

Proceedings of a workshop of the City Commissioner of the City of Palatka, Florida, held on the 23rd day of August, 2000.

PRESENT: Commissioner Mary Lawson Brown
 Commissioner Hernan Azula
 Commissioner Ish Edwards
 Commissioner James Norwood, Jr.

ABSENT Mayor Tim Smith

Also Present: City Manager Allen R. Bush, City Clerk Betsy Jordan Driggers, Finance Director Ruby Williams, Parks Supt. Jeff Norton, Asst. Parks Supt. Fred Lumpkin

INVOCATION: Reverend Jackson

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: Alvin Lavain

As Mayor Pro Tem, Commissioner Brown took the chair and called the meeting to order. She said this workshop was called to try and come to a consensus over Lefty Turner Park/Booker Field and the Booker/Turner Economic Development, Inc. Committee. Commissioner Norwood said this workshop was called due to some communication and procedural problems, and questions about the direction the City wants to take the Park and its Committee. He said Commissioner Brown has voiced concern over not being able to work with this committee, and has suggested dissolving it as the focus of the committee has changed. The Committee has asked for some direction from the Commission. He hopes they can build some consensus on where they want to take the Park, and should keep in mind this is all about the children, and they will ultimately suffer if they cannot come to an understanding. He hopes that whatever they do the issue gets resolved and they will no longer have to address it.

Clarence Williams, Chairman of the Committee, said he was asked three times to serve on this committee, and refused twice. He has experience in recreation. The committee is ultimately concerned with putting programs together for their kids to promote athletic knowledge and to make them better citizens. He has heard there is a problem, but does not know what it is. Whether the Commission dissolves the committee or not, they are still concerned about their children. No one on this committee is looking for recognition. They want the Commission to allow them to provide activities for the kids. They don't want to make anyone angry or look bad. The park sat there for a year undone. The kids on the Northside don't have the money to get into sports in the other areas of town. Each family has 4 – 5 kids, and can't pay \$50 - \$60 per kid for the Babe Ruth Association or Pop Warner. They work with the Housing Authority and they help provide recreation. They have a program starting this Saturday with over 150 kids. If the Commission considers them in charge of the Park and the recreation program, then allow them to do it. Mr. Bush said last year the committee set fees for rentals of the park, and asked how people schedule or reserve the park for games or practice. Mr. Williams said there has been no one there but kids. They rent the park for the City for \$50.00 + tax and that money comes to the City. They have rented it out two times. The kids that are there are organized teams. Mr. Bush said that is the Housing Authority's program, and asked what if someone else has a league and wants to work that field into their schedule. Mr. Williams said they would call him and get on the schedule to use the field for practice. The Park is for everyone. The basketball courts are open every day. He closes the restrooms and turns off the lights at 9:00 each night and 6:00 on Sundays. The only thing they charge for is when they have to open the pavilion. They don't charge for the fields. They have not taken a dime from anyone for anything. Mr. Bush said the original committee set the rules governing the rentals. Commissioner Norwood said he has had conversations with Mr. Williams about the park's usage and who needs to pay and who does not. Commissioner Brown said the park grant came from state funds, not federal. Ms. Driggers said the Housing Authority has run a softball league program there every summer at no charge. Commissioner Norwood said the original committee was charged with designing the park and overseeing the work, which they did. They also decided that one day they would like the park to become self-sufficient, and that is when they looked at funding and decided that the individuals who used the park needed to put something

back into it. It seems that the present Committee is trying to follow that plan. Although he has not attended the meetings and is not aware of the problems, Commissioner Brown's chief complaint is she feels she has no voice. The Commission cannot tolerate that type of attitude. She secured the funding and is a City Commissioner, and has every authority to exercise her position. She is the liaison between the Commission and the Park Committee, and that relationship should be honored.

