

A workshop meeting of the City Commission was held on December 9, 2009 at 5:00 p.m. in the employee lunchroom at the Municipal Administration Building. The meeting was called to order by Mayor L. Jack Van Sickle.

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Lee A. Wheeler, III; Terrye Y. Howell; John Paul Rogers; Jonathan Thornhill; Mayor L. Jack Van Sickle.

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: None.

LAKE WALES AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE BOARD OF DIRECTORS PRESENT: James Armstrong, Kohl & Company, CPA's; Jim Gouvellis, The Lake Wales News; Lawrence Epps, Epps Mortuary; Paul Gerrard, CenterState Bank; Ellis Hunt, Jr., Hunt Bros., Inc.; Jesse Jackson, Lake Wales Charter Schools; David Fisher, Peterson & Myers; Mike Morrow, Riverside National Bank; Jason Penrod, Weaver, McClendon & Penrod, P.A.; Angela Pulido, Lilly, O'Toole & Brown, LLP; Robert Shields, Florida's Natural Growers; Betty Wojcik, Executive Director; Art Clawson, Warner University; Brian Marbutt, Citizens Bank & Trust; Kevin Respress, C12 Group.

CITY REPRESENTATIVES PRESENT: Judith H. Delmar, City Manager; Albert C. Galloway, Jr., City Attorney; Harold Gallup, Economic Development Director; Clara VanBlargan, City Clerk; Jacquie Hawkins, Deputy City Clerk.

Agenda Item 1. Discussion of Economic Development Issues

The full memo is incorporated into the minutes.

[Begin agenda memo, prepared by the Lake Wales Area Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors]

Thank you for the opportunity to sit down with you at a joint workshop on economic development. We are looking forward to learning more about the City's current economic development strategies and discussing additional plans for continued, sustainable economic growth and quality development.

As we prepare for a productive meeting, we can all agree that the local business community has suffered over the last 12 to 18 months – and may continue to feel the effects of a soft economy for a while longer – until a full recovery is achieved. In addition, several local economic development projects have been affected, as would-be investors have either delayed or cancelled development plans. CRA revenues, which should be available to encourage specific projects, have also dwindled as property values have declined.

These conditions make it imperative that we prepare now to move forward successfully as the economy recovers.

While much needs to be done, we do understand that the City's economic development director is but one person. After hearing what the City's current economic development strategies are, we want to talk with you about ways we can help – as an economic development partner – working with the City to achieve common goals, including: economic development planning, programs to encourage and assist business start-ups, tourism development, business retention and commercial/industrial recruitment efforts.

You may remember that the Chamber used to be a very strong economic development partner and can be credited with much of the business growth we enjoy today. Some of you may even remember that the Chamber hosted the Economic Summit that led to the City's creation of the economic development director's position. At that time, this was a priority to strengthen local recruitment efforts and create more and better quality jobs for local residents.

The Chamber again brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to the table at a time when it is most needed. We have a strong Board of Directors, representing all segments of the business community. Our

executive director is a certified economic development professional with more than 30 years experience. We believe we can be a real asset to the City as a strong economic development partner.

We are looking forward to discussing ways we can work together more effectively to achieve quality growth and economic development to benefit all Lake Wales area residents and businesses.

[End agenda memo]

Mayor Van Sickle welcomed everyone. He said we all know the economy has been poor and it is not going to get better in the near future. Ideas to help the City are welcome. He said he looked forward to hearing the Chamber Board of Director's ideas on how we can address some of the current economic development issues.

Betty Wojcik, Executive Director of the Lake Wales Area Chamber of Commerce, referred to the memo that had been sent to the Commission explaining the reason the Chamber requested the joint meeting. She then turned it over to Ellis Hunt, Jr, 2009 President of the Board of Directors.

