

ActiveWords Support

From: Bonnie Jackson <bjackson@jacksonlawfirm.net>
Sent: Tuesday, February 01, 2011 10:11 AM
To: Mayor and Commissioners
Subject: Lack of Transparency by the Friends of Mead Gardens

Dear Mayor and City Commissioners,

I am concerned about the lack of transparency and the failure to involve the public in the planning of Mead Gardens by the Friends of Mead Gardens. There appear to be major proposed revisions to the Master Plan without public input or even input by the Parks & Recreation Commission. The following is a brief background:

At the invitation of John Holland, I requested a meeting with representatives of the Friends of Mead Gardens prior to tomorrow's ground-breaking ceremony. The meeting was held this morning at Mead Gardens, attended by myself, John Holland, Jeffrey Blydenburgh, and Forrest. I was looking forward to learning more about the activities and plans of the Friends of Mead Gardens in moving forward with the Master Plan. During the meeting, Jeffrey walked through a color booklet and explained that it was used at a Workshop held last Friday to provide an update and discuss the qualifications of an Executive Director, a new position that they said was recommended by Commissioner McMacken. I asked if the workshop was publicly noticed, and they said no. The only Commissioner invited was Commissioner McMacken, and the workshop was not disclosed during the update by the Friends of Mead Gardens before the Parks & Recreation Commission meeting held last week. If I had known about the workshop, I would have attended. According to Jeffrey Blydenburgh, Commissioner McMacken did not attend, but Randy Knight and John Holland did attend, and John was given a copy of the booklet. I asked for a copy of the booklet to study, but they refused. First they claimed it was proprietary, then they hesitated and agreed to provide a copy only if I agreed to tell them with whom I would be discussing it and warned that I was not to share it with members of the public. Then they became concerned that only one candidate would have a copy. Even after I informed them that the booklet was a public record as it was in the hands of John Holland, they still refused to share the booklet and said it was probably a mistake to let John take a copy. As the Vice Chairman of the Parks & Recreation Commission, and as a resident attempting to be an informed candidate for City Commission, I was stunned at the lack of transparency, lack of cooperation, and mistrust of the community. As a result, I informed them that I would make a public records request, study the booklet, formulate any questions, and reschedule the meeting. I extended my hand when leaving, but Mr. Blydenburgh refused to shake my hand.

John Holland has agreed to provide the booklet to me, and stated that he had asked the Friends of Mead Gardens to provide this information at last week's update before the Parks & Recreation Commission. I am thankful to John for attending the workshop on behalf of the City residents, and for inviting me to attend this morning's meeting. Clearly, he understands the need for transparency and public input. Hopefully, the City Commission will take this opportunity to learn more about the activities of the Friends of Mead Gardens in our public park. It is unfortunate that the residents are being denied the same opportunity.

Best Regards,

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