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Bronson sets workshop for recreational programs;

***Councilman researches solar power for revenue;
Mayor starts enforcing rules of decorum***



Sherrie Schuler, dean of students and co-athletic director at Bronson Middle High School, shares her thoughts from the podium on Monday night (June 3) as Town Clerk Shirley Miller and Town Councilman Berlon Weeks listen. Schuler helped lead Weeks to create the motion, which was seconded and unanimously approved, for a workshop starting at 5 p.m. before the next regular Town Council meeting on June 17, which is scheduled to start at 7 p.m. The workshop will be in regard to how the town intends to provide recreational opportunities for children.

Story, Photos and Video

By Jeff M. Hardison © June 5, 2019 at 5:09 p.m.

BRONSON – While the town of Bronson appears to have no plan to repair a gravesite that is depressed and sunken into the ground, it is working toward resolution of budgetary issues related to funding its recreation and parks program.

In other news and information from the Monday night (June 3) meeting of the Bronson Town Council, Councilman James Beck shared insight about a possible town-owned 70-acre set of solar panels to generate electricity, and Mayor Robert Partin brought more order to the meetings that has been lacking for some time.

Sunken Grave

In regard to the caved-in grave, which Town Councilwoman Beatrice Roberts had mentioned at a previous meeting, Roberts said no action has been taken.

Roberts said the funeral home that placed the casket in the gravesite is not going to be doing anything in regard to the depression. Roberts added that over time concrete crumbles. She was answering a question from Town Councilman Berlon Weeks in regard to the collapsed grave.

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Bronson Town Clerk Shirley Miller and Councilman Berlon Weeks prepare for the start of the Monday evening meeting.

Bronson Vice Mayor Jason Hunt and Mayor Robert Partin prepare for the start of the meeting.



Bronson Town Councilman James Beck and Councilwoman Beatrice Roberts prepare for the start of the meeting.

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Bronson Parks And Recreation

Sherrie Schuler, dean of students and co-athletic director at Bronson Middle High School, helped the Town Council solidify a date and time for a workshop to iron out details of the potential change from the town government-run Bronson Parks and Recreation to return to a volunteer-run Bronson Youth League.

There was a lot of conversation about the potential to convert parks and recreation back to a youth league run by volunteers as it was years ago.

The end result was a unanimous vote to conduct a **workshop starting at 5 p.m. before the next regular Town Council meeting on June 17**, which is scheduled to start at 7 p.m.

Vice Mayor Jason Hunt opened the discussion by saying that he would prefer that town sports teams and leagues go back to volunteers, rather than being under town government control.

Councilman Weeks said he had spoken with Joe Markham and Markham had found five or six people to participate as leaders the various sports.

Weeks said he had a goal of rolling back the millage rate on property taxes. He said he believes the problem with town's budget results from the town government taking over the programs formally run by the Bronson Youth League.

Councilwoman Beatrice Roberts said the recent property taxes increased as a result from a grant-loan from the USDA Rural Development for the town's improvement of wastewater collection.

Weeks said the concession stands are being manned by town workers rather than volunteers. That cost is affecting the annual budget. Weeks said he has heard gossip in the town that some people were eating free at the concession stands during games.

Roberts said umpires and referees eat and drink for free. All others pay.

Weeks said people would pay for their children to play in sports by working in the concession stands. A few night's work would cover the child's fee to participate as part of a team. This was for people who could not afford to pay for uniforms and the like.

Weeks then started speaking about economic growth that was supposed to happen after adding commercial sewer connections lines, but that growth never happened.

The mayor did not direct the discussion between Roberts and Weeks, as the rules of decorum provide. He went on to speak about economic development in Bronson.

"That sewer will pay for itself once we start making good government decisions and sound government decisions," Weeks said.

Problems with the annual audit, he said, are keeping investors at bay.

"We've got to show people that Bronson is a viable community so that people will want to invest here," Weeks said.

Roberts said it Bronson can even keep a laundromat open as a business.

Weeks said there is a need for industry to come to Bronson, so that people can have jobs and can then spend money at laundromats and other service industries.

Schuler said the reason business fails in Bronson is due to too high of rent. BubbaQue's couldn't afford to pay the rent at that center in Bronson. BubbaQue's moved to Williston as a result, she said.

