

WORKSHOP MEETING
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
TOWN OF REDINGTON SHORES
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 31, 2021 – 6:00 P.M.
MINUTES

Present upon roll call: Commissioner J. Blackburn, Commissioner W. Krajewski, Vice Mayor M. Robinson, and Mayor M. Henderson.

NEW BUSINESS

Discussion – Proposed Meeting Policies and Procedures

Clerk M. Palmer explained that she had begun the process of researching the creation of this policy months ago and had requested policies from surrounding municipalities to develop the policy presented. Mayor Henderson explained that the policy was an outline of the procedures that the Commission already followed but felt it was prudent to approve an official policy. Commissioner Krouk requested clarification on *Rule 3. Special Meetings*, citing that there would be a minimum 12 hour written notice to hold a special meeting, but that the Commission could not hold a vote on any agenda item that had not been scheduled at least 3 days in advance of the special meeting. Vice Mayor Robinson provided clarification stating his interpretation is that a special meeting can be called with a specific agenda item(s), and although the Board could hold discussion on any other items it chose, it could only vote on the specific items listed on that agenda. The Board requested that this item be clarified by the attorney prior to the next regular meeting. Mayor Henderson clarified the rule for omitting public comment at both a special meeting and emergency meeting, Clerk Palmer agreed.

Mayor Henderson opened for public comment.

C. Herig, 17609 1st St E – Ask why no public comment was included for special or emergency meetings. Clerk Palmer and Vice Mayor Robinson provided clarification by explaining that the Board allows for public comment on and after specific agenda items at any meeting and adds general public comment at the end of each regular meeting, but on a special or emergency meetings no general public comment is placed on the agenda.

C. Herig express her disagreement with what was being stated by the Board and what was outlined in the policy. Commissioner Krouk stated that she thought it was reasonable to include a policy that limited public comment at special meetings to only public comment on specific agenda items, including that special meetings should be limited to the purpose were called for. Discussion between Commissioners concluded that the policy had outlined the same procedures for public comment at meetings as was already in practice, however, to avoid any confusion, requested that Clerk Palmer clarify the public comment sections of the policy.

Discussion – Proposed Dog Park – Del Bello Park

Mayor Henderson stated that, in her seven years on the Board, she has never seen so much passion about an issue, stating that she had received phone calls, text messages and emails with a 50/50 split in both support and opposition. She expressed her desire to place the item on the next municipal election ballot in November. Commissioner Blackburn explained that she had been tracking comments and provided a result of 128 individuals in favor and 34 opposed. Commissioner Krajewski commented that he did not think the Board was anywhere near determining what the cost to the Town would be for the dog park, that he has seen overwhelming support in his district, with supporters also offering financial support. He also stated he thought a defined plan needed to be developed, outlining costs and source of funds for the development and maintenance of a dog park, and all should be included on the ballot. Vice Mayor Robinson agreed with the financial points made by Commissioner Krajewski, stating that the financial impact needed to be addressed as part of the Town budget process. He expressed financial impact concerns on residents with potential COVID tax hikes coming, in addition to increased Fire and EMS costs. He stated that consideration needed to be taken, as this project served a portion of the community as a special interest and would have an impact on maintenance staff. Commissioner Krouk expressed the opinion that all parks serve a special interest group, listing examples of tennis courts, exercise equipment, and family orientated park equipment, stating that she didn't feel it fair to label dog owners as a special interest group since the Town was already serving groups of many other interests. Vice Mayor

