



**ISLAMORADA, VILLAGE OF ISLANDS  
VILLAGE COUNCIL JOINT WORKSHOP**

**Founders Park Community Center  
87000 Overseas Hwy  
Islamorada, FL 33036**

**February 11, 2013  
Immediately Following  
the Local Planning Agency Meeting  
at 5:30 PM**

**I. CALL TO ORDER\ROLL CALL**

Mayor Philipson called the meeting to order at 6:05 pm. The following Council members were present on roll call: Mayor Philipson, Vice Mayor Ted Blackburn, Councilman Mike Forster, Councilwoman Deb Gillis, and Councilman Dave Purdo. Also in attendance were Village Manager Ed Koconis, Village Attorneys Nina Boniske and James White, Village Clerk Ariana Lawson, Building Official Gerry Albertson, Principal Planner Cheryl Ciofarri, Senior Planner Kevin Bond, Planner Jay Berezenwieg, Environmental Planner Susan Sprunt, Planner Shane Laakso, and all other appropriate personnel.

Local Planning Agency (LPA) members in attendance were: Chair John Fernandez, Vice Chair Amy Knowles, Richard Baker, Cheryl Culberson, Gordon Hadley, and Jim Mooney. Local Planning Agency member Don Horton was not in attendance.

**II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

LPA member Jim Mooney to lead the Pledge of Allegiance.

**III. PRESENTATIONS**

**A. Staff Presentation Regarding Building/Planning Departments**

Village Manager Ed Koconis distributed a handout entitled "Islamorada Permitting Overview." Mr. Koconis summarized the permitting process and recent enhancements including "Planner of the Day" services at the permitting counter, expedited permit processing for specific permit types, and installation of a locked anonymous comment box.

Building Official Gerry Albertson distributed a handout entitled "Building Permit Application Procedures." Councilman Forster noted that review by the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO), formerly the Department of Community Affairs (DCA), a process which generally adds at least 30 days to the review period, is not referenced on the chart.

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Mayor Philipson inquired of the Village Manager what the estimated time frames are for different types of permit review. Mr. Koconis stated that the goal is to publish set time frames for particular permit types on informational handouts and then to upgrade existing software to facilitate tracking of permit review status online. He also stated that it is difficult to accurately determine building fees beforehand, but that the recent placement of the “Planner of the Day” at the permit intake desk allows for the Planners to advise applicants of impact fees at the time of the application submission.

Vice Mayor Blackburn noted that it is the applicants’ responsibility to provide the relevant material in support of their permit application at the time of application submission.

Councilwoman Gillis and Councilman Forster solicited additional public input.

Councilman Purdo expressed the desire for staff to work with applicants to determine how they can make an application work, rather than simply denying it. Councilwoman Gillis agreed, but noted that assistance should be within reason and “false positives” must be avoided. Mr. Koconis stated that staff may need to try to make regulations easier for the public and staff to understand.

#### **IV. PUBLIC COMMENT**

Patti Silver, Islamorada, suggested Council and staff address Land Development Regulations (LDRs), transparency with regard to permit application status, and high permitting costs. Ms. Silver expressed appreciation for the workshop to address this topic. Councilman Purdo noted that the upgraded software the Village is investing in will allow the public to check the status of permit applications online. Ms. Silver encouraged the Village to adopt a single system for use by all departments.

Roger Young, Islamorada, stressed the need to update the Village’s Code of Ordinances and standardize staff interpretation of codes.

Vice Mayor Blackburn pointed out that Council and the Local Planning Agency are responsible for interpreting and amending the Code of Ordinances and that staff’s responsibility is to implement code regulations. He encouraged the public to advise Council when specific code issues arise so that they may be addressed if necessary.

Cheryl Culberson, LPA, noted the areas already covered during the workshop: fees, interpretation, process, planning, LDRs. Ms. Culberson requested members of the audience submit anonymous comments for discussion.

Richard Settoon, local pool company owner, voiced concerns over the timeliness of permitting, the stringency of stormwater swale calculations, and continuity in staff interpretation of the code. Mr. Settoon stated that he has never been told “no” by staff, but has been frequently provided solutions by staff.