Commissioner Brown said it took two years to get the money, and almost another two years to build the park. They did not have to ask for community input, and could have decided amongst the Parks Dept., Commission and City Manager what to do with it. Instead, at her request the Commission agreed to appoint a committee to get community input. She has tried to be very open with it, and found that five splinter groups were trying to do the same thing, and she called them all in and asked each group to select one person from their group to represent them on this committee. She held the first meeting and they selected Mr. Bob Burch as their chairman. He chaired the meetings and the committee decided the direction they wanted to go and how they could come up with the matching funds. All the matching was done through the City, and not through the community. Their focus was to design a building and companion facilities. They found as they went out for bids that the money did not go as far as they would have liked, and the process was slow. It took almost two years to open the park, and a little longer for some of the items. The fence is still not finished. They would also like to erect a community center for non-athletic activities. They opened it up for rentals before it was finished, which may have been a mistake. They have had complaints on the cleanliness and lack of supplies, and people felt they were not getting their money's worth. The Commission tried to make people understand that money was going to outfit the park. They have picked up some partners along the way – the Housing Authority and School Board have made significant donations. The new committee members came in and said they were not satisfied with how the park was being handled, and some of them were added to the committee, hoping that would help. She believes the problems began due to the different focus of each group. The first group shut down when the second group came in and started pushing their programs. Both programs should have run parallel, but they did not, and there was some dissension. She was getting disenchanted, because they were telling her she was not supposed to have any say, and her only function was to provide information. She was told she had no vote until there was something they wanted her to do for them. She ran for this Commission seat because she did not want to see the Neighborhood Facility closed down. She fought to keep it open so their kids would have somewhere to go and something to do. Things have been said in the community that they should be saying to each other. She opened the floor for audience discussion.

Mary Heard, original committee member, said they met in Mr. Bush's office many times and worked hard. They changed things, made decisions, and it did take a long time to get things started. There were a lot of things they wanted to do. There is no direction now, no goals. She is all for kids, and will fight for them. She understands this group is for recreation and athletics, but all kids are not athletic. They need other programs. She is not putting down sports; that is what this committee feels is important, but that is not the only important thing. They need to look ahead to next year, and not just next week. Mr. Williams said when she suggested arts & crafts, they planned a program, but no one showed up for it. They had it planned for the entire summer, but no one came. If she wants this program, she should participate in keeping it going. This is like the food program; everyone showed up once or twice, but only one person showed up the entire summer and did all the work. Everyone has these great ideas, but no one shows up when its time to do the work. Commissioner Brown said she went there for the food program several times, but very few participants showed up. She made it clear there were things she could and could not do, and being out there every morning was not one of them. She was told the people who delivered the food would also distribute it. It only took 30 minutes. By the end of the summer only 27 kids were in the program. Mr. Williams said they are not here to point fingers. If they decide to keep the Committee, let them do what they do best. If they are to start a computer program, they need an instructor and a building. There is nothing out there for kids to do but play sports. There are no other facilities. Mrs. Heard said she never said she wanted to run an arts & crafts program; he has her confused with someone else.

Reno Fells said he has been on the Committee from the beginning. He is sad and disappointed it has come to this because this project was started out to be so promising, and it has turned into something ugly. He has attended some of the Hank Bryan Park Committee meetings, and things are very organized and civil, and he wonders why this project has come to this. When the new members came to this committee, there was a lot of hostility and frustration, and questions about what, when, where, why, how – questions they did not have answers to. James Williams keeps saying that nothing got done until the new people came and started asking questions and pushing for progress, but that is just not true. They met over and over during the first year. Mr. Lavain, who also made some statements, and was also on the first committee, only attended two or three meetings all year. He has heard many comments supposedly made by committee members about him. He does not write any checks, so if someone gets paid or how they get paid, all he knows is that the money was there and was spent on the park. There were technical problems with the lighting, snafus with the poles, and delays they could not help. There were problems with the fencing. Yes, PHA runs a program every year, but with no fence, what would have happened if a ball had hit someone in the stands – the City would have been liable. He felt uncomfortable when the new people came onto the committee, because of all the bickering. He believes the park should be closed down until it is completed. There is a misunderstanding as to the true role of the Committee. The park does not belong to him or the Committee, it belongs to the City and they have the final word on what goes on there. When they were in the planning stage, they had to get a facility there before they could get a visual and do other things. Overall there has been no synergy – everything has been hit and miss. The new committee people came in frustrated, and they may have some valid concerns. To them, things were not moving fast enough.

