
ROCKLEDGE BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, March 18, 2025 - 6:00 p.m.

1. CALL TO ORDER / ROLL CALL

The Rockledge Board of Adjustment met on Tuesday, March 18, 2025, at 6:01 p.m. in the Council Chamber at Rockledge City Hall, 1600 Huntington Lane, Rockledge, Florida.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Bruce Beitman (*arrived at 6:04 p.m.*)
Gail Morris
Josiah Gattle
Timothy Layne
Jhomairis Aguero

MEMBERS ABSENT: Robert LaMarr (Chairman) (*excused*)
Kenrick Bisnath (*excused*)
Enrique Diaz, Jr. (*unexcused*)

STAFF PRESENT: Garrett Olsen, Board Attorney
John Cooper, Community Development Director
Deanna Pomichter, Planning Permit Technician
Melissa Cochie, Planning Permit Technician
Sonia Berghuis, Recording Secretary

City Attorney Olsen explained to the Board that both the Chair and Vice Chair were absent and inquired whether any of the present board members would like to volunteer to lead the meeting. Board Member Gail Morris volunteered to chair the meeting.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES AND ATTENDANCE RECORD

A. Meeting on April 16, 2024

Board Member Gattle moved to approve the minutes and attendance record of the meeting held on April 16, 2024; seconded by Board Member Layne. The motion passed by 4 votes.

Board Member Beitman arrived later and was not present for this vote.

3. PUBLIC HEARINGS

None

4. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None

5. NEW BUSINESS

A. Election of Vice Chairperson

Chairwoman Pro Tem Morris indicated that this item would be tabled until the next Board of Adjustment meeting.

B. Special Exception (SE-96-01)

Action Item: Request to Amend Conditions Imposed via Special Exception (SE-96-01), 1219 Rockledge Drive

Community Development Director Cooper explained that the applicant is requesting an amendment to conditions imposed on the subject property, as applied via a Special Exception from May 1996. Mr. Cooper provided a brief background on the current and prior applications submitted for this property.

Community Development Director Cooper reported that the City has met with the occupants and, after revisiting the previously imposed restrictions, agrees that lifting some of the restrictions would be appropriate. Mr. Cooper recommended that the Board of Adjustment review the subject request and approve the application as presented.

At the request of the Board, Community Development Director Cooper provided information regarding the restrictions requested to be lifted and/or amended. Mr. Cooper clarified that it was not the objective of the current meeting to review the Special Exception, only the additional restrictions imposed on the Special Exception in May 1996.

Community Development Director Cooper answered additional questions posed by the Board, and explained that any changes proposed for the property after the restrictions were lifted, would have to be in compliance with the City's Zoning and Land Development Regulations.

At 6:13 p.m., Chairwoman Pro Tem Morris opened the floor for public comment.

Carole Pope, 715 Rockledge Drive, President of the Lawndale Museum, indicated that she has been involved with the museum for 38 years. Ms. Pope provided a background of the property's operations and museum practices. She explained that the museum is an all-volunteer, self-sufficient operation, and that it does not receive regular funding from any taxpayer entity. Ms. Pope indicated that the property is owned by Brevard County and leased to the organization and, as such, is public property. She stated that the museum is available to the public always under careful on-site supervision, making sure not to allow activities that create a negative impact on the property or its neighbors, with the goal of protecting and preserving it for future generations. Ms. Pope emphasized the value of the property to the community and explained that removal of the restrictions would help its volunteers achieve the museum's goals.

Mary Lu Tombleson-Harvey, 7116 Pena Lane, Melbourne, described her involvement with the museum as a board member. She spoke to the importance of the Lawndale Museum as an educational tool and its historical

context. Ms. Thombleson-Harvey explained that the museum preserves the heritage of Rockledge as the oldest city in Brevard County, and allows its visitors to learn about life in Rockledge along the Indian River as it was in the late 1800's. She indicated that removal of the current restrictions would allow the museum to increase its sources of revenue to continue with the preservation of the site, something that to date has been accomplished through volunteer work. She stated that it was the efforts of volunteers that saved the property from a state of disrepair, restoring it to a building that contributed to the improvement of the neighborhood it belongs to. She asked that the Board vote in favor of lifting the restrictions as requested.