Mr. Hunt said that at their Annual Chamber Retreat, the Board had discussed what they and business leaders could do to further enhance the community, and specifically to partner with the City in promoting economic development. He said they have a strong Chamber with approximately 100 in attendance at each Business After Hours event. They have a broad representation of the businesses in the community with a wealth of knowledge that he felt was not being utilized. Through this joint meeting, he said the Chamber hoped to get an idea of the City's views and what they are doing, and discuss how together they can establish a framework that would use their expertise to help the City. One suggestion he gave was that when a new business was coming to town, one of the business leaders could take them to lunch and tell them about Lake Wales.

Jason Penrod, the 2010 Chamber President, said he looked forward to the opportunity for the City and Chamber to work together for the collective good and to spruce up the economy around here.

Mayor Van Sickle said the City was always looking for ideas and he was glad the Chamber was willing to help. He said that Harold Gallup is the Economic Development Director for the City. That is not to say other people are not willing to help. He said most of the new development was at the north side of the City near Lake Ashton, and the development near town was mostly retail-type jobs, not the kind to build the city on. We want other type of industries in the City so we can have better paying jobs.

Harold Gallup, Economic Development Director, said he always try to develop a working relationship with organizations where presently there is no relationship. He works mainly with the Governor's office, the CFDC, and Enterprise Florida, though he has made use of local businesses. A happy business, he said, is the best ally. A lot of site selection coming in today is not like the past where you would meet prospects face to face and wine and dine them at business luncheons. Now they come in with a set schedule and would not be able to go to lunch with you even if you offered. He said he would like to use local businesses, particularly if the company was partnered with a business in the same general classification. He says he works very hard at setting a tone that Lake Wales is looking for opportunities of both in-bound and out-bound commerce. He reviewed the development history since he came to the city including Harley Davison, Spin Magnetics, The Learning Center, and others. He discussed some of the problems he faces with water restrictions and industries requiring too much of it, the disposal of residual material, and an inadequate labor force. He said that if the City cannot provide the service needed, he would tell them because if he promises service that cannot be delivered, word would get out.

Jesse Jackson, Superintendent of Lake Wales Charter Schools, addressing the availability of skilled labor issue, said that one of his concerns as a Superintendent was if entry level training is providing opportunities for local people to work. He said the Ridge facility [Ridge Technical Center, Winter Haven] that provides training skills, does not necessarily meet the needs of Lake Wales because it is too far away for many local young people to take advantage of. That is something Charter Schools could be involved in, to gear-up their vocational training programs.

Harold Gallup said that the recent drop to 10% unemployment may be misleading because that number does not include those whose unemployment benefits expired, those who have given up looking for work, and those who are underemployed. He suggested that the number might be closer to 15-17%. He said there always is a need for basic skills but high tech industries require more than basic skills. He gave several examples. He explained the SRI Study. He said people are leaving Lake Wales to work in Orlando or Tampa that we should be employing in Lake Wales.

Jim Gouvellis, Lake Wales News, said that one of the reasons they were meeting was to find out how the City and Chamber could work together more. He said if the Chamber knew the strategic plan of the City and what type businesses they were trying to attract, they would be able to gear the training programs for the areas needed. He said we have the work force, but do not know in what areas to train them.

Betty Wojcik added that unlike the Chamber, Harold would know the skills that are needed. She asked Jesse Jackson if he ever met with Harold to discuss training. He said he had not but he thought it was critical that they do. Strategies for a 5-year plan, in line with the Polk County Cluster Study, was something the Charter School system could easily put into place if it knew what was needed.

Mr. Gallup said that, since he has worked for the City, there have been many visioning and study groups. He said the Chamber has not lived in a vacuum and the issues have been discussed repeatedly for a decade or more. The quality of labor has always been an issue in Lake Wales. The Charter School System is a tool he said he uses.

Ms. Wojcik said that, though Mr. Jackson is aware of a labor problem, he is not aware of the specific skills that are needed that could be introduced through the Charter School system. The Charter School System is an example of what can develop when a group of people want to improve the educational system. That is why the Charter Schools System is here today, giving us some choice, with excellent programs on the way.