Mr. Bush said when the Committee formed they had \$150,000 and a set of plans an engineer provided. They said they would like to accomplish as much of what was on those plans as possible, and the Committee tried to find a way to do that with volunteers. Months went by, programs were planned, workdays came and went, and no one showed up. They went on this way for some time. Finally James Williams suggested they have an engineer draw up some specs and contract the work out, and that is what they did. That is when the ball started rolling. There were delays on the fence, backstop and lights, and this is the final stage. The original committee sat down and came up with plans and set the fees, how the park would be run, etc. When the changeover occurred, that group had different ideas. The original SOP was never put into writing, so it was difficult to carry it over. They probably need to broaden the committee and bring other people in to look at long-range goals for future development, and plan to seek funds for other programs besides just football, baseball and basketball. They also need a Statement of Operations. Mr. Fells said it is important to set realistic and attainable goals. You can have many dreams, but without money, none of it comes to fruition. Volunteerism is short-lived. Some goals are just unrealistic. Until they can hire an individual to administer what goes on at that park, their efforts will continue to be scattered and weak. Commissioner Brown said one of the old committee's focus was to get a building out there. The committee members received letters saying if they weren't going to attend committee meetings they should resign, and the letters were very offensive. The former chairman, Mr. Burch, was offended and stopped going. She does not know who directed that those letter be sent. They should find a way to fund a part-time person at the park. She will look into it. They have never sat down as a group to discuss it. The focus was to get the park finished. People are willing to help them do things. Mr. Lumpkin got the bullpen finished, and Mr. Fells convinced Scotty's to donate some cabinets and counters for the concession stand. Communication within the group was really bad, and nothing was being accomplished. When Mr. Williams took over he had no idea what the previous group was trying to do, and took the group in another direction they were not ready to go in. She said she did not want to rent the building until they got someone to clean it and did more to it, and it was rented anyway. She asked Ms. Driggers to relate a complaint from Mrs. Beauford, who rented the park a few weeks ago. Ms. Driggers said she came in to return the keys and get her deposit refunded, and asked for a full refund of the rental fee because of the unsatisfactory condition of the building. She said Mrs. Beauford had to call Mr. Lumpkin in to get the doors opened, because the locks were in bad shape and the keys would not open them. Mrs. Beauford said he had to blow the

sand and dirt out of the building. She said there feminine products stuck to the bathroom floors, and the bathrooms were just overall dirty. Mrs. Beauford told her they had to bleach the concession stand and restrooms, and said it looked like punch or something red had exploded inside the refrigerator. She was very angry about the condition of the building. Ms. Driggers said she is only relating what Mrs. Beauford told her, and did not see it first hand, but Mr. Lumpkin did, and asked him to relate what he encountered. Mr. Lumpkin said he was called to the Park early on that Saturday morning. Mrs. Beauford was not happy with the dirt under the doors and under the pavilion. They did have problems getting the doors open, and the bathrooms were not clean. He took care of what he could. Commissioner Brown said they do not want the facility to get a bad reputation. Senator Holzendorf's name is attached to it. There are simple things they can do now like plant trees. The new committee does not put much stock in what she says. They wanted to hear what Mr. Bush had to say about it, and he told them what she told them. Mr. Bush works at the pleasure of the Commission. She asked for this committee. The purpose of the committee was to give the community some input on the new facilities. She has no doubt she has offended some of them, judging from the way they spoke to and about her. Many of the old members have stopped attending because of the bickering, and haven't been to meetings in more than a month.

Mr. Fells said communication is the key. The new group brought in hostility and confusion over issues they had no control over or answers for. Things were not moving fast enough for them and they were upset. James Williams claims things were not getting done until he started putting pressure on people, but that is not true. Things were getting done and the ball was rolling. Clarence Williams did do a great job with the PHA program, but when it comes to the committee there has been a major breakdown. He resigned when the new members came on because of the irrationality, but he rethought his position and stayed on. Commissioner Azula said they can spend all night talking about this, but what it boils down to is they need to set some basic, minimum rules for the Park. He will volunteer to meet with Mr. Bush, Mr. Norton and Mr. Williams to accomplish this. The park is by no means finished. They will go after funding for the park, and set priorities for the Committee. They lack a basic set of procedures, and will have problems until they get one. Commissioner Edwards concurred.

