



**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**

**April 28, 2020**

**6:00 PM**

---

**ORDER OF  
BUSINESS**

**1 Call to Order - Roll Call**

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Rob Marlowe at 6:00 p.m. 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, Deputy City Clerk Amanda Napier, Finance Director Crystal Feast, Fire Chief Chris Fitch, Economic Development Director Charles Rudd, Public Works Director Robert Rivera, Library Director Andi Figart, Development Director Earl Hahn, Technology Solutions Director Bryan Weed, Human Resources Manager Bernie Wharran, Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Chris Bornfleth and Lt. Lauren Letona.

- a Due to the Novel Coronavirus, the City Council will be conducting its meetings through the use of Communications Media Technology (CMT) until further notice. The City Council chamber will NOT be open to the public for these meetings. During the meeting, comments may be emailed to MeyersJ@cityofnewportrichey.org or you may call 1 (872) 240-3412, access code: 606-759-949. Please keep in mind that access to the meeting by phone may be limited and email access may be delayed. By waiting until the meeting to make a comment, you may not be able to participate in the meeting. The City Council reserves the right to proceed on any item whether public communications are delayed or otherwise obstructed.

**DISCUSSION ITEMS**

**2 Brand and Market Analysis Discussion with Arnett Muldrow & Associates - Page 3**

City Manager Manns introduced the item to Council. She stated the purpose of this work session was to discuss the branding and marketing analysis from Arnett Muldrow and Associates. She then introduced Aaron Arnett and Ben Muldrow who appeared electronically for the work session. City Manager Manns spoke about the various focus group meetings that were conducted. The meetings included public forums, business and property owners, representatives

of art and history, and residents of the City of New Port Richey.

Mr. Arnett presented slides on market research findings. He noted that since the last meeting in February, he and Mr. Muldrow have met with well over 100 people in about 12 different focus groups. He shared that Arnett Muldrow and Associates is working on developing brand identity and a marketing strategy, noting they are about halfway into it. He mentioned that they are planning to conduct five or six remote round tables this week. Mr. Arnett shared the results of the zip code survey and noted that in the interest of time, only high level findings would be shared. He stated that the zip code survey was conducted from the end of January through February 4, 2020, and that 24 businesses participated, which he noted was a strong sample. Mr. Arnett spoke about the customer makeup, retail market, which items and services are selling downtown, and the amount consumers are purchasing. He also mentioned the type of business he believes would help prevent "leakage", meaning the amount of dollars consumers choose to spend in areas surrounding New Port Richey for the same items and services offered in New Port Richey. Mr. Arnett presented the results obtained from an online survey, in which 698 participants responded and answered questions regarding their demographics, perception of New Port Richey, perception of the local area, and outside perception of New Port Richey. He shared that the next steps will be to hold a virtual workshop with 5-6 round-table discussion, beginning to work on the creative development, brand reveal, and photography. He noted that their goal was to visit physically sometime after the stay at home orders are lifted due to COVID-19.

Mr. Muldrow asked for comments from City Council members, noting he is excited about the momentum being built. City Manager Manns shared that the City Council members were accepting the information presented and had no questions at this time.

Mayor Marlowe commented that "renaissance on the river", a comment presented on one of the slides, really jumped out to him, as he felt that really summarized what the City had been trying to accomplish. Deputy Mayor Starkey agreed with Mayor Marlowe, and noted that it is important to portray that although there is a renaissance going on downtown, the city is not afraid of change. He stated he would like to show that the city is historic but also up and coming. He inquired on how to differentiate New Port Richey from Port Richey, noting that it was difficult having such similar names. He stated he was eager to see what Arnett Muldrow and Associates would come up with to overcome that. Mr. Muldrow commented that they are excited to work on that challenge. Councilman Davis mentioned that while the city has "old roots", he has a problem with the word "renaissance". He stated that although the city has old architecture, it also has new inner workings and renovated areas downtown. He noted that the city is attracting younger people and families, and has been slowly renovating housing. Councilman Altman stated that there are people in the city who like things the way they are currently. He congratulated Arnett Muldrow and Associates for being on the right track and commented that he believes the survey is an accurate depiction of where the city currently is. He noted that the city has a new vibe and an attitude; and stated that the melting pot that the city is does not jive with "old Florida", like Dade City. He stated that the city is growing together into something special. He noted that the Cotee River has been the city's biggest asset for 30 years and that the river sees a lot of boaters, kayakers, and people who like to sit by the river and observe. He states that if the city projects itself as growing, we need to be designing our community to grow. Mayor Marlowe commented that he sees renaissance as a rebirth and not as something that is old. Councilman Murphy thanked Arnett and Muldrow and noted that the city has so many great attributes with a lot of room to grow and a lot of market share to grow into. He stated that New Port Richey is a fun, active community with great history from the past, but the city cannot get stuck in the past. He noted that he believes the city should be more of a renaissance/rebirth and would like to see not so much of what the city has been, but what the city can be in the future.

