



Hendry LaBelle Recreation Board
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October 19, 2023

A regular meeting of the Hendry LaBelle Recreation Board was held on the above date at 5:30 PM at the Hendry-LaBelle Recreation Office, 310 Cowboy Way, LaBelle, Florida.

City Commissioner/Chairman, Daniel Akin, called the meeting to order at 5:30 PM.

Roll call: Members present were Commissioner/Chairman, Daniel Akin; School Board Member, Paul Samerdyke; County Commissioner, Emory “Rowdy” Howard; and County Commissioner, Mitchell Wills.

County Commissioner Wills was asked to lead the opening prayer.

Everyone stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

Chairman Akin opened with Bids – None.

Consent Agenda -

County Commissioner Wills made the motion to accept the September 21, 2023 Board Meeting Minutes and to approve the payment of the bills. School Board Member Samerdyke seconded. All were in favor. Motion was unanimously passed.

Awards, Appearances, and Presentations – None.

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County Commissioner

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Correspondence (FYI – None.

Staff Reports – None.

Hearing of the Public – None.

Reports & Other Business –

- a. Chairman Akin stated we were going to discuss Director Lynn’s pay increase retro active from his start date of September 9, 2022 to the September 21, 2023 Board Meeting. Director Lynn stated that he was supposed to get his pay after his probation and he did not. He further stated he would like to request getting his pay retroactive from six (6) months past his start date of becoming Director. Chairman Akin asked for discussion. County Commissioner Howard stated that is the way it typically is. School Board Member Samerdyke asked if that was the way it’s done. Chairman Akin said he believed it was. School Board Member Samerdyke stated he just didn’t want to make a mistake with Chairman Akin replying “no, I don’t think we are.” County Commissioner Wills asked Director Lynn if it was within the budget with Director Lynn answering, “yes sir.” School Board Member Samerdyke asked if we needed a motion. Chairman Akin answered, “yes.” Further discussion about when the pay adjustment would begin from with Director Lynn stating September 9, 2022 is when he took over so six (6) months after that.

School Board Member Samerdyke made a motion that Director Lynn’s pay get adjusted from March 9, 2023 (six (6) months after he became Director on September 9, 2022) to September 21, 2023 when his pay rate was increased to \$70,000.00/yr. This would be retroactive pay. County Commissioner Howard seconded. All were in favor. Motion was unanimously passed.

Chairman Akin stated that next up was:

- b. Discuss Capital Improvement Spreadsheet for Forrey Park expenses. Director Lynn began explaining the spreadsheet is in three (3) parts with the first part containing the tennis, pickleball and basketball courts as well as the artificial turf for the outdoor movie area. The Recreation/Hurricane Shelter is at \$750,000.00. The Horseshoe & Cornhole is at \$43,000.00 and the rest of the items total \$2,682,681.00.

The next section is the inside of the Concession Stand and all that would contain is just under \$20,000.00 at \$19,799.79. Director Lynn stated that there were a few things

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that might change on there like the freezer which they had as bigger than what we had but the price is still close to what we have on here.

And then the bottom section would be everything related to the ball fields to include all bases and plates, Musco lights, the Concession Stand. Director Lynn stated that he went with Rock's higher price for the concession stand. Everything else, he went with the higher price just to cover our bases. Everything else included with that minus the irrigation would total \$2,271,299.10... for a Grand Total of \$4,973,780.00. Director Lynn went on to state that he had just received the quote for the Lightning Alert. That's why it's hand written at the very bottom. It's \$12,569.99 to be added in there also. He further stated that he had not yet received an additional quote for the restroom and another parking lot. Those are two (2) of the things we are still waiting on. That's roughly what our numbers are to complete the park he said. County Commissioner Howard asked \$4.9 million, right? Adding plus the twelve thousand. School Board Member Samerdyke said we are over \$5 million dollars. Director Lynn said, "right." Discussion ensued about the total dollar figure with School Board Member Samerdyke asking if we have a budget for this... Chairman Akin answered a resounding "no." Director Lynn stated that he talked to Ian about a loan and for a \$5 million dollar loan, you're looking at \$700,000.00 a year payment. Chairman Akin said he spoke to the lady at the bank on Tuesday about a \$5 million dollar loan and what the rate would be which they replied "6%" but he didn't know how many years it was supposed to be for. Director Lynn replied 7 or 10 years with Chairman Akin responding that the existing loan is longer than that so we would need a longer time to get that payment down. County Commissioner Wills asked if they would add the \$4.9 million to the existing \$1.4 million dollar loan that we already have? Chairman Akin said he did not ask them that question... reiterating that this is for discussion. County Commissioner Wills asked what is the current loan payment? Director Lynn answered \$105,000.00/yr. County Commissioner Wills then stated that amount would be added to the new loan payment of \$700,000.00. Chairman Akin responded that was the figure that Ian gave. Chairman Akin further stated he wasn't going to ask the bank for a \$5 million dollar loan. He wasn't comfortable doing that. Again, County Commissioner Wills asked what was Ian's amount? Director Lynn replied, "\$700,000." So, County Commissioner Wills stated \$800,000.00 a year is what we need to come up with. Chairman Akin said that was based on a 10 year note though. The actual loan would be for a longer term with a substantially lower payment but what are we asking for?