Robinson agreed. Commissioner Krouk also asked what the purpose and goal of the discussion was at that time. Commissioner Blackburn stated that the idea of a dog park was discussed by the Board at a previous workshop and that she was asked to gather more information for further discussion. She explained that the idea was resident driven, was picked up by the Beacon after the last workshop, and many misconceptions about the park had been going around Redington Towers, whose residents began emailing and calling Town Hall regarding the issue. She stated that was the reason the item was on the agenda for discussion was to clear up these misconceptions. She continued, expressing her thoughts that dog owners being referred to as a special interest group made it sound as if it was referring to a small group of individuals, when in fact, she explained, there were 75-80% of all households in the Town that were dog friendly, including 665 single family homes, several duplexes, and 814 out of 1135 condominiums, while only 357 Redington Towers residences out of a total of 1949 households in the Town did not allow dogs. She addressed what she called a misconception communicated in resident comments that the dog park would not encompass the entire park, but only a small portion. She suggested, as a trial, the “no dogs allowed” signs at Del Bello Park to make a dog-friendly park allowing for leashed dogs. She described the process of finding a location for a dog park, beginning with the location of the small portion of grass area by the Town parking lot across from Wahoo’s, but there was a directly adjacent resident who was adamantly opposed. She continued, stating that the Parks and Recreation Committee ruled out fencing a portion of Constitution Park because they determined there were too many residences directly adjacent to the area and ruled out Delma Spitzer Park because it is filled with playground equipment and is the one free play area for kids. She stated that the reason the committee had settled on the Northeast corner of Del Bello Park is because, in doing research, she found that a dog park was recommended to be at least 20-200 feet from the nearest residence, and the proposed dog park site at Del Bello Park was 326 feet from the nearest residence. Vice Mayor Robinson stated that he was surprised to learn that Del Bello Park did not already allow dogs and asked what research the committee had done on the size of dog parks, whether the proposed area was large enough and since it was a smaller area, what findings had there been on multiple size breeds in the same area. Commissioner Blackburn described a visit to Queenie Park, a small half acre dog park in Tampa that allowed multiple size dogs and explained how the proposed turf material at that park decreased maintenance costs and dirt carrying on the dogs. She included that dog parks of that size are too small to have separate areas, but if an issue did arise, they could alternate days for small and large dogs. Vice Mayor Robinson asked who would maintain the dog park. Commissioner Blackburn replied that the maintenance crew already maintained the park by clearing garbage, mowing, trimming, etc. and would continue to maintain the park. Commissioner Krouk expressed support for the idea but expressed her desire to see a proposal presented by the Parks and Recreation Committee or a separate advisory committee that outlined and addressed items brought up in opposition to avoid misconceptions. She then suggested holding a dog event at the park to ‘test’ the noise that may be produced by stationing people in areas of Redington Towers to monitor decibel levels produced. Commissioner Blackburn suggested holding an “On Leash Bark in the Park” and offered an option for noise mitigation with the placement of a sunshade. Mayor Henderson stated she was not opposed to making the park dog friendly on a trial basis. Commissioner Blackburn was open to the idea of trying an on-leash trial, but still expressed support for a separate dog park by outlining reasons such as dogs being better behaved off leash, dog parks being self-moderated by dog owners shaming other dog owners for inconsiderate behavior, providing an opportunity for dogs and owners to socialize, the potential to help keep dogs off the beach, and the fact that she found in her research that there was a 40% increase in the development of dog parks from 2009 to 2018, showing an increasing demand. She also proposed appointing dog park ambassadors for park oversight. Commissioner Krajewski commended Commissioner Blackburn on her research, supported the idea of testing decibel levels from Redington Towers by holding a trial event, and suggested taking sample readings separate from the event to monitor existing noise from traffic, etc. He stated that he personally was a dog lover and that he felt the Gulf Coast was very dog friendly with bars, parks, etc. allowing dogs. Commissioner Blackburn included that there was a misconception that Redington Towers donated the land to the Town for the Park, when in fact the developer who owned it wanted to put more condominiums on the site, but when they ran into issues, they sold the land to the Town. She asked that C. Herig speak on her experience dealing with the transaction as Commissioner at the time and writer of the grant. C. Herig recalled that the developer had to agree in order to submit the grant, called the Preservation 2000 Grant, which led the State to purchase the land in 1995 and deed to the Town. Commissioner Krajewski

expanded on C. Herig's comments by providing information on Resolution 07-96, which he stated was passed on July 30, 1996, in which \$750,000 from the Florida Communities Trust contributed to the purchase of the property. He explained that the original purchase price was \$850,000, however, the Town had then negotiated a reduced purchase price of \$800,000, with the remaining \$50,000 contribution coming from the Town's Pennies for Pinellas Fund. Discussion took place between Clerk Palmer and C. Herig, however unresolved, as to where the name for Del Bello park came from and how the remaining \$50,000 in the land purchase was settled.

Mayor Henderson opened the meeting for public comments. Clerk Palmer asked that participants limit their comments to those not already declared.

M. Hunter, Redington Towers One Unit 12C – explained she was a new resident who got the impression that a significant amount of money would be spent on the development of the dog park, leading her to suggest that, because there were many tax paying citizens of the Town who are not registered voters of the Town, there should be another way, beside a referendum, to gain public opinion on the dog park issue. She included concerns over limited parking and additional hours and money spent on monitoring and maintenance of the park.

S. Trichopoulos, Redington Towers Two – stated she supported the comradery that a community dog park can bring, then explained that there too many dangers such as potential dog bites, providing a brief story of her son's recent attack by a dog near Dunkin Doughnuts, risk of spreading kennel cough between dogs, and the bacterial risk associated with issues such as ring worm.

S. Watkins, Redington Towers Two – expressed her concerns over the proposition of an on-leash policy at the park and the impact it may have on the fishers and kayakers who use the park, owners not picking up dog waste, and bacteria concerns over dog waste. Her husband D. Watkins also provided comments, voicing his opinion that if a dog park is established, it should be for Town residents only and should be enforced by checking IDs.

An unidentified participant remarked that the dog park should be voted on.

