Last year's Bikefest was the best one they have had. Private persons came down after Bikefest and cleaned up the streets. There were no arrests during Bikefest. Big events are what makes it work.

MJ Faqouseh came forward and stated that there is no governance during events. If we do not harness the energy then people are not going to spend money here. He stated that New Port Richey is a hidden gem to capitalize on.

Geoffery Kranich came forward and thanked Council for their support of Chasco. They have cut

down on the golf cart use for this year. He stated that Chasco does promote the downtown businesses. He would like to see the downtown businesses more involved in Chasco. They are very respectful of what is going on. They are here to help.

Jim Gunderson came forward and stated that the work session has been interesting and enlightening. Activities in the park will be important for the Hacienda. Mt. Dora does a lot of events and festivals. Having the opportunity to promote events is very important. He stated the windows are due to be installed in the Hacienda over the next few weeks.

Deputy Mayor Starkey stated that the Lakeside Inn in Mt. Dora is a wonderful place. He stated everyone is passionate about their opinions. He stated that you have to carry yourself in a responsible manner. You need to know what behavior is tolerated. He is not opposed to large events but agrees there needs to be governance. Smaller events are beneficial as well. He thanked everyone who came to speak. He stated more conversations with event organizers needs to take place. Our events are a reflection of our city.

Mayor Marlowe stated that Pasco Pride did a good job at integrating with the downtown businesses. He also stated that Faith Baptist Church did something he had not seen before which was shuttle service. That is something that Council has discussed. He gave kudos to Chasco for considering that option this year.

Councilman Murphy stated there were a lot of good points made. There is a place for everyone and their events in the city.

Councilman Altman stated there is a consensus growing to support smaller events. We need to look at each event to see how we can make it better. Growth creates change and we will have to change some of our long-standing traditions. Maybe we can look at more creative ways to support volunteers.

Councilman Davis stated that there were only two events that got TDC dollars outside the community. Volunteers need to know the rules of events as well as the event organizers. We need to adapt as time changes. We need to treat our neighbor as we treat ourselves.

3 Adjournment

There being no further business to consider, upon proper motion, the meeting adjourned at 6:55 p.m.

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_ (date)

\_\_\_\_\_ (signed)

Initialed: \_\_\_\_\_

Judy Meyers, CMC, City Clerk