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County Commissioner Howard interjected asking if he could explain where some of this was coming from with Chairman Akin responding, "sure." County Commissioner Howard proceeded that at a Rotary meeting he attended, not the last one, but the one before that, Charlotte Miller was there and she was with Paul (he didn't recall his last name), Senator Passidomo's aide. After the meeting, Charlotte shared with County Commissioner Howard what FPL was actually willing to help out with in support of Forrey Park, \$30,000.00. In that conversation, they asked him, why have we not reached out to Senator Passidomo's office for the remainder of the complete build-out and in discussing that, on the Board of County Commissioner's side, one of the things that was pointed out was the Board of County Commissioners needed a full presentation of where we were, where we are now and where we're going to be to get this thing completed. Before they are ready to engage the lobbyists, any other method of going to Senator Passidomo on this, they wanted to see this which Director Lynn has done a really good on this in getting this ready. He stated that he believed Director Lynn had one more step and that was to have a meeting with Rock, to get a complete picture of where we are without any gaps and each County Commissioner can look at it through a full presentation to get a full picture of where we need to be and then the next step would be to engage with Senator Passidomo.

Director Lynn added that as soon as he meets with Rock, he'll schedule a Special Meeting before the next Board Meeting to go over his presentation. County Commissioner Howard stated that Commissioner Wills was more experienced in this and asked him who should give the presentation? Should it be all of them with Director Lynn? County Commissioner Wills suggested getting these numbers over to Jennifer right away so she can get it out in their Board packets and start looking at these numbers. He also suggested, in the meantime, looking at this Capital Improvements spreadsheet and seeing where we can trim. Can we get this to more of a manageable number? Referring to the top part at \$2,682,681, do you really need that to open your park? I would have Director Lynn come in and explain line item by line item. Explain exactly where we want to go and have the full budget on hand so when asked a question like "what is in your budget, what are you allowing for?" "What does the payment look like?" "At that point, Commissioner, you and I would have a conversation with the Board Members who are here tonight to be at that meeting to show that we are all united in moving this Forrey Park project forward." County Commissioner Wills stated that he spoke to Brandon Thomas of U.S. Sugar and they are willing to kick in too. They will probably be somewhere around the same FPL range. County Commissioner Howard wanted to confirm with County Commissioner