James Williams said the fence needs to be finished and the roof leaks in the electrical room and pavilion. They are having problems with the concession stand windows, which were never installed properly. Mr. Bush said those items are under warranty and the City should have been notified. They will contact the contractor on that. Mr. Williams said the dugouts have not been finished and are only temporary. In the contract \$14,000 was set aside for dugouts, and that has not been done. The sprinkler system does not work. Mr. Norton said the sprinkler system was on this afternoon and works fine. Mr. Bush said Mr. Williams needs to understand that they never had the \$14,000 for the dugouts. They did not have enough money to do all they originally estimated they could do with volunteers doing most of the work. The volunteers fell through and they went out for bids on most of the work, and when the bids came in they were higher than anticipated, so the Committee sat down and decided the project needed to fit the money, and they set realistic priorities. The dugouts were to be done by volunteers. He can't go back to the application and say there is \$14,000 to build a dugout, because that money is not there. Mr. Williams asked whom the consultant was who got the contract to build the pavilion. He said the contractor was paid \$96,000 to build the pavilion, but there was only \$42,000 in the contract for the building. Mr. Bush said that is what it cost to build it. Mr. Williams said he would like to have a list of the materials that cost \$96,000 in that building. Mr. Bush said the City took competitive bids for this work, and that was the lowest bid the City received. The contractor may or may not itemize his bid. Mr. Williams said he wanted a list of how many bricks, receipts for the bricks, etc. Mr. Bush said these companies work up their bids based on a set of specs. The City does not ask for an itemized list from the contractor. Mr. Bush said if he wants an itemized list, he should go to the contractor to get it. Ms. Driggers said for the Commission's benefit there has been a lot of talk about things not being handled correctly, and she can tell them from her personal experience working with Mr. Bush on a day to day basis on this and other grant projects, he spent much more time on this one project than on other multi-million dollar grants for projects going on all over the City. They all did. The city is still working on a CDBG grant that was in process when she first came to work here almost

three years ago. The wheels of grants grind slowly. Mr. Bush sent the pavilion alone out for bids three times just trying to get a bid that came in under \$100,000. They were coming in around \$125,000 - \$130,000. The first committee worked hard on this also. \$150,000 seems like a lot of money, but it does not pay for an entire park. Mr. Bush said the first committee did an admirable job of putting together a useable and nice park for what money they had to work with. They got the most 'bang for their buck.' Ms. Driggers said at one time before she came on with the City there was some talk about giving the park management over to a non-profit group, and the City had actually worked up a contract similar to what they have with the Price Martin Center, but it never came to fruition. She does not know what happened to the group. This group operates as a non-profit group, and maybe they can come to the same type of agreement.

Commissioner Norwood moved to suspend renting the park until it is complete. Commissioner Azula seconded the motion, and asked if they don't rent it, what will happen to it. Commissioner Brown said maybe things will get done faster. Commissioner Norwood said everyone complains about the park not being adequate to rent. This will force the community to make sure what needs to be done, gets done. It gets everyone involved. He knows the City is trying to stay out of the recreation business, but they should not lease the park for private functions and only use it for community functions, and let the committee continue to sponsor sports programs. Commissioner Brown said people are not satisfied with what they are getting. At one time the committee started writing policies and procedures, but that took a back seat when the new group came in. She wants to see the citizens use that park, and she wants it to be a showplace for the City. At this time, with this committee, some of the members have some personal feelings about her that she has not been able to overcome. She has lost sleep over this and has experienced a lot of stress over these issues. She wants to back away from this committee. She will still look for funding if they want her to, but the present group is not ready to accept what she has to offer, and she does not want to be a stumbling block for the Park. She loves the town and its people too much to sit here and not be able to do what needs to be done. The activities are wonderful, but she would love to see it broadened. She does not sit in all these meetings for nothing; she does a lot of interfacing. The contacts she makes are valuable. She said she does not want to be where she is not wanted, and tendered her resignation from the Committee. Commissioner Norwood called the question. There being no further discussion, the motion passed unopposed.