Mr. Arnett stated there needs to be a balance in making sure the history is not stodgy and is more from a character standpoint. Mr. Muldrow thanked Council for their comments and noted that they touched on some of the biggest challenges, but also touched on what the biggest storyline is. He stated that they are not creating a theme and that the city did not have to be one thing. He

noted that it is preferable to be a community that preserves and celebrates the past while also going out and cultivating new innovation and investment. He stated that the constant energy of change is what makes a community one that people want to stay connected to. He noted that if people don't feel like a community has defined what they love, people will become hesitant to change. He stated that he hopes this process will build a stage to celebrate a unique history while stitching together the dynamic nature of old and new.

Councilman Starkey stated that the west side of U.S.19 is an opportunity for development. Councilman Davis stated that we have more of a restaurant evening life than Dade City and that Dunedin has mostly a dinner time/early evening atmosphere. We need to grow daytime retail area. We have the evening time already captured.

### 3 Communications

Mayor Marlowe stated that last week he participated in a phone conference with Chairman Moore regarding where we were with COVID-19 and potential reopening. The group also shared their concerns that staff had, PPE's for hospital staff, and the need to coordinate the reopening of businesses and services in Pasco County. Mayor Marlowe stated we need to make sure the homeless are addressed as they are potential source of COVID-19 due to their living conditions and noted that County staff is aware. He stated that there is tentatively a meeting for Thursday or Friday and the Governor to present his vision Wednesday. He stated in last Friday's report there was a proposed entryway feature for Main Street and US Highway 19 and he thought it was a tremendous idea. Something big that would jump out as people drove down US Highway 19. Mayor Marlowe requested that staff take a look at RV overnight parking along the river. He stated that this may be a bigger discussion as he thinks we may want to make sure ordinances address issues of camping inside city limits. He stated he does not believe we ought to have people pitching tents and camping and motorhomes running all weekend along the river. Mayor Marlowe encouraged people to get take out and support local businesses.

Deputy Mayor Starkey stated he cannot believe mainstream media, scaring people when it's not always needed. He has been reading articles and it's more contagious but less deadly than being made out to be. Not as many people are dying as originally thought. Interested in getting downtown reopened. We will go along with County and State decisions. He wanted to send his thoughts and prayers to Dr. David Maharajah's family with his sudden passing.

Councilman Davis thanked City Manager Manns and City staff for the great job as leaders in the community. Looking forward to seeing it open up, just a path that we have to take. This is the new normal.

Councilman Altman stated he went to Bryson City, NC, and had to quarantine. He stated he is sad to see politics play a part. Difficult to identify who has it, makes it impossible to know numbers. He agreed with Deputy Mayor's comment that we will follow suit with county and state. He stated the scare is worldwide. He stated that Main Street is rolling the dice, unsure if things will be up and running in order to have a 4th of July celebration. He is advocating that the city secure fireworks that people can see safely in the distance. Maybe higher fireworks, we all need the entertainment. He is in favor of having an event.

Councilman Murphy thanked staff and stated he is looking forward to a slow rollout hoping it goes smoothly. He stated that the book sent by Florida League of Cities is on the way to elected officials. He suggested donating them to the library.

### 4 Adjournment

There being no further business to consider, upon proper motion, the meeting adjourned at 7:45 p.m.

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

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

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

Amanda Napier, Deputy City Clerk