

**MINUTES
CITY COMMISSION WORKSHOP
HAINES CITY, FLORIDA**

February 15, 2018

5:30 PM

Commission Chambers

1. CALL TO ORDER

At 5:30 p.m. Vice Mayor Morris West called the City Commission Workshop to order in the City Commission Chambers located in City Hall, at 620 E. Main Street, Haines City, Florida.

Vice Mayor Morris West, Commissioner Don Mason, Commissioner Anne Huffman, and Commissioner Horace West were in attendance. At 6:40 p.m. Mayor H.L. Roy Tyler arrived.

Also in attendance were the following staff members: City Manager Deric Feacher, City Attorney Fred Reilly, and City Clerk Linda Bourgeois.

2. WORKSHOP ITEMS

2.1. FOOTBALL LEAGUE MERGER

Staff Contact: Terrell Griffin, Parks and Recreation Director

City Manager Feacher explained to the City Commission why the presentations were scheduled and distributed a comparison of the multiple sports leagues and program costs throughout Polk County.

Commissioner Huffman requested information about voting during the workshop, and City Attorney Reilly shared that there should be no voting associated with the presentations. He went on to say a consensus could be given to provide direction.

Randy Penick, President of the Northeast Rattlers presented on the petition for the city to consider only allowing one football team to utilize the football facility this year.

The letter was copied by the City Clerk and distributed to the City Commission and staff members on the dais.

Overview

- ✓ The Northeast Rattlers said they were more about the youth.
- ✓ The Mission, Vision, and Strategy was read to the City Commission.
- ✓ A review of the football team and cheerleading team's accomplishments were shared with the City Commission.
- ✓ In 2015, there were approximately 175 children registered between both [football and cheerleading] programs.
- ✓ In 2016, there were approximately 200 children registered between both programs.
- ✓ In 2017, there were approximately 250 children registered between both programs.
- ✓ The advantages were discussed: After school mentoring, college prep assistance program, no fee to parents for the programs, all children get to participate in the all of the games, and they created relationships with the Tampa Bay Buccaneers and Miami Dolphins.

Commissioner Huffman asked why the league was not able to recruit players from the other league?

Randy Penick replied he was not sure however many players have joined their league over the years.

Commissioner Huffman stated there were parents that had concerns about the playing time on the field.

Randy Penick said he would guarantee that each child would play.

A discussion ensued about the amount of practice needed relative to the playing time, the play schedule and roster.

Randy Penick went on to continue with his presentation.

- ✓ Advantages of a merger were less maintenance on the playing fields, reduced electric costs, local benefits to the businesses, and less contact time with the field fertilizers.
- ✓ The free participation is due to sponsorships, there are year round activities for the kids, they host an end of the year banquet, and they groom the youth in the community to grow up to become model citizens.

A discussion ensued about the sponsorship funding for the free participation, and the presentation concluded with the sharing four success stories.

Buster Raggs of the Haines City Rattlers thanked the City Commission and said they were not interested in a merger.

Overview

- ✓ The Haines City Rattlers should have the same field usage rights as the Northeast Rattlers.
- ✓ There was no reason for the petition because it essentially is forcing the City Commission to make a decision that is not theirs to make.
- ✓ The Haines City Rattlers have met all obligations to their organization.
- ✓ He believes the Northeast Rattlers Board is trying to take over their Organization.
- ✓ He has been a part of the City for over thirty years.
- ✓ He thinks the City should accommodate two teams rather than a force merger.
- ✓ In 2008, there was a letter from Morris West with the same request to consolidate the leagues. They did not agree then and they do not agree now.
- ✓ With the population increase it creates a need for two programs.
- ✓ Having one organization will put too many kids on one team.
- ✓ He believes the Northeast Rattlers Board is trying to take over their Organization.
- ✓ To have only one organization would be egregious to the kids.

Commissioner West clarified the statement made by Buster Raggs about MidFlorida Board of Directors wanting to take over their organization was not a factual comment. The Board does not care what happens here tonight and the Vice President is here tonight

to attest to that. It is a blatant lie.

Vice Mayor West asked about the 2008 letter.

A copy of the 2008 letter was provided to Vice Mayor West from Buster Raggs.

