

TOWN OF LAUDERDALE-BY-THE-SEA

TOWN COMMISSION

WORKSHOP MEETING MINUTES

Town Commission Meeting Room

4501 Ocean Drive

Tuesday, June 6, 2006

6:00 P.M. to 7:00 P.M.

1. CALL TO ORDER, MAYOR OLIVER PARKER

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Parker at 6:00 p.m. Present were Mayor Parker, Vice Mayor Yanni, Mayor Pro Tem Clark, Commissioner Silverstone and Commissioner McIntee. Also present were Town Manager Robert Baldwin, Municipal Services Director William Mason, and Acting Development Services Director Bradford Townsend.

Town Attorney James Cherof and Town Clerk Medina were not present.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAG

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

3. DISCUSSION ITEMS

A. General discussion on Dog Friendly Beach

Mayor Parker asked if the Commission had any objections to hearing comments from the public. No objections were noted.

Commissioner McIntee asked that each speaker be held to three minutes. Mayor Parker advised that the parliamentarian counter was being repaired, but he would try to ensure that all speakers did not go over the three minutes. He suggested that if any one speaker went inordinately long, the Commission could call it to their attention.

Ron Piersante, 227 Lake Court, stated that when this issue was originally discussed, he had mentioned a few concerns, including the issue of a shared beach with residents and pets. He indicated that a drive by would show that residents and visitors were still using the beach at 6:00 p.m. Mr. Piersante was concerned with the possible liability issues to be confronted, such as with loose dogs or bites to other pets or persons. He expressed concern with the use of beach areas where dogs have defecated and the health issues that could present. Mr. Piersante felt that at least Fort Lauderdale had thoroughly reviewed all the possibilities, providing for their "doggy beach" at the end of their beach strip.

Mr. Piersante stated that many residents on the far south portion of the Town had complained that the neighborhood had approximately 26 pets, but no place to walk their

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dogs on the beach. He indicated that if those residents wished to have a dog friendly beach, the section of beach by the Palm Club and the Surf and Yacht Club should be designated for pet use. Mr. Piersante stated that he opposed this proposal, but felt that if the Commission wished to move forward with implementing this idea, a better location should be chosen.

Dr. Robert Russetti, from Imperial Pointe Animal Hospital, and resident at 278 Tropic Drive, stated that he had three Labradors of his own and, although he would enjoy visiting the beach with them, he had to recognize that the human health aspect of this issue was the main concern. Dr. Russetti stated that there were many parasites and diseases carried by canines that were contagious to humans. He described several health issues that could arise and believed that this would not be a true advantage to the residents of the Town. Dr. Russetti indicated that the liability issues were great and questioned how the Town would ensure that pets were de-wormed every four months as recommended by the Center for Disease Control. He stated, too, that to avoid communication of diseases, the sand would need to be sifted thoroughly after each use.

Commissioner McIntee objected to Dr. Russetti providing his opinions on this matter, indicating that individuals from the other side of the debate should be given an opportunity to do the same. Mayor Parker advised that he had not requested Dr. Russetti be in attendance, but had been advised that he was present to discuss this matter in his professional capacity. He indicated that he would not object to any other medical professional from providing their opinion on the matter.

Commissioner McIntee asked Dr. Russetti if he would recommend the closure of the Fort Lauderdale Beach as well. Dr. Russetti replied affirmatively, stating that although the concept was one he believed he would enjoy with his pets, he could not ignore the human health issues involved.

Commissioner Silverstone asked if all remains could be considered to encourage human health issues. He indicated that it almost sounded as though the Town should outlaw public walking of dogs altogether. Dr. Russetti replied affirmatively, emphasizing that pets should be kept away from any area used by humans to lay on or about the areas used for defecation (i.e. beach, playground).

Cindy Geesey, 256 Imperial Lane, stated that Dr. Russetti had been her pets' veterinary for the past 20 years and was active in leading groups to care for misplaced pets after national disasters (i.e. hurricanes). She indicated that Dr. Russetti was well known in the community, not to mention throughout the country; not to mention that he was a resident of the Town. Mrs. Geesey stated that she loved animals and wanted to ensure the safety of the animals, their owners, and visitors to the Town's beaches. She indicated that there were so many other important issues the Town should be considering instead of debating an issue that was well known to create problems.

Diane Boutin, 4244 El Mar Drive, stated that as manager of Windjammer Resort she opposed this proposal from the tourist and maintenance point of view. She urged the

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Commission to address and concentrate its efforts on topics that would benefit the quality of life.

Fran Scheffler, 250 Capri Avenue, stated she opposed this proposal as she witnessed on a regular basis the pet owners who did not care to clean up after their pets. She indicated that if pet owners were careless on the street, they would be just as careless on the beach when no one was looking.

Barbara Cole, 221 Washingtonia Avenue and 5000 North Ocean Boulevard, stated that she had been under the impression that residents had asked for a doggy beach and the workshop was being held to consider the request. She felt that if tried on a trial basis, perhaps the dog beach area could be cordoned off so people would know not to lay in those areas. Mrs. Cole stated that she did not believe this was such an important issue, but believed it could be done on a trial area.