John Seaman, 1215 Rockledge Drive, lives adjacent to the Lawndale Museum. Mr. Seaman provided the Board with 27 pictures related to the matters being discussed. He indicated that there are usually more cars parked on the property than the 8 available parking spaces. He stated that this causes exhaust fumes and dirt to enter his home, since the measures proposed to alleviate this were never implemented. Mr. Seaman also mentioned that the vegetative buffer that was installed is inadequate. He fears that with more frequent activities being organized at the museum, the days he would have to live with those impacts to his home would increase from once a week to five days a week, making it hard for him to live in and enjoy his home.

Linda Beck, 1120 Geiger St., shared her experience as a docent and regular volunteer with the Lawndale Museum. She invited the Board to come visit the facility to see up close the preservation and maintenance work done by its volunteers. She indicated that, during the time she has been involved with the museum, she has not seen large numbers of cars parked on the property. Ms. Beck stated that the museum is currently open on Saturdays but needs the modified hours to be able to generate more revenue, and asked the Board to vote in favor of removing the restrictions as requested.

Greg Tsark, 1209 Rockledge Drive, is a proud resident of Rockledge and expressed his appreciation for all the City does to provide its residents with the necessary services and recreation areas. He mentioned that Rockledge Drive is one of those areas enjoyed by Rockledge residents as well as visitors and deserves the efforts to be preserved and improved. He indicated that the change in restrictions being proposed would disturb the serene and quiet characteristic the Lawndale Museum is known and appreciated for by its neighbors. He stated that their pursuit of additional revenue should not come at the expense of the tranquility of its surrounding neighbors and natural environment.

Sally Shinn, 1347 Rockledge Drive, stressed the importance of the Lawndale Museum from her point of view as an educator. She stated it provides its visitors a window into life in Rockledge dating back to being the first city in the county, an experience made very authentic, interesting and captivating by its volunteers as they showcase its historical architecture and furnishings. Ms. Shinn indicated that the museum is a place where future generations can be inspired by past generations and their accomplishments. She mentioned the collaborative efforts of the museum with the Cocoa-Rockledge Garden Club

and Cocoa Agricultural Center to provide an appropriate environment for much needed pollinators in the area. She concluded that all those efforts would greatly benefit from the lifting of the current restrictions as requested.

Richard Traeger, 2158 Auburn Lakes Drive, has collaborated with the Lawndale Museum for five years. With his background in historic preservation, he stated that the Lawndale Museum is one of the best preserved facilities of its kind that he has known, all thanks to its volunteers. He reiterated that the intentions of the volunteers would never be in detriment of the property or its surrounding areas, and that it is important to preserve the treasured Lawndale Museum.

Ian Golden, 2725 Judge Fran Jamieson Way, B-203, Viera, Director of Brevard County Parks and Recreation Department, recognized the great efforts of the Lawndale Museum towards its restoration and maintenance. He indicated that the removal of restrictions would provide more exposure to this unique property for the public through small events and fundraisers, compatible with its capacity. He stated that the removal of the restrictions would not exonerate the property from abiding to applicable building and zoning regulations, as well as the National Historical Registry, including ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) provisions. Mr. Golden expressed that the lifting of the restrictions would go a long way towards continuing to allow the museum to perform its exemplary work of educating visitors and preserving this piece of Rockledge's history.

In response to some of the questions posed during the public comment period, Community Development Director Cooper clarified that the Board and staff are reviewing the additional restrictions imposed, not the Special Exception itself or modifications to its use. He stated that during the 30 years of existence of the Lawndale Museum, there have not been any code enforcement complaints, implying that the property is being used as it is supposed to. With regard to the parking issue, Mr. Cooper indicated that he had a conversation with the neighbor as well as the lessees, and noted that progress can be made to address the issue.

There being no further comments, Chairwoman Pro Tem Morris closed the public comment period at 6:58 p.m.

Community Development Director Cooper answered additional questions from the Board on issues of noise ordinance, parking, bus traffic, frequency of use for events, zoning and other issues presented. He indicated that the Zoning and Land Development Regulations, as well as the Special Exception itself, have safeguards to ensure that the property operates in a manner that is conducive to the neighborhood. Mr. Cooper also stated that he recognizes the needs of the Lawndale Museum in order to be successful, and reiterated the City's recommendation is to move forward with modifying or removing the restrictions.

Board Member Gattle moved to lift restrictions numbered 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10; seconded by Board Member Beitman. The motion passed by unanimous vote.

6. ADJOURN

There being no further business to come before the Board, Chairwoman Pro Tem Morris declared the meeting to be adjourned at 7:20 p.m.

Submitted by:

Sonia Berghuis
Recording Secretary

Approved by:

Robert LaMarr
Chairman