

Minutes from Town Commission Workshop with Local Business Operators/Owners
February 12, 2018 8:00 a.m.

The meeting was called to order at 8:05 a.m. by Mayor Sasser. He introduced Vice Mayor Vincent and Commissioners Elliot Sokolow and Mark Brown, and Town Manager Connie Hoffmann. Mayor Sasser explained the purpose of the meeting was to get input from members of the business community on the issues they felt the Town should address over the next 5-7 years. The Mayor then opened the meeting for input.

In attendance from the business community were:

John Boutin – Windjammer
Bill Ciani – Perfect Pools (Commercial property owner)
Mike Daniel – Dolphin Harbor Inn
Janet Deni – Kilwins
Christopher DeSalvo – Christopher's Garden of Love Florist
Richard Farrar – Hotel Consultant
Arthur Franczak – Shore Haven
Ben Gracey – Whaassup
Maria Lazbal – Tides Inn
Rocky Narain – Surf Shop
Sattie Narain – Surf Shop
Gary Weissman – Consignment Queen
Jeff Whyte – Whyte Financial Group
Margaret Winiarczyk – Breakaway Inn
Andrew Winiarczyk – Breakaway Inn
Don Miller – Beach Harbor Realty
Pamela Rossi – P.J. Rossi Jewelers
Dominic Casale – Prestige Spa / Diamonds & Doggies
Chris Mancini – Historical Tours By The Sea
Mark Stern - Attorney
Paulo McCo – Blue Moon Fish Company
Ina Marjakangas – Coast
Yolanda Bernardini – Welcome By The Sea
Courtney Stanford – Chamber of Commerce

Dominic Casale recommended the Town buy the building across from Pronto for \$1.5 million. He also suggested the Town negotiate with SunTrust to subdivide their property and sell a portion to the Town for construction of a parking garage. Mr. Casale also opined that bikes and hover boards are hazardous on the sidewalks.

Capt. Wood of BSO clarified that the LBTS code states that skateboards are not allowed downtown but that, under state law, bikes are allowed on the sidewalks.

Peggy Mohler stated that Fort Lauderdale doesn't allow bikes on the sidewalks. She asked if the Parking Fund was restricted to parking. Town Manager Hoffmann

responded that there were no restrictions on the use of money in the Parking Fund. Ms. Mohler responded that she thought the Parking Fund should be restricted.

The Mayor asked for a show of hands of how many people in the audience thought that parking was a problem in LBTS. All but three people raised their hands.

Gary Weissman stated parking is a serious problem for his business. He noted that a business upstairs from him operates a call center and has 40-50 employees.

Peggy Mohler stated that trucks can't make turns downtown without driving on the curbs and sidewalks. She felt parking and traffic were the two biggest problems. She stated that people are not coming to LBTS due to lack of parking.

Don Miller also referenced the call center contributing to the parking problem. He asked that the Town change the code to allow parallel parking behind cars parked on private property.

Richard Farrar said he has observed that people can't figure out how to put money in the pay machines and they can't read the instructions.

Mayor Sasser asked for clarification if he was saying that lighting is a problem on pay stations.

John Boutin said sometime a centrally located garage has to be built. The point of redevelopment was to raise the stature of hotel visitors and that was happening. Mr. Boutin felt that the Town should allow digital advertising in windows, and let hotels post rates. He also recommended renaming Commercial Boulevard to establish a distinct identity. He felt the Town should move Town Hall and build a parking garage. Mr. Boutin also stated the Town needs more and better retail shops.

Janet Deni said that, while the parking consultant said there is not a parking problem except for a period of time in the winter months, her business and others need more parking in season to generate enough profit to survive the off-season months when they lose money. She also stated her opinion that the A1A/Commercial intersection is dangerous; there's not enough time for people to cross. She also felt that signage restrictions need to be loosened and she agreed that the Town needs more and better retail.

Commissioner Dodd arrived around 8:35 a.m.

Ina Marjakangas said she was one of fifteen new businesses west of A1A that desperately need more foot traffic; west of A1A is like an abyss. She asked that the Town put back the holiday lights in the trees in that area and leave them there year round. She also suggested that the Town put up different banners on the street poles that said "take the Bridge Walk/" to encourage people to shop locally. And she wanted the Sun Trolley drivers to give out LBTS maps to riders.

Gary Weissman complained that the Town's code says no sandwich boards, no temporary sale signs or banners and asked that the Town ease up on code enforcement.

Chris DeSalvo explained how his new tour business would work, focusing on historical tours, crime tours, and black history in South Florida. He is pitching the cruise lines to sell the tours and promote LBTS as a destination. He indicated he will need pick up and drop off spots for tour buses in multiple locations.

Some business owners expressed interest in a Water Taxi stop in the Town.

Rocky Narain recommended the Town buy the building for sale at 275 Commercial and build a garage there (InterComp building). He felt that location for a garage will help drive people to walk to retail. He stated the Town cannot attract high end retailers without parking. Mr. Narain said the code enforcement staff arrived in 15 minutes when he put a surfboard against the front of his store. He would like the Town to let the sports equipment businesses put tents on the beach with paddleboards and other water sports equipment to get some visibility. He also urged the Town to ease up on code enforcement.

Jeff Whyte stated he has had an insurance business in LBTS for 11 years. He urged retailers to work together, and use the internet to your advantage.

Arthur Franczak stated he operated a 68 unit hotel that has been in his family for 21 years. The hotel's best years had been 2007 and 2015. He doesn't want more construction. Mr. Franczak pointed out that hotel inventory is down 40%; when the old Clarion and Holiday Inn hotels open again, it will be very positive for other businesses in Town. He urged his fellow business people to give it time and see where it goes.

Richard Farrar said the businesses need to adopt the Disney concept. We all need to work together he stated. Mr. Farrar observed that the Friday night music events attract older people and they need to start thinking about how to appeal to a younger crowd.

Don Miller stated the pay stations are inconvenient when it is raining and that they need more lighting on the brick pavers on the west plazas.

Dominic Casale suggested installing footprints on the sidewalk to get people to walk west. He also suggested the Town use electric shuttles to pick up people at remote parking and allow local businesses to advertise on the shuttles. He also was a proponent of setting up valet spots out west and putting Town maps out in acrylic holders.

Peggy Mohler said if LBTS retailers would give Aruba rack cards, they will display them in the restaurant. Ms. Mohler suggested restricting the money in the parking fund to parking only. She expressed concern about the Pelican Hopper stopping in Anglin's

Square and just sitting there blocking traffic. She also opined that we need directories at each plaza and the Town should highlight the sculptures

Janet Deni agreed that the Town needs other means of transport. In her opinion, people want to do more in LBTS than just eat and drink. They are looking for things to do.

Vice Mayor Vincent observed that, from the input, it seems to come down to three issues: Parking, lighting, and code restrictiveness.

Maria Lazbal stated that LBTS is unique, and has great potential, but the sidewalks along El Mar are bad, there is flooding, and there are no lights, no parking, no information. She feels there needs to be more marketing. In her opinion, the Town doesn't promote LBTS. Ms. Lazbal also stated we need more events.

Peggy Mohler recommended restricting the parking fund and putting parking meters down El Mar Drive.

The Mayor thanked those in attendance for their input and closed the meeting at approximately 9:20 a.m.

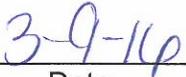


Mayor Scot Sasser

ATTEST:



Town Clerk Tedra Smith



Date