Weeks, like Vice Mayor Hunt, said he believes that our best served in Bronson Parks and Recreation converts back to the Bronson Youth League.

Schuler took the podium and said she was in the BYL before it became BPR. Before

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the town converts back to BYL, Schuler suggested the town have a workshop so that people can give their input in this regard.

Schuler said that rather than scrapping the BPR, address and fix the problems – including with the budget.

Weeks agreed and made a motion to have the workshop, starting at 5 p.m., before the regular meeting scheduled for June 17. The motion was seconded and was approved unanimously.



Linda Cooper of Williston speaks to the Town Council, sharing her opinion and asking questions about the town's Parks and Recreation Department. Bronson resident Elijah Williams is seen in the foreground.

Bronson Parks and Recreation Director Curtis Stacy shares his thoughts about comments that have been made in regard to the department.

Linda Cooper of Williston said she would like to see a job description for what Director Curtis does. She also wants to see the costs for food in the concession and the revenue generated by those sales.

During this most recent conversation about BPR, Director Stacy and Town Clerk Miller had an opportunity to make it clear that Stacy was within the budget he was getting a and his management of the department had nothing to do with the budget issues weeks spoke about.

Weeks said the Town Council budgeted \$87,000 but it only took in \$30,000 as revenue from BPR.



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Stacy said that when Weeks says he wants to return BPR to volunteers and make it the Bronson Youth League again, because it is not making money, it seems to Stacy that the councilman is being critical of the work Stacy does.

Weeks said the town cannot continue to lose money.

Weeks went on to say the discussions at the meetings for the past two months were just to keep Stacy employed.

Town Clerk Miller noted that Stacy uses money that the Town Council has allocated for his department.

“He’s doing what he’s supposed to do,” Miller said, “with the resources they has.”

This is not an issue of Stacy not knowing what he’s doing, Miller said. It is not an issue of Miller doing something that he is not supposed to do, because he does what he is supposed to do.

“It is not an issue of him not having the concessions under control because he has it completely under control. He can give you lists of everything he’s had for concessions for the last five years,” Miller said.

Stacy can show the money he spent and the money that was taken in, Miller said. The issue is not what Stacy is or is not doing, she said.

“The issue is, do we want to spend our money on infrastructure – roads and streets,” Miller said, “or do we want to spend our money on the children of Bronson?”

The proverbial bottom line from the lengthy discussions is that a workshop is set to happen for people to share their opinions with the Town Council and for those five leaders to determine the direction the town is going in regard to providing for recreation in the town.

Solar-Powered Future

<https://youtu.be/Vsv4iYcpHMo>

In this video, Bronson resident Mary Tracy asks about something she heard Town Councilman James Beck say four weeks ago. She did not stay at the podium to complete what she was saying, and it was not something that was on the agenda. Later in the meeting, after she called out the question from her seat in the audience, during the time on the agenda when there is public participation, Beck answered her question.

Beck said he is looking into the possibility of using 70 acres the town owns to create electricity by solar panels. That electricity would either be sold to Duke Energy or it would be put into a grid for use by the town at places like City Hall, the wastewater treatment plant and the Levy County Department of Public Safety facility.

This project is in its most preliminary stage of research.

Meeting Becomes Civil

Mayor Robert Partin again recited the rules for people to follow so that they can provide input during the meetings.

He explained the rules exist to allow everyone a chance to speak and for the town to keep an accurate record from the meeting.

With people making comments back and forth, with no guidance from the mayor as to who is speaking, it becomes difficult to document the conversations.

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The first rules call for the person to go to the podium and identify themselves.

Speakers are to show respect and civility as well, and no profanity is to be used. Order is to be maintained, and the presiding officer can have the person removed from the podium or removed from the room if that is warranted.

People did relatively well immediately after the rules were again recited, but before that meeting was people were still calling questions from their seats. However, in contrast with previous meetings, at least people who spoke waited to be recognized by the mayor before shouting out questions or comments. One woman who went to the podium started by speaking so softly now one could tell what she was saying.

The shouting from seats or at the podium results in part from the town apparently lacking a sound system in that meeting room of the Dogan Cobb Municipal Building, or it may be a cultural artifact of Bronson