Mayor Van Sickle noted that the education issue had been identified. He suggested that they identify other issues and then work on how to resolve them. Mr. Gallup, he said, would be the one who would know what areas of training are needed. He said that contractors tell him that they will not do business in Lake Wales, but do not give specific reasons. Knowing there is an issue without knowing the specifics does not make the problem easy to solve. Therefore, he asked that they identify the problems and then see how to attack them.

Art Clawson, Vice-President for Advancement at Warner University, applauded the work Mr. Gallup was doing, but said he did not want them to get sidetracked. He said that Mr. Gallup says he worked with the State as well as internationally. As an example of how the Chamber could help, he said that he had lobbying experience and worked with organizations in Tallahassee, and so have others around the room. What they were offering as a business community was to lessen the load on Mr. Gallup, as he cannot carry the load alone. They want to be a partner. One person did not start the Charter School System. It started with a small group and extended to the community. He suggested forming an Economic Development Council to utilize the available skills that can augment Mr. Gallup during the process instead of afterwards.

Mr. Gallup said that he and Mike Morrow have had conversations over time, though more in passing than it should have been. There have been business councils formed in the past that historically have not gone well. He said there was in existence already within the Chamber a committee that could be the connecting point between it and City's economic development.

Mr. Clawson asked where the decision was made to go after the aeronautic companies and how that would fit into the City's economic development strategic plan. He said we do not want to go down a road, only to find out we would have done things differently if we had other information or insight.

Mr. Gallup said they were going after logistics because Lake Wales is on a crossroad with US 27 and SR 60. It is 1-1/2 to 2 hours to either coast and 3-1/2 hours to the keys. Economic Development takes in tourist dollars, commercial, manufacturing, warehouse distribution, cultural, etc., which is the fabric of the community. Industrial is hard core and hard edge manufacturing. We need to build the infrastructure such as stores, and hotels. This is what is being done in the mall area, which is the City's commercial core.

Mr. Clawson asked how the Chamber could be a better partner. He said the Chamber members have a skill-set that could be accessed to benefit the community, as well as the City Commission, for planning, unfolding and implementing. He asked how a regular ongoing, dialogue and partnership could be established. Mr. Gallup said they could form a group with two individuals from each sector of the community so that at any one monthly meeting at least ten will attend. That way, everyone would not need to attend each meeting but key people could be counted on to attend. Members of the Chamber could be extremely instrumental in creating a dialogue where they could work on issues.

Ms. Wojcik asked Harold if he would attend a council or partnership if one was formed, and he said he would. She said the committee could look into such things as what the school systems and colleges can do to help start up businesses. That way, they would be able to find out the issues concerning a new business that wants to come to the City. Those details could be handled through the committee, council or partnership, or whatever it is named, and a recommendation or plan brought forward. She said that they did not need to listen to every detail of everything that ever occurred in Lake Wales with economic development, or even all the needs that are out there. The Chamber members feel like they are an excellent resource for the City, so came to the meeting as a group to find out if there was a structure in place that they could work through to help. Ms. Delmar said that they should begin to create the structure at this meeting.

Clinton Horne, not a member of the Chamber Board, said they needed someone who could pull the two sides together and make things happen. He said the Chamber needed further clarification as to what the Chamber could do to be helpful and then find solutions by moving down the path together. Ms. Wojcik said they need to decide what things the City can best handle, and what specific things Chamber members can do, using the expertise of certain businesses and working together. She said there were all kinds of things that could come out of a joint relationship, such as meeting with colleges, or with Joe Miranda, talking to the CRA, and utilizing a facility at the Business Park to get start-up businesses going. The City could work on some and the Chamber could work on others. Mr. Gallup said that this would require money, and that grants are not always available. Ms. Wojcik said that the joint group could look into what we can or cannot afford.