City Attorney Reilly made some comments and said the situation as he understands it is that there are two separate leagues that are non-profit organizations, both of them for some period of time have existed and run their own leagues, both of them are a part of a sanctioned organization, has rules that actual govern the league such as the playing time and that sort of stuff; it is a very structured existence. The thing the city has an involvement in is the authorization to allow the two teams to use city facilities. He went on to say that as he understands the situation, there was a proposal by one league, in essence to ask the City Commission to make a determination that there should only be one league and that there should be a forced consolidation or merger. His point is as legal counsel giving legal advice, he would encourage the City Commission to not force a merger. This is because you have two organizations that want to exist and if you force a merger then you are making a choice and that could be a choice with some legal ramifications to it. He continued and said that if the two leagues want to merge then the two presidents should meet to discuss and work out the details so they can come to the City Commission and say what they would like to do in the future. If they don't want to merge then they should immediately focus on is the negotiation of the contract for the coming season. He went on to say that city staff has been put in a bad position because city staff has been asked to intervene between the two squabbling organizations and that's not fair to city staff to be put in that position.

Commissioner Mason replied and said it also affects the City Commission because it ultimately winds up here.

City Attorney Reilly commended city staff for being fair and equitable for the past five years despite being put in an awkward position periodically. His suggestion was if the two leagues do not want to merge then focus on contracts.

Commissioner Mason asked if the City Commission only wanted one group to utilize the facilities for say the purpose of less maintenance, is that choosing sides to force a merger? He suggested a choice by merits. He said he is not saying he is in favor one way over the other, he just thinks it is not forcing a merger.

Vice Mayor West related the request for a second league to that of another baseball organization.

Commissioner Huffman said that these two are already in existence.

Vice Mayor West spoke about the Haines City sponsored football team at Yale Field and when they decided not to no longer support the program.

Commissioner Huffman made a request to the City Clerk to provide her with the minutes of when the City Commission decided to allow two leagues.

Rebuttal from Randy Penick

Randy Penick said the whole time Buster Raggs talked he did not address one thing their organization does for the kids in the community.

Rebuttal from Buster Raggs

Buster Raggs stated that they provide a youth football league for this community.

Commissioner Huffman said she has other questions and time is not permitting her to ask them. She requested to meet with both organizations to discuss the situation further.

Commissioner Mason said he believes both organizations are here for the youth and requested for them to sit down and consider what is best for the kids. A united effort will not pull the kids in two different directions. He encouraged them to work together. He concluded by challenging them both to think about that. It's about the kids.

Vice Mayor West agreed and said it is about the kids. He said once we place the focus on the adults then we lost the battle. It is about the kids and getting them educated to go on and be successful in life. He went on to say that a merger would strengthen the organization and he doesn't understand why we can't become one organization. Haines City could be one powerhouse. The strength is in the numbers and if we become one, we become stronger. He continued and said when this comes back, after Commissioner Huffman has some time to have her questions answered, we will then decide if Haines City will allow only one organization to use the field or both.

Commissioner Mason offered to be a mediator if they wished to have him present.

RESULT: DISCUSSED

3. AGENDA REVIEW

The City Commission discussed the following items on the agenda:

The MS Haines City Softball agreement was discussed.

Commissioner Huffman shared her concern about how many teams they actually have and shared her granddaughter's team has lost their sponsor. The organization has two teams and she said it puts them in a position to play each other all of the time. Is there some responsibility that MS Softball has to ensure it is a real program and not just team A playing against team B and maybe a team C?

City Manager Feacher replied and said from the city's standpoint our responsibility is to ensure they comply with insurance and coaching requirements. They are a separate entity. We do not decide if they have ten teams or one team. He went on to explain the partnership with Davenport.

Commissioner Huffman said that we need softball in Haines City because if there are only two teams using Davenport facilities. She said Haines City residents want softball in Haines City.

City Manager Feacher said that decision would come from the direction of the City Commission.

Commissioner Mason agreed he would like to see softball back in Haines City and confirmed the \$134,000 was still in escrow for the construction of another field.

Commissioner Mason offered Brad's Tire to sponsor the softball team.

Commissioner Huffman said she would like to see four teams. She said it's not the amount of kids willing to play it's a lack of sponsors.

A discussion ensued about the fee charged, what the organization does with the fee, and the potential to have a traveling team.

It was agreed that the contract was necessary for them to play on the field.

There was no further discussion of any other business items.

4. ADJOURNMENT

At 6:55 p.m., the City Commission Workshop was adjourned.

APPROVED: _____

BY: _____

ATTEST:

Linda Bourgeois
City Clerk