P. Monson, Redington Towers Two Unit 804 – voiced concerns about potential noise generated by the dog park and described an incident with a police dog barking as an example of how differently dog barking noise carries. He also expressed his feeling that individuals visiting the dog park would not only take up parking on Gulf Blvd but would cause issues by parking at in the SeaBreeze parking lot and the beach parking areas.

C. Muszik, 17820 Lee Ave – expressed support for non-leash dog park and anything the Town could do to support renters with dogs as they are not allowed, but voiced concern over dog bite liability issues and spreading of dog disease and bacteria risks.

L. Betances, Redington Tower Three Unit 17D – stated he has an emotional support dog, he is currently not allowed to bring to Del Bello Park. He expressed support for permitting on-leash dogs at the park and commended Commissioner Blackburn on her work on the project.

V. Katz, 203 180th Ave E – stated that she was on PAWS for five years and that her experience indicated that off leash dog parks reduced problems with dog waste and dogs were much less likely to attack at an off-leash dog park.

M Palena, 201 175th Ave E – expressed support for the dog park as a dog owner herself and suggested the Board reach out to neighboring municipalities like Indian Rocks Beach with dog parks to gain knowledge on their experiences.

M. Benham, Redington Tower One Unit 12D – commented that she thought it strange that there was such a push for the dog park to be located at Del Bello Park when so many residents are affected and there was such

strong opposition to the site, she suggested looking at the previously mentioned sites as there was far less resident impact.

L. Hendrickson, 17960 Gulf Blvd Unit 111 – expressed empathy for dog owners, however stated that she was ultimately opposed to the dog park. She stated that a written proposal should be presented to the Board and warned of the liability risks associated not just with the establishment of a dog park, but also the removal of signs at the park prohibiting dogs. She included her opinion that the item should be brought to the ballot so that full time residents of the Town could make the decision.

M. Dewitt, 50 181st St – explained that she was new to the area, had two dogs, and explained the difficulty finding space to bring them since they are not allowed on the beach or the parks. She shared a story of one of her dogs being hit by a car on Gulf Blvd and expressed support for providing a place for residents to take their dogs.

B. Taylor, 300 182nd Ave E – stated he thought there was a good introduction to the project but felt there needed to be a plan presentation with graphics to illustrate what was planned. He said he has been speaking with residents and has gotten pledges for donations, both monetary and material, such as a sunshade for both shade and sound mitigation. He agreed that Redington Towers residents' concerns needed to be addressed but noted that they were only 18% of the residences in the Town. He stated he had surveyed people and found that 129 residents were in favor, 34 opposed (29 who were Redington Towers residents), and 26 visitors in favor. He included that he felt if a plan could be developed that addressed concerns of the Redington Towers residents then perhaps a vote would not be necessary. He then offered his availability if Commissioner wanted to contact him regarding how his poll was taken.

C. Cook, Redington Towers Two Unit 1107 – voice her opinion that she did not feel Commissioner Blackburn's poll was accurate because she felt that people opposed to the plan would not contact her knowing the Commissioner was in favor of the project. She cited 9 individuals at the meeting who spoke in opposition and 5 in favor. She asked Commissioner Blackburn what the capacity of the dog park would be based on its size and how she intended to regulate capacity issues. She also voiced concern that overcapacity could be an issue if there was as much support as Commissioner Blackburn had indicated for the park.

Commissioner Blackburn explained that an aerial drone photo was used to outline a rough plan for the enclosure and offered to email to C. Cook. She further explained that a dog park committee could be formed to regulate the dog park, including but not limited to capacity regulation.

C. Sullivan, Redington Towers One Unit 11A – stated that she would not have purchased her unit had there been a dog park in the proposed location and that she thought the location would affect wildlife in the park.

Commissioner Blackburn replied to C. Sullivan's concern, explaining that she was reassured by B. Taylor, who had worked with raptors and wildlife for several years, that the placement of the dog park in its proposed location would not drive away local wildlife just as osprey and other birds.

Husband of S. O'Rourke's, Redington Towers Unit 1505 – explained that he was retired military and expressed worry over potential health issues the dog park may create.

B. Taylor, 300 182nd Ave E – explained that he was the one who had done the survey Commissioner Blackburn spoke of and he did not intentionally seek out positive comments.

L. Foster, thanks the Board for entertaining the dog park idea and supports the idea of the dog park or providing on-leash access for dogs at the park. She stated that she thinks the potential liability issue needs to be addressed and suggested the issuance of parking passes if parking is an issue. She remarked that the areas in Town that had dog waste stations were very clean and did not seem to indicate neglectful waste cleanup.

Commissioner Blackburn stated the item would be taken back to the Parks and Recreation Committee.

MISCELLANEOUS

The following was announced by Mayor Henderson:

Regular Meeting – Wednesday, April 14, 2021 – 6:00 p.m.

Workshop Meeting – Wednesday, April 28, 2021 – 6:00 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 8:14pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Cheri A. Zindars
Deputy Clerk