Mr. Hunt said that the entrances to a city may determine what people think about that city, and he was concerned at some of our entrances. He added that the people a visitor meets would also influence his or her view of a city. He said that one way the Chamber could help, would be to arrange for someone to meet the wife of a business prospect to show her the schools their children might be attending, whether a Charter School, or college. He felt that the City was not utilizing the relationships developed by Chamber members as long-time citizens and said they could provide this at no charge to the City. Mr. Gallup said he has used the colleges and universities when opportunities presented itself. He said he did not know it all and could not know it all.

Mayor Van Sickle said he thought it was important to surround oneself with knowledgeable people and wanted them to establish the needed structure so Mr. Gallup could go to the right people for help. Ms. Wojcik asked if a Commissioner wanted to be involved in that group. Mayor Van Sickle said he did not think a Commissioner should be in the group because they were policy makers and not procedure makers, giving direction for others to do the work.

Mr. Gouvellis said that Mr. Gallup uses the word "I" a lot. The point was that Mr. Gallup was only one person and the interested people around the room could help change the "I" to "we". If the City Manager and Commission wanted to consider the Chamber members as "employees of the City" in that regard, they would be happy to sign up for free. Mayor Van Sickle said that the articles in the newspaper about the City had been so negative for the last three or four months, which could be the reason why we seem

somewhat standoff. He asked Mr. Gouvellis to use more "we" in the paper when it comes to the City. Mr. Gouvellis said he would.

Commissioner Wheeler said that there needed to be more communication and that everyone needed to have access to the same data. He gave the example of the CSI Cluster Study that the Commissioners and Harold had seen, but not the Chamber members. He explained the study to the Chamber, how it could indicate the fastest growing industries in Polk County, which turns out to be defense and aerospace. He said that by both sides having that information, they could discuss it and then go to the Charter Schools to let them know the skills that will be needed to fill those positions. He added that it would be a long-term thing, and would not happen overnight. It would take community involvement to get the labor force that was needed.

Mr. Jackson said that what they were discussing were long-term strategic plans but the world without jobs today is just as vibrant as the world being projected for the future and needs to be dealt with. They need to have both a long-term and short-term goal. He said that many people in the community are out of work, yet still have families to care for. The school system does all it can to provide Christmas and Thanksgiving to families in need. Some might think that is not the school system's job, but if the school children are coming to school without what they need it becomes their job. The joint group needs to come up with solutions to get people to work short-term if we want to stabilize the community and return it to a vibrant community. Commissioner Wheeler said there was no one individual who could solve everything. Mr. Hunt said that it would be helpful to have another representative from the City on the committee, whether it was the City Manager and/or a City Commissioner that could report directly to the City, in addition to Harold.

Commissioner Thornhill said he is the official representative for the Chamber, and that he would like to see it possible for kids graduating from Lake Wales to find jobs in Lake Wales instead of having to go to Winter Haven or Bartow to find them. He said we have many educational opportunities in the area but not everyone is going to be a brain surgeon. There needs to be training for all types of jobs including ditch diggers. He said according to the CSI Study, life sciences and medical fields will be the important fields. Maybe the Commission could work with the Chamber to work on additional medical education, though we already offer some medical, home nursing and dental. Maybe the Charter School system needs to work on designing those types of things to come out ahead in the end. He said he would also like to work with the schools for more recreation. He volunteered to be the representative though he said he might not be able to attend every meeting. But, when it got down to a meeting that would help a business, he would like to be there and then bring it back to the Commission. He agreed that they needed better communication. He said he could be the liaison, as he is now for State Farm for housing. He said he could take prospective businesses around the lake and talk to them about Lake Wales. When he takes people around the lake, they think Lake Wales is the best place in the world. He said he was sure there were some in the Chamber who have realtor experience so they would know we need high priced homes as well as low to moderately priced homes. He keeps hearing about the labor void and educational issues but with so many schools around he said he feels strongly that it can be turned around.

