

COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES
Belleair Bluffs City Hall
2747 Sunset Blvd, Belleair Bluffs, FL 33770
Monday April 24, 2017 6:00 PM

The Belleair Bluffs City Commission held a meeting Monday, April 24, 2017. The following answered roll call: Mayor Arbutine, Commissioners J. Barkley, J. Nazario, T. Shimkus, S. Sofer, Attorney Trask, Largo Fire Chief Willis, PCSO Deputy Rosado and City Clerk Debra Sullivan. The invocation was led by Attorney Trask.

Citizens to be heard on non-agenda items

Mr. Lawton asked if he should comment about the tax issue now or under the agenda item. Mayor stated under the agenda item #3.

Proposal from Advanced Engineering & Design, Inc. – Mr. Bill Reidy

Mr. Reidy is the owner of the company represented. He has been the staff engineer for the City of Belleair Bluffs for 20 years. He has been asked to provide a proposal to do a complete engineering study of infrastructure issues on the east side of the city. He is proposing an advanced study of the east side. It could be sewer utility issues which will be handed over to Pinellas County who will repair and patch the area of the road they repaired. He will look at stress on the roadways. He will recommend different methods of repair depending of the severity of the issues he finds. He will do a comprehensive report including a list of prioritized projects, prices for the projects and assist with completing a 5 year Comprehensive Improvement Plan for the city budget.

Commissioner Nazario requested that his firm do the final inspections if and when a job is completed. Commissioner Shimkus asked if this firm would do any sewer inspection or just road review. She says that most of the issues particularly on the east side are related to the Pinellas County sewer system. She wouldn't want to simply pave a road and then have to tear it up to do sewer repair. Mr. Reidy stated that although Pinellas County does the sewers, they only do the minor work required as in patching the roads. His goal would be to find the issue and schedule the road work with the county sewer repair so the project is fully completed.

Commissioner Barkley asked about the unevenness of the roads by the curbing. Cracks in the curbing are an issue with him as well. What will Mr. Reidy do about those issues? He will have to determine the reason for the crack, by taking some core samples to determine the road thickness which will let him know if the base material was originally laid thick enough.

Mayor Arbutine stated that we have overlaid the roads too many times to keep the costs down which is causing the unevenness. Now that SWFWMD has changed the method of which they fund and have become stingier in what they fund, it is imperative that we have funding to repair our own infrastructure. This study is necessary to determine exactly what is causing the issues, how serious the issues are and what the remedy is and what the cost will be.

DEPARTMENTAL REPORTS

Administration/Finance – Commissioner Sofer reported that Operation Medicine Cabinet is coming up. D. Sullivan's staff has begun planning for the July 4th event. D. Sullivan noted that the "Little Library" is always in need of children's books.

Sheriff's Department– Deputy Rosado reported the statistics stating there was a 50% decrease crime from this time last year. 2 felony arrests, 491 incidents, resulting in 600 deputies responding, 9 crashes, 132 citations and warnings issued.

Fire Department - Chief Willis reported her department has given help to the fires in the other counties. Commissioner Sofer commended them for their assistance.

Public Works Department - Commissioner Barkley reported Debra is still doing double duty and we are still looking at solutions. All issues are being handled professionally.

OLD BUSINESS

Sign Code Update – Attorney Trask stated Attorney Brinton will be in attendance at the May 8, 2017 commission meeting at 6:00 pm. The Bluffs Business Association will be noticed.

Personnel Discussion for Public Works and Administration – D. Sullivan has no update. We are waiting for the City of Largo to come back with a proposal for service.

NEW BUSINESS

Ordinance 2017-02 An Ordinance of the City of Belleair Bluffs, Florida increasing the public service tax by 5% and providing for an effective date

Attorney Trask noted the change that was made concerning the appropriation of the 5% to roads, streets and changed the effective date to October. Commission discussion meant to say that 50% of the proceeds would be reserved to road and street repairs. Section 2 will be amended to reflect that change. Commissioner Nazario still questioned the wording of the ordinance requesting that the total amount collected will be 10%. Attorney Trask stated the original wording was to tell the public this was not a new tax, but a tax that is being increased. If the Commission wants it to be very clear the wording will be

Ordinance 2017-02 An Ordinance of the City of Belleair Bluffs, Florida increasing the public service tax to 10% and providing for an effective date.