Paul Gordon, local air conditioning company employee, requested Council make “Walk-through Wednesday” every day, as is done Monroe County and in the Cities of Key Colony Beach, Layton, and Marathon. Mr. Gordon also requested the implementation of online permit tracking. He noted that local contractors who take pride in their reputation will wait for permits and risk

losing business to non-local contractors who are not concerned with permit compliance and can, therefore, complete the work more quickly.

John Fernandez, LPA Chair, stated that in his experience permitted work often takes less time to complete than does the actual permitting process.

Linda Miller, realtor, stated that she would like to see the Village implement measures to quiet pool pump noise and to require turnoff times for underwater green lights or otherwise restrict the placement of green lights.

Chris Trentine, CBT Construction, expressed agreement with Paul Gordon's comments regarding the loss of business due to the wait time associated with permitting. Mr. Trentine expressed a desire for more consistency and continuity in staff interpretation of codes, and suggested weekly departmental permit review and follow-up.

Ken Gentes, 329 Woods Avenue, expressed discomfort with Planning staff both interpreting and enforcing Village Code. Mr. Gentes suggested formation of a task force to review the current Village Code. Mayor Philipson noted that staff still has to abide by State codes and regulations.

Jim Mooney, LPA member, stated that electronic streamlining will make the biggest difference in expediting the review process. Mr. Mooney expressed the opinion that oversight committees will only hinder Village operations and that additional Village manpower may actually be needed. He acknowledged the Planners' responsibility toward the community as a whole.

Dave Boerner, Islamorada, opined that procedural changes are easy but that code changes are not likely to happen. He suggested the LPA critically review the Village Code for potential changes and present recommendations to Planning Department staff for consideration.

David deHaas, Islamorada, expressed agreement with Dave Boerner's comments and inquired how the LPA feels about transitioning its responsibilities from those of an agency to those of a commission.

John Hernandez, LPA Chair, stated that the consensus at last LPA meeting was that they would like to be more involved in planning issues.

Cheryl Culberson stated that she felt it is time to review the LDRs. She suggested the LPA work with a five-member ad hoc committee over a ten-week period to review the LDRs and recommend revisions to Council.

Councilwoman Gillis indicated her support for LPA and ad hoc committee review of the LDRs.

Councilman Forster suggested developing a task force to identify 1) code-related issues to send to the LPA for review, and 2) procedural issues to address with Planning Department staff.

Village Attorney James White advised Council that any task force formed would need to comply with Sunshine Law requirements.

Councilman Purdo spoke in support of task force formation. Councilman Blackburn voiced interest in the creation of a hybrid task force consisting of LPA members as well as local contractors.

Amy Knowles, LPA member, suggested the task force be granted more autonomy and allowed to conduct a more casual form of charette-style workshop.

Councilman Forster suggested forming a task force to meet independently and then jointly with the LPA to review LDRs. Councilman Blackburn agreed and suggested Council and staff abstain from attending.

David deHaas, Islamorada, questioned how broad the scope of the task force would be.

Joe Jenack voiced support for formation of a committee comprised of contractors to provide suggestions to the LPA to address the LDRs.

Following a brief break from 7:23 – 7:38 pm, Village Clerk Ariana Lawson read anonymous comments left for Council during the break regarding task force formation, LPA review of LDRs, and the Village's general permitting processes.

Jim Mooney, LPA member, stated that he did not feel a comprehensive review of the LDRs is necessary. He recommended instead forming an ad hoc committee of contractors to hold a series of charettes without staff or Council participation and then making suggestions regarding procedural changes to Council and staff to see what effects they may have before attempting to revise the Village Code. The other members of the LPA concurred.

## **V. COUNCIL DISCUSSION**

Councilwoman Gillis requested staff expedite implementation of the CityView software upgrade.

Council discussion ensued regarding the makeup and scope of the task force. Council agreed to each nominate one member to an Ad Hoc Planning and Development Services Citizens' Advisory Committee at the February 14, 2013 Regular Village Council Meeting.

Village Attorney James White advised Council that no member of the LPA may be appointed to any other committee, including the task force under discussion, but that the LPA is welcome to attend the committee's meetings, which will be publicly noticed.

Councilman Purdo thanked staff for attending the workshop.

## **VI. ADJOURNMENT**

Councilman Purdo offered a motion to adjourn. Councilman Forster seconded the motion. The meeting adjourned at 7:59 p.m.



Ariana S. Lawson  
Village Clerk

Approved by the Village Council this 28<sup>th</sup> day of March, 2013.