

Zephyr Park Presentation

A Zephyr Park Presentation was held by City Council on July 17, 2025 at 6:00 PM in the Council Chambers of City Hall and Via GoToMeeting (646) 749-3122 - Access Code: 855-960-693. Council President Charles E. Proctor called the meeting to order at 6:02 PM.

Roll call was taken. Present were members Lance Smith, Charles Proctor, Kenneth Burgess and Mayor Melonie Bahr Monson. City Manager William Poe was also present. Jodi Wilkeson, Steven Spina and City Attorney Matthew Maggard were not present.

Staff present: Public Works Director Shane LeBlanc, CRA Director Gail Hamilton, Public Information Officer Kevin Weiss, Principal Planner Rodney Corriveau, Community Planner William McCaw and Assistant City Clerk Eileen Mercado.

1. ZEPHYR PARK PRESENTATION

CRA Director Gail Hamilton introduced the purpose of the meeting, which was to present updates to the Zephyr Park Master Plan in response to significant flooding events that occurred in 2024. The presentation was led by James Pankonin and Dustin Ballard of Kimley-Horn and Associates, who have been working in coordination with the Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD) to ensure the park's design can withstand future storm events.

The presentation began with a review of the previously approved master plan, which included features such as an event lawn, band shell, playground, splash pad, walking trails, and historical elements. The design team emphasized that while the core elements remain, their locations have been adjusted to mitigate flood risks. Drone imagery and elevation data from Tropical Storm Debbie and Hurricane Milton were used to identify high water lines and inform grading changes.

To address flood concerns, the design team proposed elevating key infrastructure such as restrooms, the splash pad, and playgrounds to elevations above the 100-year floodplain. Areas prone to flooding will be designated as floodable landscapes, with reinforced sidewalks and materials that can withstand periodic inundation. A new boardwalk will be constructed over the lake to provide scenic views and improve pedestrian access, especially in areas where sidewalks previously flooded.

The revised plan also includes a teen challenge zone with fitness-oriented equipment, outdoor games, and unique playground structures. The design aims to complement other city parks, such as Hercules Park, by offering distinct recreational experiences. Landscape enhancements will feature native Florida species, and the splash pad will be relocated slightly to take advantage of existing utilities.

Council expressed support for the updated design, particularly the flood mitigation strategies and the inclusion of diverse recreational amenities. Concerns were raised about safety near the water, especially for young children, and the design team confirmed that fencing and controlled access points would be incorporated. Council also discussed the importance of maintaining open space for activities like yoga and community events.

The future of Alice Hall was addressed, with staff recommending its eventual replacement due to age and functionality. A potential relocation to Shepherd's Park was discussed, though Council emphasized the need for broader community input and a comprehensive plan before any decisions are made. The possibility of using CRA-owned properties near the park for a new community center was also mentioned.

Funding for the project was reviewed. The City has secured \$3.2 million in state appropriations and is pursuing a \$10 million Community Development Block Grant. An additional \$3.8 million is available from the recreation reserve fund, formerly associated with the sale of the Zephyr Haven Nursing Home. A financial strategy involving bond financing for Zephyr Park, the City Yard Complex, and the airport terminal will be presented at the next council meeting on July 28, 2025.

Additional topics included the use of permeable materials for parking areas, the potential for a lake aeration fountain, and the feasibility of using reclaimed water to maintain lake levels during dry seasons. Staff confirmed that further coordination with Pasco County is underway to improve the outfall structure at C Avenue, which will enhance drainage capacity.

The meeting concluded with an invitation for Council to submit any follow-up questions. Staff and consultants were commended for their thorough presentation and responsiveness.

2. CITIZEN COMMENTS - NONE

ADJOURN 7:15 PM

Submitted by Ricardo Quiñones (not present)