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Bronson residents request and complain



Bronson Town Clerk Shirley Miller takes a breath Monday night (Feb. 4) as the start of the regular twice-monthly meeting begins following an hour-long workshop to determine what is fair for town employees in regard to salaries, job descriptions, evaluation methods and other policy-procedure matters.

Story and Photos

By Jeff M. Hardison © Feb. 5, 2019 at 4:19 p.m.

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BRONSON -- Known as the "Heart of Levy County," the Town of Bronson's Town Council on Monday night included individuals who might have caused Council members some heartburn after they heard requests and hared complaints.

The evening was full of commentary.

The range of commentary went all the way from a heartfelt, soul-searching plea to help the homeless, through a plausible legal concept for choosing the mayor of Bronson, and the conversations devolved into statements of unsupported opinions.



Answering to the residents and visitors of Bronson, the current Bronson Town Council is comprised of (from left) Councilman Berlon Weeks, Vice Mayor Jason Hunt, Mayor Robert Partin, Councilman James Beck and Councilwoman Beatrice Roberts.

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Peggy Rowe of Bronson tells the Town Council that she would like the town to provide a place for homeless people when the weather becomes very cold..



HELP THE HOMELESS

Peggy Rowe, a member of Bronson United Methodist Church, said she had received a text in December from Angie Phillips, a nurse with the Levy County School System, concerning a past student of Bronson High School who had been living in the woods.

He is there without water and without electricity, Rowe said.

When the air temperature drops to freezing (32 degrees Fahrenheit), she thinks even more about people who must live exposed to the weather.

Rowe said some cities have a place for homeless people to go when temperatures drop to a certain level. Rowe said she is unfamiliar with how those operations came to exist; however she offered some off-the-cuff ideas, including using the brick building on Hathaway Avenue that is owned by the White Foundation.

There is no established place for homeless people to escape harsh weather in the three counties of Levy, Dixie and Gilchrist counties.

Nevertheless, any homeless person in the Tri-County Area can call 352-507-4000 to reach the Tri-County Community Resource Center. Once a person calls, the TCCRC will connect the caller with resources that can lead to food, clothing and housing, as well as the potential to obtain a job.

The TCCRC cannot create resources, but the volunteers there can help people in need find options for help.

The North Central Florida Alliance for the Homeless and Hungry is a planning and oversight body for a five-county region of North Central Florida. It is under the umbrella of The United Way.

The NCFAHH is reported to cover Alachua, Bradford, Gilchrist, Levy and Putnam counties to help the hungry and homeless people in those counties.

The best first step for a person seeking help in the Tri-County Area of Levy, Dixie and Gilchrist counties, however, is to call the TCCRC at 352-507-4000.

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Shirley Patterson Taylor tells the Town Council that she thinks Beatrice Roberts should have been the mayor to follow former Mayor Bruce Greenlee. At the immediately-previous meeting two weeks ago, though, the Town Council voted unanimously (5-0) for Mayor

Robert Partin and in a separate 5-0 vote for Vice Mayor Jason Hunt.

CHOOSING THE MAYOR

Shirley Patterson Taylor and Franklin Schuler expressed their belief that Bronson Town Councilwoman Beatrice Roberts, who was formerly the vice mayor, should have been selected as mayor.

Beyond that, they expressed their opinion that Roberts should at least have remained vice mayor.

Bronson Town Attorney Steven Warm explained that as far as the town charter, the five sitting Town Council members at the most recent meeting worked within the bounds to choose Mayor Robert Partin and Vice Mayor Jason Hunt.

Taylor opened her speech by quoting 1 John 3:18, which she said says “Let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.”

The King James Version of the 1 John 3:18 says “My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.”

The appointment of Berlon Weeks and James Beck, as the two replacements for former Mayor Bruce Greenlee and former Town Councilwoman Katie Parks, led to a need for new leadership.

The choice of Partin as Mayor and Hunt as vice mayor is disturbing to Taylor, she said.

The Town Council, Taylor said, overlooked the best person for the appointment to be mayor – Roberts.

“If you weren’t going to make her mayor,” Taylor continued, “you should have left her as vice mayor.”

Taylor said she feels that the vice mayor should be appointed as mayor, after the mayor departs before his or her term has expired. The mayoral duties last from Oct. 1 through Sept. 30 of each year.

Taylor said these appointments “trouble” her, and she requested the Town Council to rescind its previous choices in that regard. Taylor let them know she is 76 years old and is a resident of Bronson, and that she would be proud of the Town Council if it would rescind its previous appointments for mayor and vice mayor.

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Franklin Schuler, a former mayor of Bronson and one of the people who sought appointment to one of the two empty Town Council seats, shares his beliefs about who should be mayor now in Bronson -- Beatrice Roberts.



Schuler, who is a former mayor and Town Council member, shared his opinion.

Schuler said the “past practice” was for the vice mayor to be named as mayor.

“Whenever Bruce (Greenlee) stepped down,” Schuler said, “Miss Beatrice (Roberts) became mayor.”

Schuler said the other important factor is that the mayor always, in the past, has been the person to select the vice mayor.

Schuler asked Town Attorney Warm if past practice was an accepted method.

“If you’re talking in the abstract,” Warm said, “past practice is important. But they had a political decision to make. It isn’t a legal decision.”

Warm went on to say that traditionally, according to the town charter, there is no such thing as a vice mayor. There is nothing in the charter or in any ordinance to show the creation of a vice mayor in Bronson.

Instead, he continued, it is an administrative convenience for the running of meetings in the absence of the mayor.

In this instance, Warm explained, since the mayor no longer existed – Greenlee resigned – the vice mayor had no particular status other than to run meetings until a mayor was selected.

There is nothing in the structure of the current town government that mandates a vice mayor, or that the vice mayor would become the mayor automatically in the event of the mayor’s death or resignation, etc., Warm intimated.

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Elijah Williams, an often-outspoken Bronson resident, shares his opinions with the Town Council on Monday night (Feb. 4).



Later in the meeting, Elijah Williams announced his intent to start a campaign for a charter revision to assure the selection of the mayor would follow what some people in town consider to be proper.

The last time the voters of Bronson were given a chance to vote to change the town

charter, the majority voted to leave the charter as it exists.

OPEN BURNING COMPLAINT

Mary Tracy, one of the three people not selected from the field of five to fill the two previously empty Town Council seats, gave the Town Council a long speech about her dislike for open burning within the town limits.

Tracy and her husband Chris moved to Bronson from Naples about 15 years ago.

Tracy said there were fires four years ago and seven years ago that upset her. The smoke made it so she could not open her windows and breathe. Tracy said ash falling on her vehicles forced her to use the carwash in town.

For some reason, she thought Councilman Beck owned the carwash. He never did own it.

Tracy said she has been unable to reach the Florida Forest Service. She said it has a phone number that if full, will take no more messages – due to its filled voice mailbox.

She will be speaking with Fire Chief Dennis Russell to help her have better communication with the Forest Service. On Tuesday afternoon, Chief Russell said he is glad to help any person in the Bronson Fire District if they have concerns related to fires in this part of Levy County.

While Tracy alleged that she was not getting any answers from the Florida Forest Service in regard to open burning, that does not appear to be something that has happened when the correct office is called. She must have used an incorrect number.

The Florida Forest Service is part of the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services.

The telephone number to get a burn authorization or report a wildfire in Levy County is **352-493-6060**.

The Forestry office at Usher, six miles south of Chiefland is open 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. seven-days-a-week. After that time, it rolls to an emergency dispatch that is open 24-hours-a-day.