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Wills, “where do we want to trim down, is it just the baseball and concession?” County Commissioner Wills replied, “no sir, again, look at the top numbers, the tennis & pickle ball courts, it’s \$700,000. Everybody wants a kitchen. We need bathrooms. Okay, so we open up with kitchen and bathrooms. But the \$700,000 up there, do we really need that? Do we really need the Ninja Warrior Course at \$140,000 to open up this facility? It’s going to take each one of them taking this home and looking at it and each one of them come back and state what they want to see.” County Commissioner Wills asks Chairman Akin the number they should proceed with. Chairman Akin replied the full amount will be the existing note with what’s left of \$1.4 million plus \$5.2 million, stating he just doesn’t know how much that bathroom is going to be. County Commissioner Wills stated, “\$5.3 million just to be safe.” County Commissioner Howard asked if that would be ready by the December meeting. Then there was talk about January but not wanting to put it off until then if possible. County Commissioner Wills asked Chairman Akin if that was enough time for him to get that together from the bank. Chairman Akin wasn’t sure of what the bank’s terms were but that he would call there tomorrow. Further discussion was had between the Commissioners and Director Lynn about the timeline of when this presentation could be ready with all of the loan and payment amounts and a completed, trimmed down Capital Improvements spreadsheet. Director Lynn explained that he is now sharing all of this information with the City Commissioners as well. County Commissioner Howard asked Director Lynn to email out an updated spreadsheet. Chairman Akin asked for a dollar amount to go to the bank with. He was thinking \$1.4 million along with the \$1.1 million that is left on the existing loan plus the \$600,000 in cash reserves stating he would like to have a little bit of cash available for that first payment. County Commissioner Wills stated that we should go with the \$1.1 million that we currently owe and add it to the total figure that Director Lynn comes up with and ask for that amount and not touch what we have in reserve for now. County Commissioner Howard agreed with that. School Board Member Samerdyke stated it would be a little over \$6 million. County Commissioner Wills stated that the bank could come back and ask for the reserve funds but if not, we have it there, further stating, “it’s better to have it there and not need it, then to need it and not have it.” Chairman Akin said he would ask for \$5.3 and see what kind of terms they can give us and roll the existing loan into it which would put us at \$6.4 million roughly.

County Commissioners Wills stated he would reach out to Senator Passidomo tomorrow. School Board Member Samerdyke asked if we have a timeline. Chairman Akin said he will be working on the bank to give us a loan. Roughly on what they would

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offer on the new \$6.4 amount. Then, discussion was had about the interest rate which is higher now than when we got the first loan but it's only going to go up 2% which is still lower than the current rate. Chairman Akin gave a recap that Director Lynn is going to meet with Rock, Chairman Akin is going to work on the bank loan and the presentation needs to be ready to present to the Board(s) no later than January, 2024. School Board Member Samerdyke offered his help too.

Chairman Akin informed the next item up is:

- c. Request for timed locks for the park restrooms. Director Lynn explained that he would like to get timed locks on the restroom doors to help with the homeless being in there and destroying them. So, when the parks close, the doors would automatically lock at 10pm. County Commissioner Wills asked if the emergency bar would still open the door. Director Lynn explained that if someone is inside when the door locks, they can hit the button to get out. Director Lynn gave stated that he just began the research on these which included reaching out to other county park Directors to find out who they used for their restrooms. County Commissioner Howard asked, "how many are needed total?" Director Lynn replied, "10." School Board Member Samerdyke stated there are 4 on the other side of the river, asking where are the other 6? Director Lynn replied 2 here at Civic Park, 2 at Davis Pratt and 2 at the Sports Park. School Board Member Samerdyke asked if he had the same amount of vandalism at all of the parks. Director Lynn answered "yes, and no. It's different at different times." Director Lynn shared that at Davis Pratt, they were stealing the stainless-steel soap dispensers so we changed them back to plastic and the very next day, they tore them off the wall. He further stated that he didn't believe that it's all "homeless" people but if we lock the restrooms when the park closes, it will cut down on all of that. He stated that he wouldn't buy the locks all at once, but break it up. Chairman Akin suggested doing further research and get the best deal. Chairman Akin was concerned about the price of the locks and people vandalizing them as well adding to a more costly issue. County Commissioner Wills suggested getting the best price and installing a set in our worst area to start with before we do them all. He further mentioned that a lot of the vandalism doesn't always occur after hours at night. So, let's try one first and see how it works. No formal motion is required on this.

Director Lynn had three (3) additional items:

1. The homeless people setting up camp in the Nature Park. They had to removed a 16' trailer of trash in there and two (2) weeks ago he explained he had to tear up 17 camps

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in there. He explained he did have the Sheriff's permission to tear them down and get them out of there. Last week he didn't catch anyone out there. He further stated that he did have the ones he found in there "trespassed" and he hasn't seen anyone in there since. Director Lynn said that they are learning his schedule and they vacate the restrooms before he makes his rounds but they leave their cardboard in their that they lay on. He has tried to catch them at Davis Pratt at 4am but they are already out with their stuff. He further stated that he is still waiting on Matt about the security cameras. Director Lynn mentioned he will also bring this up to the City Commissioners as well as the BOCC.

