

SPECIAL MEETING
CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF BONITA SPRINGS
WEDNESDAY, MAY 3, 2017
3:00 P.M.
CITY HALL
9101 BONITA BEACH ROAD
BONITA SPRINGS, FLORIDA 34135
MINUTES

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Peter Simmons called the special meeting to order at 3:00 P.M.

II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

At the request of Mayor Simmons, Council Member Steve Slachta led in the Pledge of Allegiance.

III. ROLL CALL

Mayor Peter Simmons and all Council Members were in attendance.

IV. PUBLIC COMMENT

3:01:28 PM Rick Steinmeyer addressed the historic designation of the property.

3:01:53 PM Jackie McCurdy, Member of the Board of Directors of the Everglades Wonder Gardens, informed Council that the Board for the Wonder Gardens feels it is in the best interest for all that the gardens is owned by the City of Bonita Springs and operated by the non-profit.

3:05:43 PM John West spoke in support of the Wonder Gardens, and agrees the City should take over the Wonder Gardens, and allow it to remain an attraction in the City of Bonita Springs.

3:08:14 PM Ike Lichtenstein also spoke in support of the Bonita Wonder Gardens being leased back to the Wonder Gardens at a nominal fee.

3:11:56 PM Beth Hagan a full time resident of the City addressed educational classes for the Wonder Gardens and kits used - "adopt a kit."

3:15:20 PM Thomas Hecker, Executive Director of the Everglades Wonder Gardens, stated they are excited with the educational portion of the Wonder Gardens. He also addressed an email and stated they look forward to attracting more visitors.

3:17:52 PM Gary Price addressed the financing for the Everglades Wonders Gardens, and stated that to date there have been no taxpayers funds spent. He supports it remaining an attraction.

V. PRESENTATION ON ALTERNATIVE PLAN TO EVERGLADES WONDER GARDENS LOAN RESTRUCTURE (COUNCIL MEMBER O'FLINN)

3:20:57 PM Council Member Peter O'Flinn addressed his paper (attached to Greensheet No. 17-05-0176) to address the background and proposals for the City to assume ownership of the property in return for a cancellation of the loan obligation. He further explained and Council discussion followed.

3:54:41 PM Council Member Simmons wants to examine the Board of Directors and feels there is a need for a change in the Board. He feels half of the existing board should remain and half should be new. Need to determine number of years and the length of the lease.

3:57:14 PM Council Member O'Flinn suggested a 2 or 3 year lease.

3:59:18 PM Council Member Quaremba stated she felt that they should not be addressing details today. They need to be in a position where they will flourish, and that the property is maintained for the purpose of which the former Council approved it – to make it a biological wonder with animals and plants. She suggested to put it back to Staff to help Council develop a relationship with the non-profit so that non-profit will flourish. Mayor Simmons stated they are also looking for ideas on how to drive people there. He also addressed the need for a new draw for children and fresh thinking. They are trying not to change what's been there, but financially everything has to change – change in the Board of Directors and a new attraction/idea. Council Member Quaremba addressed the need for a variety of attractions to attract multiple people – a place for both children and adults.

4:03:52 PM Council Member Forbes motioned for a 3-year lease, with the first two years with no payments, with the last year a \$3,000 per month, and that they would take care of all maintenance on the building, and have perhaps Anne Wright on the Executive Committee as a non-voting member. He further suggested having Staff put something together to bring back to City Council, and also Council can do some one on ones with them to get it right.

Mayor Simmons suggested a very general motion at this point. Council agreed. Council Member Quaremba stated she feels that the motion should be that the City develop a relationship with Bonita Wonder Gardens, and that Council accepts ownership of the property and goes forward to develop a lease agreement between now and some date Staff sees reasonable.

4:05:505 PM City Manager Carl Schwing stated that any parameters that Council feels are important for Staff to address would be helpful as they form this relationship with the Bonita Wonder Gardens.

Council Member O'Flinn stated that one parameter to him would be the northern property. Council Member Quaremba stated that no additional taxpayer funds; no more than a 3-year lease, and whatever the dollar figure. Council Member Gibson stated he didn't know if a 3-year lease was that favorable to the organization as far as for fundraising. Having the hiatus on payments is good and would allow them to keep some of that money the business is generating in the business, but really to do the capital improvements they rely on donations, and so he doesn't know if a shorter lease would be conducive to getting the donations to do the capital improvements. Council Member DeWitt stated that the City of Bonita Springs is always going to own the property and want it to be the Bonita Springs Wonder Gardens, and whether its run by not-for-profit or Bonita Springs Wonder Gardens, or any other non-for-profit that may come tomorrow, he feels that as long as the City's vision stays true, whatever capital improvement they do is going to be there forever. He further explained and discussion followed.

4:13:41 PM Council Member Forbes stated he wants to ensure that maintenance is done by the Bonita Wonder Gardens, and that the City has some assurance of proper insurance protection – property and public liability.

4:14:51 PM Council Member O'Flinn motioned for generally three years, the northern property as appropriate input with respect to the Board. City Manager Schwing explained that he was looking for direction that Staff will take this; Council Member Quaremba seconded.

4:15:27 PM City Attorney Vance clarified that the motion would be for City Staff to start working on a lease with acceptance and authorization to go forward with a deed in lieu of foreclosure acceptance. As to the lease there's the discussion of what terms were discussed today, and also usual and customary terms that have been used for other facilities. Council Member O'Flinn agreed. He also stated that if the City Attorney had other items, they would listen, i.e., a Memorandum of Understanding, etc. City Attorney Vance stated there will be some additional research, which she addressed relating to what is private and what is public. Council Member Gibson suggested part of the motion be that there is no default at the end of the month.

The motion carried unanimously.

VI. DISCUSSION ON ALTERNATIVE PROPOSAL AND/OR LOAN RESTRUCTURE

Included above.

VII. PUBLIC COMMENT

4:18:17 PM John West stated the BWG should be an attraction for kids and families to enjoy.

4:19:57 PM Rick Steinmeyer addressed a concern he had with wages associated with not-for-profits.

4:21:17 PM Trish Leonard, President of the Everglades Wonder Gardens, addressed concerns relating to the Board of Directors. She also agrees with the creation of a water park and additional items for children. She also thanked the City Manager for all his help.

4:22:47 PM Marjorie Rubacky addressed the issue of fundraising.

4:26:58 PM Gary Price also addressed the Wonder Gardens.

VIII. COUNCIL DIRECTION OR VOTE.

Reflected above.

IX. ADJOURNMENT.

There being no further items to discuss, the meeting adjourned at 4:29 p.m.

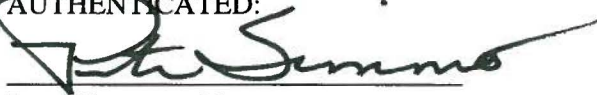
Respectfully submitted,


Debra Filipek, City Clerk

APPROVED:
BONITA SPRINGS CITY COUNCIL:

Date: 5/22/17

AUTHENTICATED:


Peter Simmons, Mayor