Mr. Bush said the fence should be finished shortly; it needs to be moved, as it is in the wrong place. When they get that finished, the baseball and softball can be continued. Commissioner Norwood said he would like see the park rented for tournaments once the fence is in place and the concession stand is finished. Commissioner Brown said if they keep substituting things in the concession stand, it will never be finished. It needs to be done right. Commissioner Norwood said he approached the County about getting recreation equipment, and he was told the Committee needs to show a community cash match. This committee needs to show what kind of fundraising they can do. Vice-Mayor Brown said you don't have to have a cash match, you can use in-kind, but she knows they want to see cash. They can have one fundraising party and come up with that. Commissioner Norwood said Commissioner Azula had earlier suggested a small group meet and establish an SOP, and moved that a sub-committee consisting of Commissioner Azula, Mr. Bush, Mr. Norton, Mr. Fells and Mr. Williams meet with the purpose of establishing a Standard Operating Procedure for the park. Commissioner Edwards seconded the motion, which passed unopposed.

Commissioner Edwards said Lefty Turner Park has its own bank account that both he and his Kiwanis Club have put money into. After discussion, a meeting for the SOP group was established for 4:00 p.m. on Wednesday, September 6, 2000. Commissioner Norwood said when the old committee met, they did keep minutes, but never submitted them to the Clerk for distribution, although they should have. This committee needs to keep a record of their meetings and furnish the Clerk with a copy so she can provide them to the Commission. Mr. Williams said they have minutes of all their meetings. Mr. Bush asked if the first group had set any policies and if they had a written record of them. Ms. Heard said she had those records and would drop them off to Mr. Bush.

An unidentified audience member said she keeps hearing old committee vs. new committee, and asked who the committee members are. Ms. Driggers said the membership was last revised on March 23, 2000. The members are Commissioner Brown as liaison, the Late "Lefty" Turner as honorary member, Bob Burch as Chairman, Reno Fells, Eugene Foster, who replaced Patricia Donerson, Mary Long George, Mary Heard, Rosalyn Hill, who replaced Melvin Ryles, Fred Lumpkin, Commissioner Norwood who has since resigned, and Clarence Williams, who replaced Alvin Lavain. A discussion ensued on who replaced who. Ms. Driggers said Patricia Donerson, Alvin Lavain and Melvyn Ryles came off the list before Commissioner Norwood resigned. Mr. Lavain said he never resigned. Ms. Driggers said those people who came off did so due to non-attendance. She has previously told members of the current committee on several occasions that Mr. Lavain was no longer on the committee, and if he needed to be put back on the Commission needed to reappoint him. Mr. Lavain said no one sent him a notice. Ms. Driggers said she has been told Mr. Lavain is the vice-chairperson, and she pointed out that officially he wasn't even on the committee any more, but that's as far as it went. Clarence Williams said James Williams never was on the committee; Ms. Driggers said that is correct, he never was. An audience member asked why he has so much input and keeps asking for copies of all these documents. Ms. Driggers said these are public records and anyone can ask for them. Ms. Driggers said if Mr. Lavain will submit an application, she will submit it to the Commission when they call for applicants and let them take whatever action they want on it.

A discussion ensued on whether to accept Commissioner Brown's resignation from the Committee. Commissioner Brown said the biggest problem is communication with the group. Commissioner Norwood asked Clarence Williams if they are willing to work with Commissioner Brown, he said they will work with anyone. Commissioner Brown said she sits on this Commission the same as the rest of the members, has the same vote they do, and deserves as much respect as the next Commissioner. The members of the Committee do not treat her with respect. If she is out working for the community she should not have to battle with the same people she works for and loves. Some people say things to her directly, and some chose to say things behind her back. It gets to her after a while. She pointed out that they address the other commissioners as "commissioner so-and-so", but address her as "Ms. Brown". Alvin Lavain asked why he was not notified that he was no longer on the committee. Commissioner Brown said she did not put him off the committee, and was told it was because he had missed too many meetings, and left it at that.

There being no further business to discuss, the workshop was adjourned.

CITY CLERK

VICE-MAYOR