

TOWN COUNCIL WORKSHOP

Municipal Center Council Chambers

February 7, 2023, 12:30 PM

Minutes

I. Call to Order:

II. Roll Call:

Present at Meeting: John D. Labriola, *Mayor*
John Moffitt, *Councilmember*
Russell Berner, *Councilmember*
Brad Belt, *Councilmember*
Michael Heidingsfelder, *Councilmember*

Also Present: Stephanie Tillerson, *Town Administrator*
Joe Wilson, *Town Attorney*

III. Citizens' Comments (Agenda Items Only):

None

IV. New Business:

A. To Complete the Discussion from the February 3rd Town Council Retreat on the Town's Communication Plan

Councilmember Heidingsfelder began the discussion by indicating that at the Council Retreat, there was agreement that there was a gap to fill regarding the communication expectations of the community. There has been an improvement in the Town's communications over the past twelve months. Still, he felt that improvement was needed in providing information in a timelier manner or when the Town receives information and that the information is more detailed and comprehensive. He felt that the current information on the website should also be reviewed as the conversion to the new website begins, and the need for a discussion of how Council Members could more actively communicate with the community beyond regular meetings.

Councilmember Heidingsfelder reviewed his recommendations:

- Offering open communication sessions or Town Hall meetings where Council Members are available to respond to community questions, concerns, input, suggestions, recommendations, and criticism.
- Continuation of the podcast platform.
- The Town is being more proactive in communications.
- Doing communications in conjunction and collaboration with other island entities.
- Discussion of if more specificity is required in communications with different interest groups.
- Including island concerns in communications
- Focus on the core subscribers to the Town newsletter.
- Discussion and agreement on participation on other island communication platforms such as iKiawah.

Councilmembers engaged in an in-depth discussion of responding to posts made on iKiawah in which topics are uncivil or inaccurate statements must be corrected to inform the community properly. Discussion included personally responding to topics, responses requiring an official Town position as to what constitutes facts, opinions, or statements of policy, and the process of the dissemination of substantive information expressing a point of view or position.

Mayor Labriola indicated that the Town has a series of mechanisms in which it communicated and posed questions on if those mechanisms were sufficient, if they should be critically evaluated, or if the Town should entertain designing a mechanism around how and what type of information the community wants to receive. He noted that the answers are the policy issues that the Council should address.

Mr. Wilson pointed out that Council Members can freely comment on social media but indicated the importance of iterating that they are not speaking on behalf of the Town. Once someone starts speaking on behalf of the Town, they become subject to FOIA retention requirements.

Councilmember Heidingsfelder agreed to clarification of personal responses on social media and hoped that a process could be developed where mistakes or wrong information posts are conveyed to the Communications Manager or the Town Administrator, and the Town quickly responds or posts a link to the correct information on the Town website.

Councilmembers further discussed Councilmember Belt's comments on Town Hall meetings, Town eBlasts, and newsletters, a mechanism for open discussions or communicating more directly with community members on personal views or opinions, and more interaction with engaged community members during Town Council meetings.

In response to the numerous concerns with the Development Resources page on the Town's website, Councilmember Heidingsfelder suggested that a workgroup evaluate the current content of the page and identify those items which may require additional review along with reviewing the control process for the issuing of communications on the website or eBlast posting and make improvement recommendations. Council Members further discussed the communication opportunities and the recommendations made by Councilmember Heidingsfelder, with Councilmember Belt and Ms. Tillerson agreeing to work on the review of the Development Resources page.

Councilmember Heidingsfelder discussed his recommendations for more proactive communications, ensuring the department heads raise relevant communication topics as soon as possible, and agreeing on making a clear strategic recommendation to Ms. Tillerson. He also discussed the creation of an additional communication platform in the form of Town Hall meetings, developing concepts for discussion and approval consideration at the next Town Council meeting. Mayor Pro Tem Moffitt and Councilmember Heidingsfelder agreed to work on the meeting concepts.

V. Citizens' Comments:

None

VI. Adjournment:

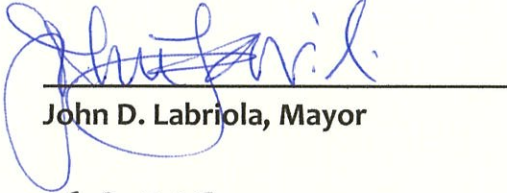
Councilmember Belt made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 1:40 pm. The motion was seconded and was unanimously passed.

Submitted by,



Petra S. Reynolds, Town Clerk

Approved by,



John D. Labriola, Mayor

3-8-2023

Date