

The Town Hall Meeting related to the Height Incentives Process, held on September 11, 2018.

Councilman McConnell called the meeting to order at 5:30 P.M. He said the Land Development Code (LDC) had not been reviewed since its adoption in 2012 and wanted to ask the community if it served the City's purposes today, maybe some of the 2012 goals were not the same as 2019 goals.

He invited Mr. Leonard to explain the Height Incentive Process. Mr. Leonard gave a brief history that from 1977-2001, Zoning regulations allowed buildings to have unlimited height dependent on the size of the property. The Council in 2002 decided that unlimited height was not the appropriate action to take so they adopted a height limitation of 22 stories which was law until 2012. In 2012, the Council considered the current developments and the look that the City wanted and adopted the 150' height limitation and allowed another 70' through height incentives. He gave examples of incentives which would have to be a public benefit. However, no developer had a right to those incentives. They had to apply to the Planning Board first to show the incentives and their public benefit, and the Planning Board would make a recommendation to the Council. He said there had been past applications for Height Incentives, not all approved, and now may be the time to discuss whether to allow Incentives. The options were whether to keep the Incentives but make them requirements or remove some of the Incentives.

Councilman McConnell said the Council was trying to balance the quality of life and property rights for the residents and the land owners. He said there were some legal constraints as well as private property rights. He opened the floor for comments.

Mr. Tom Klomps asked Mr. Leonard what could be done if the approved Incentives were no longer provided by the property 10-15 years from now. Mr. Leonard explained that the City would issue a Notice of Violation, issue tickets, and ultimately make the correction and lien the property. He gave examples.

Ms. Karen Mathson said developers rarely lived in the places they developed. She said a moratorium on heights had been requested in 2002 which resulted in the "concrete canyon": She spoke of part of the island controlled by the County and the City had no control over all the sandy beach. She commented that what was good for the residents would be good for the tourists.

Mr. Rick Ramos commented that a citizen had been denied his Height Incentive application yet businesses were approved. He said the infrastructure would not support more development and Highway 98 needed to be four-laned. Councilman McConnell said the roadway was his concern as well.

Mr. Mike Burke said why height limits at all and what was being controlled, was it the number of people on the beach or tall buildings. Councilman McConnell said he thought it was the infrastructure issues and doing a better job of spreading out the people on the island. Mr. Burke said Tidewater was a good example of what was desired in order to see the beach, skinnier taller buildings.

Mr. Derwin White spoke of wide buildings obstructing the view and that it was difficult to control density. He said room sizes could be lowered which would negatively impact traffic flow.

Ms. Linda Dehill said at the Planning Board meeting, the City Planner voted against the Height Incentives for By The Seas Resort due to congestion. She said the Council's elected duty was to preserve and protect their way of life.

Mr. Leonard said there was a moratorium now on anyone asking for Height Incentives and five applications would be considered at the end of the month. The moratorium would exist until the Council decided the changes to the LDC. Councilman McConnell said no discussion could occur concerning those five specific requests at this meeting.

Ms. Mathson asked about development in the unincorporated areas of the island with the mass numbers of units being unsold and turned into apartments. Councilman McConnell spoke of affordable housing being an issue on the beach.

Mr. White said there seemed to be confusion between condos and hotels, as hotels typically had 70% public lodging during the year. He said the majority of Gulf-front would be either condos or hotels. Regarding traffic, FDOT spent One Hundred Million Dollars to

complete the Highway 79 expansion all the way to I-10. One Hundred Thirty-Five Million Dollars was allocated for Hwy 231 to add additional lanes. A lot of money was being spent to create the evacuation avenues once the people reached a certain point.

Councilman McConnell spoke of his traffic problems within Palmetto Trace and drivers using the streets as shortcuts. The peak number of cars on PCB Parkway was eighty thousand cars in one day when the road was only designed for forty thousand cars. He suggested the only way to correct a volume problem was to spread out the cars. Comments were made about the bottleneck at the bridge.

Mr. Leonard said no local government could stop a development merely because of traffic because the developer had the right to pay and go. He explained the Proportionate Share and the fund to pay for a specific transportation improvement which would alleviate the congestion. Second if local government significantly reduced the development potential, the City might have to pay the developer for that loss or allow the development to occur even if it was against the current Land Development regulations.

Mr. David Chapman spoke of the CRA traffic blight and the planned Multi-Modal transportation system on Front Beach Road. He said the process started in 2008 but all steps had not yet been completed to address the traffic problems. Councilman McConnell said asphalt was being laid today on Segment 2 and hopefully completed soon in order to start on Segment 3. He explained the CRA and the Council's plan to do a Segment every two years.

Mr. White mentioned the other controlling factor was the water and sewer capacity. Councilman McConnell said Staff had already planned for expansion and property had been purchased a few years ago. Mr. Gisbert said the current plant on Gulf Blvd. was sized for all current and future use. The capacity would work for approximately another ten years. He said the City was purchasing about forty acres west on SR79 near the Commerce Park, and then roads to the site would be built. In ten years, the plan was to have the new plant operational. Related to the CRA, Mr. Gisbert reminded that as Segments were completed, all utilities such as water, sewer, telecommunications and power, were replaced, placed underground and protected. He said the CRA addressed the infrastructure with 8' wide sidewalks, and dedicated trolley lanes.