He noted the effective date will be October 1, 2017 and Section 2 would be changed to reflect 50% of the proceeds would be designated to street and road repairs.

A motion was made by Commissioner Barkley to approve Ordinance 2017-02 on first reading which was seconded by Commissioner Nazario.

Commissioner Sofer has not changed her opinion of this, noting communications from residents, higher property values and would like to find another way to find revenue.

Commissioner Nazario stated that it is imperative that we keep our city safe and in the condition that the residents are accustomed to. He agrees that everything is going up, but so are the costs of the city. When residents come to meetings and express concerns about road safety it is their duty to accommodate all the residents and address these issues. There is no one else to pay for these costs but the residents. The Commissioners are residents also and will be impacted as well. We are elected officials and are expected to maintain and make these hard decisions.

Commissioner Shimkus hasn't changed her opinion since last meeting. She doesn't want to impose on the residents and raise the costs. She says the roads need to be fixed, but doesn't see the urgency at this time.

Commissioner Barkley said that it is their fiduciary duty to protect all the residents. He is a resident and will be impacted, but the roads, curbing, pot holes all need to be addressed. This will take a lot of money and the funds need to be saved for these projects. The funds will be designated to this project. The residents and visitors expect a certain level of excellence in this city.

Mr. Sundwall – what happens to the money when the roads get fixed, does the money get returned? Mayor Arbutine stated the roads are never fixed. Once the east side is done, the west side will need repair. These funds will be used for roads. This is a 15 year project since all the roads always need repair.

Mr. Carey – he agrees that it is the responsibility of the commission to care for the residents. He understands the city needs more money. He asked if there was a ceiling on the tax, which Mayor stated 10% is the highest it can go since it is legislated by state statute. He asked the commission to find the money elsewhere so the residents aren't burdened.

Mr. Lawton – requested documentation to validate the funds. He asked if the money is for just the east side of the city. He asked if we have looked at all revenue sources. He asked if we are using reserves for the road repair projects.

Steve McNally – Sunset Drive – there is nothing so permanent as a temporary tax. He asked if the tax can be pushed back to a date in the future.

Dave Fynan – Overbrook Ave N. – He knows the roads on the east side are deplorable, he lives there and knows the roads need to be fixed. Dave said the funds spent to settle the firefighter’s pension claim, could have been spent to fix the roads. He suggested that the city ask businesses for money to fix our roads.

Darlene Cavanaugh – against the increase, she can’t afford it. She would like the Commissioners to listen to the residents in attendance. She suggested the city cancel the July 4th event. She said her bills are high because it’s hot. She has medical equipment needs and will cause a hardship. “My bill is \$10 a month now and if it doubles it will go to \$40”. She asked that the money come from the Commissioners pockets.

Wanda Rusinowski – fiduciary obligation is not to the city, it is to listen to the residents. No one has ever listened to her in the 15 years she has been coming.

Commissioner Sofer wants to find another source of revenue. She offered to shave her salary. Commissioner Nazario agrees that we don’t want to raise the taxes, but we have to secure there is funding for necessary expenditures. Our revenue sources are reducing as well. This revenue source is not a mandated set tax. This is a user fee and the residents can control the amount of their expenditures.

Commissioner Shimkus thanked the residents and stated she does listen to those that talk to her.

Mayor Arbutine said it is not an easy thing to be up here making decisions related to funding. In the past our road projects were secured by SWFMD at a 50% saving to the city. About 6 months ago residents came to address the commission, residents just like you - to express their concerns about the conditions of the roads on the east side of the city. We are down to 2 employees in city hall, 2 employees in public works, we contract out services to save money. Everything has been cut and all tax dollars are being maximized.

He suggested the framework, which is the study from the engineer to assess and prioritize the projects.

Roll Call was taken:

AYE: Arbutine, Barkley, Nazario

NAY: Shimkus, Sofer

Approval of proposal from Advanced Engineering

Commissioner Barkley made a motion to approve Advanced Engineering to provide guidance on the streets and roads in Belleair Bluffs which was seconded by Commission Nazario.

AYE: Arbutine, Barkley, Nazario

NAY: Shimkus, Sofer

There being no further business the meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Debra Sullivan

Debra Sullivan, City Clerk