David Clemens, 5555 North Ocean Boulevard, stated he was in favor of the dog beach and believed that as a responsible dog owner he should be given the opportunity to enjoy the beach with his pets. He felt that such a beach could be regulated, such as with licensing and policing to ensure that pet owners were being responsible. Mr. Clemens stated that he could not believe that dogs defecating on the beach could be more detrimental to human health than bird feces and did not see anyone being concerned over the seagulls.

Commissioner Silverstone stated that he understood that there were other issues that were of a higher priority, but stated that during his and Commissioner McIntee's campaigning, residents had requested a doggy beach. He explained that he and Commissioner McIntee had been elected to represent the people and believed that this proposal should be moved forward, at least on a trial basis. Commissioner Silverstone advised that licensing, with proof of required vaccinations, could be monitored by the Town. He indicated that one could not "live in a cocoon" and the responsible pet owners should be provided with an opportunity to make this proposal work. Commissioner Silverstone stated that if after three months the Town felt that the dog beach were not working, it could be closed down.

Commissioner McIntee stated that he had done his homework and visited the Fort Lauderdale Beach with the sole ranger managing the area. He indicated that the ranger kept a book that showed revenue increases from \$1,800 to over \$12,000 for the City of Fort Lauderdale. Commissioner McIntee stated that although Dr. Russetti had made some good comments, no dog was allowed on the beach without a license or without having all required vaccinations. He stated that people who don't clean-up after their pets get citations and the beach gets cleaned daily. Commissioner McIntee stated that he had heard that the salt water neutralized the urine, but indicated that he was unsure if this were truly the case.

Commissioner McIntee stated that a telephone poll had been made and he had received 27 responses in favor and 7 responses opposed to the proposal. He

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expressed his belief that of the 7 “no” responses, 4 were suspects; with the 27 “yes” responses, only 6 were suspect. Commissioner McIntee stated that he and Commissioner Silverstone had gone door-to-door during their campaigning and that over 75 percent of residents had requested the dog beach. He indicated that the majority of the residents desired a dog beach and believed that if it were not passed, the residents would speak at the next election.

Mayor Pro Tem Clark stated he had lived in a community that had a dog beach and he did not care for what he saw on a regular basis. He indicated that that beach had been closed down as it turned out to be quite a disaster. Mayor Pro Tem Clark stated that he kept track of the calls he received on this issue and advised that 84.7 percent of the callers were against the dog beach.

Vice Mayor Yanni stated that he had originally thought this would be a good idea on a trial basis; however, he said his telephone was “ringing off the wall” with opposition. He stated that it was impossible for the Town to compare itself to Fort Lauderdale Beach, beginning with the fact that Fort Lauderdale had approximately five miles of public beach. Vice Mayor Yanni did not believe it would be feasible to take a portion of the Town’s beach to designate it for dog use.

Mayor Parker stated that the Town had approximately 150 feet of public beach on Commercial Boulevard, 150 feet of public beach on El Prado, and 125 feet of public beach on Washingtonia Avenue. He agreed that the Town could not afford to take a portion of its public beach for dog use. Mayor Parker stated that he did not see an overwhelming demand for a dog beach, stating that he had only received calls opposing the proposal.

In discussing the issue of allowing a doggy beach in Lauderdale-By-The-Sea, the majority consensus was against the proposal, with Commissioners McIntee and Silverstone voting in its favor. On a 3-2 poll, it was determined that this matter would not appear on the next agenda for discussion.

Mayor Parker stated that Commissioner Silverstone had made an observation that dogs were permitted on public parks and could, potentially, create the same health hazards. He indicated that dogs were already prohibited on Washingtonia Park and asked if the Commission wished to consider prohibiting dogs on the Municipal Park.

In discussing the issue of allowing dogs on the public park areas, the majority consensus was in favor of prohibiting the use of the parks by dogs, with Commissioners McIntee and Silverstone voting in opposition. On a 3-2 poll, it was determined that this matter would appear on a future agenda for further discussion.

Manager Baldwin stated that due to the large number of complaints against people walking their dogs along El Mar Drive, enforcement of dogs on the medians was researched. He indicated that staff found that there was no ordinance that provided enforcement capabilities for the “no dog” signs on the medians at El Mar Drive.

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Commissioner McIntee felt that removing the medians from use by pet owners would be an unnecessary penalty.

At the request of Mayor Parker, Chief Gooding advised that the ordinance ensuring that people cleaned up after their pets was enforced regularly. Mayor Pro Tem Clark stated that as long as the ordinance requiring clean-up was being enforced, he did not believe additional action was necessary. Vice Mayor Yanni agreed. He indicated that if there were an empty lot that could be used as a pet park, it would be easier for him to support the proposal. Commissioner Silverstone stated that the dog park was a good compromise. He stated, however, that he was against additional restrictions. Mayor Parker stated he had no objections to individuals walking their dogs on El Mar Drive as long as the appropriate ordinances were enforced. He indicated that he had no objections to pursuing the idea of a dog park and encouraged pet lovers to perhaps consider donating land for that purpose.

It was the consensus of the Commission that the “no dog” signs be removed from El Mar Drive. Additionally, the Commission agreed that “pick up after your dog” signs should be erected as appropriate. Mayor Pro Tem Clark emphasized, however, that it was not necessary to erect 400 signs around Town.

4. ADJOURNMENT

As there were no objections and no other business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 6:50 p.m.

Oliver Parker, Mayor

ATTEST:

Alina Medina, Town Clerk

Date Accepted: _____