2. Next, is the new ABI machine. He has been using it a little bit and hands down it is way better than the SandPro. They were done with the practice fields in less than an hour. With the SandPro, he stated he would still be out there. It just does not tear up the grass like this new machine. He has reached out to other local people who have this same machine about how to use the laser leveler but they don't have that particular attachment so he reached out to Brandon of ABI about getting some training up in Indiana. It's a 2-2 ½ hour classroom training and then 6-7 hours in the field – one on one with the trainer. He looked up prices for flights. This would be early December. He would fly out on the 6th and come back on the 8th with all day training on the 7th for a total of \$289.00 plus a motel and rental vehicle. He asked for approval from the Board for a pick-up vs., a car due to inclement weather there. Without taxes, it will cost around \$520.00. That is to include the flights, motel and rental vehicle. More discussion was had about Director Lynn's food expenses per diem. He replied he has always paid for his own food. County Commissioner Wills stated that's not how this works. Director Lynn explained that the budget used to be \$500 but now he bumped it up to \$2,000. The \$520.00 is without tax and food. County Commissioner Wills asked Director Lynn if they had anyone they could send down. Director Lynn replied, "I asked and no they don't." There is a local company with one but he prefers to be trained by the people who manufactured it. County Commissioner Wills further stated that is the trouble we run into when we purchase from companies out of state. School Board Member Samerdyke asked, "can you watch it on YouTube? Everything I learn is on YouTube nowadays... it's just a thought." Director Lynn replied that he probably could. Chairman Akin asked for a total price. Director Lynn advised them that the price on flights continues to go up the longer we wait. School Board Member Samerdyke stated that the closer you get to Christmas, it's going to go up. Director Lynn stated that he started looking into this about three (3) weeks ago to get an earlier flight for November; however, Brandon of ABI said they couldn't do it until the first

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week of December. Board Member Samerdyke asked, “so if it’s snowing and the ground is frozen, how are they going to train you on the laser leveler?” Director Lynn replied that they have an indoor facility. Director Lynn advised that he will be flying into South Bend but the company is in Mishawaka, Indiana. Chairman Aikin asked if December is the only time they can do it. Director Lynn replied that December is when he has the park closed to prepare it for Little League season. County Commissioner Howard commented that there is probably a set amount for breakfast, lunch and dinner with Director Lynn replying that they do offer a free breakfast. Chairman Aikin asked what a total would be for the whole trip with Director Lynn replying under \$700.00. County Commissioner Howard asked how hard it (the laser leveler) was to put together. Director Lynn replied that it was still in the box. He has put other attachments together already (rakes, drag and box blade). County Commissioner Wills asked if he has tried contacting any of the local guys for help with it. Director Lynn stated he would call them tomorrow. County Commissioner Wills continued that if they don’t want to mess with it, then we purchased the piece of equipment, we need to know how to operate it.

Chairman Aikin made a motion to approve Director Lynn attend training in Indiana if he cannot find any help with it locally. School Board Member Samerdyke seconded. All were in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

3. Next, Director Lynn made mention about all of the contributions that Cynthia of LaBelle Youth Soccer Association has made to improve the soccer fields at Civic Park. The sod quotes fell through due to the timing of having it installed before their season began but she did purchase new goals, nets and covered bleachers which we will help put together for them when they get here. FPL did come out and new service will cost an arm and a leg, so we are waiting on David Whited to get him back out here for a quote to run service out to the poles. Director Lynn stated that he did find some lights that are around \$1,000 a piece so around \$20,000 for lights stating that we need 20 lights out there. Once we get that put together, Cynthia is also willing to help pay for that. County Commissioner Wills suggested contacting Preston Long about what they put in at First Baptist. He believes they were cheaper than that and they are good lights for practice. Taylor Electric donated the installation. The City & County both have bucket trucks. He said he would reach out to James Taylor and see what he suggests.

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Motion for meeting to adjourn was made by City Commissioner/Chairman Akin, seconded by School Board Member Samerdyke. All were in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

ADJOURNMENT

Meeting was dismissed at 6:30 p.m.

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