Mr. Penrod said that the quality of this Chamber board is phenomenal. They need to tap the energy of these people by knowing where to go next. They have a successful Business After Hours group with great networking opportunities, and great Trustee meetings. They believe this is the next step for them, and they have people committed to take that step. The Mayor said working together was a great idea and the next step would be to form a committee to lay it out and bring it back to the Commission.

Commissioner Howell addressed several issues:

- She said that she had wanted the Commission and Chamber to work together ever since she became a Commissioner and feels we need to use our business people. She asked that the City Manager provide the Commission with a monthly report so it won't be the Commission that drops the ball. If there is no meeting that month, then they should get a report stating that. Ms. Delmar said she would put a written report in their mailboxes monthly.

- She said it was no secret that the City needs more business and that businesses do not want to come to Lake Wales. She said the type businesses we are trying to bring in should not be a secret to the committee, though the newspapers do not need to know and report it. Ms. Wojcik said they could tell the newspaper but "off the record." Mr. Gouvellis said he did not see the extreme need for secrecy in most city matters anyway. The Mayor gave an example of a business that may come south of town that should not be disclosed. Mr. Gallup said openness is wonderful; however, there are businesses that do not want it disclosed, and if it is, they will back out. Ms. Wojcik said she did not expect Harold to bring this kind of prospect to the meeting for discussion and that she would not do it either if she was in his shoes. Commissioner Howell said that not every prospective company for Lake Wales wants it to be kept a secret.
- She said that the City has many extra rules and regulations and she does not think every one of them are necessary. Ms. Delmar said they were having a meeting next week to talk about regulatory matters. She said that if they are guilty of over-regulating they want to change that to roll back some of the regulations. Commissioner Howell suggested that the proposed group look at all the rules and regulations because, as business owners, they would know what is wanted. We want quality, but not so much red tape. If they have to jump through so many hoops to get into Lake Wales, they will just go to Lakeland. She said she would like the hoops to be smaller. Ms. Delmar said there are certain areas they think are problems and these will be discussed at a staff meeting with recommendations brought back to a workshop. At that point, input from others would be requested. We have certain areas where we think there are problems, which would require ordinance changes and public hearings. If additional areas of concern come up during that process, those would be addressed as well. She said Staff is aware of the problem and they are working on solutions.
- She said that this should not be a spitting contest. Everyone in the City knows that Harold is responsible for Economic Development and knows that the Chamber is responsible for businesses. She did not want to see the City withholding information because it wanted to get "credit" for bringing a business to Lake Wales. It did not matter who brings it here as long as it comes. Mr. Gallup said that does not happen. She said that it may not be expressed out loud, but someone may think it might make them look bad if they don't get the credit.

Commissioner Rogers thanked the Chamber for their time. He said that though everyone wants to see businesses come to Lake Wales, he did understand about confidentiality. We need to merge together with the community and chamber and keep an opened mind.

Mayor Van Sickle asked how they wanted the committee formed. He suggested that Harold be the Chairman as he was the Economic Developer Director for the City, and the Chamber be an arm of the City. The Chamber would need to figure out what people they wanted on the committee and the procedures to follow. Mr. Gallup suggested that Mike Morrow, Betty, and he be the ones to get together, because Mike and Betty know the disciplines and members of the Chamber. Then, following the "group of ten" concept, the three of them could form a committee. They would decide whether to meet once a month or twice a month and the time for the meeting, though he suggested morning meetings because he discovered that nightly meetings accomplish very little. This small group could formulate a structure and then make sure the other members are on board. They would then bring back a recommendation through the City Manager to the Commission and give a presentation no later than the first City Commission meeting in January. After that, they can start putting the program together and see how it will work. Mayor Van Sickle asked Mr. Gallup if he thought it appropriate for a Commissioner to be part of the group, because if the meetings are held in the morning, Commissioner Thornhill might not be able to attend. Mr. Gallup said that the three of them would work on it first and then Commissioner Thornhill could meet with them to see if there were any holes in the plan, before the presentation to the Commission.