Mr. Klomps said the Loop Road (Now Bay Parkway) had ended up a parking lot due to congestion, and now the St. Joe Company planned hundreds of apartments on the Loop Road. The new road was not fixing the problem and traffic would only escalate once the new Sports Park was built. Councilman McConnell said the City had no jurisdiction over the new Sports Park as that was the County and the TDC.

Mr. Tod Ingram commented about the CRA car lanes only 10' wide and the developers having the expectation of their height incentives being approved and the City being sued with the Bert Harris Act. He questioned the impact to businesses by losing part of the parking and storefront due to the roadway expansion. Councilman McConnell said there had been no eminent domains on property on Front Beach Road in the rights-of-way. Mr. Leonard said the standard width for FDOT was 10' to 12'. Mr. Gisbert added that Front Beach Road was quite old with some sections only 66' wide. The CRA designed itself to work within a 66' section but would look better and perform better in 100'. He said the City did go through eminent domain on two parcels in 2007-2008 and would avoid going through that process again at all costs. He said they would communicate with the landowner, make an offer supported by an appraisal, and have the ability to offer above the appraisal in order to avoid suits.

Ms. Colleen Swab made comments about the trolley riders and that many people would not ride the trolley. Councilman McConnell explained that the Bay County TPO operated the trolley system which reduced the traffic load of workers coming to the beach. He said the CRA was building roads which would be more tourist-based.

Mr. Frank Sewell questioned when this Segment of the CRA would be completed and daily penalties if deadlines missed. He said he did not see any traffic improvement and the contractor should be working 24 hours per day to finish. Mr. Gisbert said the CRA project had an original completion date in November and were allowed for raindays and changeorders. He reminded that the CRA was building a road while still keeping the utilities and dealing with the visitors. He said the contractor was replacing the water and the sewer while still maintaining the current water and sewer, replacing the power while still maintaining the power, and all this took time. He said when Bay Parkway was built, it only took five months for the 1.5 miles. Building this Segment 2 in the middle of development took longer. He said it was a complex operation to keep access to every business and every condo.

Mr. Dan Jackson asked the width of Bay Parkway. Mr. Gisbert gave the dimensions on the segments and said it would be a limited access road which prevented driveway cuts and used feeder roads similar to that in front of Home Depot.

Councilman McConnell explained the City's funding through the 1% Gross Sales Tax, only one of three cities in the State with that tax. He reminded that the City did not have an Ad Valorem Tax for the City and the Council was fighting to avoid assessing such a Tax like the County. The assessment was for a specific thing which would mitigate resorting to an Ad Valorem Tax. He said the City had no control over the funding- one bad storm and it was wiped out. He spoke of recurring costs which led to assessments.

Ms. Genese Hatcher made comments about the Height Incentive application for an additional 4' which was denied by the Council for parking underneath the home. She said the Planning Board had recommended approval. However, now businesses have applied for additional height up to 22 stories. She questioned why the 4' would be denied but yet 22 stories approved. Councilman McConnell said the Council was not discussing increasing height limits. Mr. Chapman said the difference in the two issues was that the residential property had been for a Variance where these businesses were applying for Height Incentives. Councilman McConnell said these were two different issues.

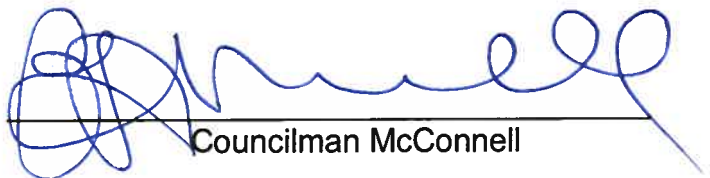
Mr. Chapman said he agreed with Ms. Swab about the trolley riders and said he had not supported the CRA dedicated tram lane. However, there were other way to use that lane, such as leasing through UBER or e-scooters. Regarding the building height, the LDC tried to prevent concrete walls and provide some aesthetic features. He spoke of the public good, providing parking where none existed.

Mr. Burke said he felt the height incentives were useless and he supported the City deciding a height, and if prettier buildings were wanted or addressing density, then address those issues. He suggested developing an Impact Fee for the public good amenities. Comments were made from the audience about the height being finalized at 220'.

A lady from the audience asked when the Height Incentives would be discussed. Councilman McConnell said the moratorium was in place until January, and the Council will discuss the matter beforehand. Ms. Mathson asked about the current Height Incentive applications, and Councilman McConnell said he could not discuss that issue.

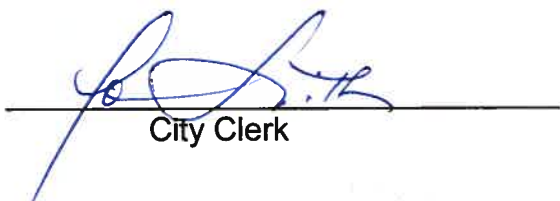
With nothing further, the meeting was adjourned at 7:05 P.M.

READ AND APPROVED this 20th of November, 2018.



Councilman McConnell

ATTEST:



City Clerk