



Village of Biscayne Park Commission Agenda Report

Village Commission Meeting Date: October 6, 2016

Subject: Discussion on procedures regarding
fiscal accountability, transparency,
and writing of checks

Prepared By: Commissioner Barbara Watts

Sponsored By: Commission

Background

I believe that it is the responsibility of the current Commission to address and attempt to rectify the Village's policies and procedures regarding financial transactions and their oversight that resulted in the significant overage on its construction and renovation projects, brought to the Commission's attention only late last spring. One of the reasons for the overage, we were told, was a survey by Miami-Dade County necessary for the building of the Annex (approx. \$30,000). Surely, this overlooked cost was known and probably paid for months prior, So too, the architect's fee for the Log Cabin's restoration (around \$70,000?) which seems to have been omitted from the budget, was paid at some point, probably before its re-opening celebration in Jan. 2016. Two people had to sign the checks—the City Manager and the Mayor or another Commissioner. Was anyone paying attention? Did the signees sign the checks for these items thinking things were just hunky-dory because the Village Manager indicated nothing and because the mantra was "Let the Village Manager manage?"

Obviously, the ball was dropped and "mistakes were made." On second thought, let us be directly honest: the Village Manager, the Mayor, and the Commission, each to a different extent, dropped the ball and made mistakes. It unlikely that the Village will have two such large projects in the near future, and thus unlikely that any future lapses in oversight and accountability would result in a number so large as that of the still-unknown Annex/Log Cabin overage; nonetheless, it is our responsibility to

October 6, 2016

Commission Agenda Report

explore and at least put into effect measures that will eliminate or greatly decrease the possibility of such an overage happening again and, as well, amend the Village's policies and procedures so that there is greater oversight by the Commission and Residents over the Administration's spending, with greater accountability and transparency with respect to all transactions.

I suggest that we direct the Administration and Staff (and, possibly, our lawyer) to explore the policies and procedures of other municipalities. I further suggest that the Commission consider establishing an Oversight Board—if there are residents qualified and willing to serve. Furthermore, I wonder whether a change in policy for check signing may be put in place; perhaps the signature of a Commissioner as well as that of the Mayor and Village Manager be required for checks over a certain amount? Certainly, procedures should be changed for large projects (what is the Village received a substantive grant for road or storm water drainage repair?).

Even though a new Commission will be seated soon, it behooves this Commission to set the ball rolling to ensure that such a situation does not reoccur. It happened on our watch and we owe this to the residents of Biscayne Park.

Fiscal / Budget Impact

Staff and attorney time.

Attachments

None. This is a discussion item, with request for assistance from the Administration for research.