Mr. Hunt said that since it is a team effort, he would like to see an additional person besides Mr. Gallup on the Committee.

Ms. Wojcik said that it is actually going to end up being a Chamber Committee that Harold would be a member of and that Ms. Delmar would be invited to attend. Mayor Van Sickle disagreed and said that the City is responsible for economic development and the Chamber is willing to help, so it needs to be a City meeting. Ms. Wojcik said it was not actually a City or a Chamber meeting, but a joint effort. To her, it would make more sense to have the Chamber set it up, organize it, and make sure it operates once a month so it is not one more thing that Mr. Gallup has to be responsible for. He can attend the meetings and communication can take place so they jointly can decide the structure and report to the Commission. Commissioner Howell said Ms. Wojcik could schedule the meetings, which would take some of the load off Ms. Delmar. Ms. Delmar agreed that it is a joint committee and that she would be responsible for the reports to the Commission for communication purposes.

Mr. Penrod said that when engineers and builders say they don't want to come to Lake Wales something is wrong. The Mayor said he was hearing the same thing but he added that some of the problems have been resolved. He said we wanted the businesses to come to Lake Wales. It should be easier for us to make positive change than Tampa, Orlando or Jacksonville because we are a smaller community and know each other so have built closer relationships. Commissioner Thornhill said it was a partnership and most of us live in the community so we should work as one. It should not be yours and mine, but ours and we need to keep that in mind.

The Lake Wales Area Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors thanked the City Commission for the opportunity to sit down with them in a joint workshop to discuss economic development. They looked forward to learning more about the City's current economic development strategies and discussing additional plans for continued, sustainable economic growth, and quality development.

OPENED TO PUBLIC COMMENTS

Howard Kay said he has lived in Lake Wales since 1983 and has been quite active in the community. He said there were only two times that he felt electricity at a meeting, something really special apart from anything else. The first time was at a board meeting where Harold Maready, principal of a Charter School in Lakeland, spoke to them about Charter Schools. After hearing him speak, there was an electricity in that room that was unbelievable. Robin Gibson was in that meeting so the board members asked if he would do something with that and he did. That is how our Charter System got its start. The second time was in this meeting and the energy he felt was similar to what he felt then. He was sure that the joint committee would do something to make a huge difference.

A resident, gave no name, requested that we change the motto of Lake Wales from the City of the Bells, to the City with a Heart.

Wes Rogers said, in reference to providing jobs in the city now, that Mr. Jackson would be pleased to know that the City recently passed an ordinance to give preference local contractors.

Robbie Shields said no one individual can do everything. It needs to be the community, jointly working, with a show of cooperation.

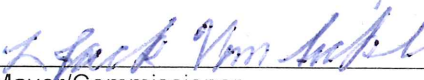
Bob Kelly talked about a problem concerning the vendors at Bargain City not being allowed to list their businesses on a joint sign because of the City's sign ordinance. He also reported that he had a produce packer, a recycling company and others that want to come to the area and he is working on them trying to keep them in Lake Wales. He said he has had a problem in the past trying to fill the need for qualified employees. He said he works with Harold who is his first stop.

Ruth Dampier thanked Ms. Wojcik for scheduling the meeting and said she was looking forward to what the joint committee could do.

CLOSED TO PUBLIC COMMENTS

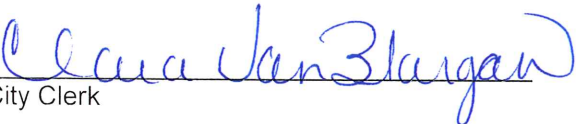
Commissioner Wheeler said we needed to keep communication open and not let the electricity evaporate. Commissioner Rogers thanked them again.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.



Mayor/Commissioner

ATTEST:



City Clerk