



Office of the
**INDIAN RIVER COUNTY
ADMINISTRATOR**

Jason E. Brown, County Administrator
Michael C. Zito, Assistant County Administrator

MEMORANDUM

TO: Members of the Board of County Commissioners

FROM: Jason E. Brown
County Administrator

DATE: August 31, 2018

SUBJECT: Discussion on the ~35 Acre Golf Course Property Adjacent to Historic
Dodgertown

DESCRIPTIONS AND CONDITIONS:

The City Council of Vero Beach will consider a contract for sale of the ~35 acre Dodgertown Golf Course parcel at their meeting today at 5:30 pm for \$2.1 million. As discussed previously, staff has some concerns about the timing of this sale as it relates to our lease of Historic Dodgertown. I want to clearly detail some of my concerns and thoughts about the potential impact this sale may have on the County.

- Major League Baseball (MLB) has indicated to County staff that they want to ensure that there is adequate parking for major events (5,000+ attendance) at Dodgertown similar in scale to the Jackie Robinson Game, benefit concerts (Jake Owen), and the St. Helen's Harvest Festival. As you know, the County currently has an agreement with the City that allows Historic Dodgertown to use the Dodgertown Golf Course for parking as needed. This right could be jeopardized if the property is sold and developed. The agreement also provides for parking on the airport parcels lying just north of Aviation Blvd. Once again, this right is available only as long as those parcels are not developed (and there have been active discussions about developing some of them). Additionally, my understanding is that Historic Dodgertown has a "handshake agreement" to park on the DT Commons parcel (triangular parcel between Aviation Blvd. and Dodger Road) in exchange for mowing. This parcel is currently listed for sale. There are very limited options to provide necessary parking for large scale events other than the Golf Course parcel should these other parcels become unavailable. The lack of a solution could potentially jeopardize an agreement with MLB. Please see the attached aerial showing the parking options available on and around the Historic Dodgertown site.

- There has been significant opposition from the public to selling this land for development. This seems to be derived from the history of the parcel as well as concerns about development vs. open space. Staff is concerned that if the County is unable to reach an agreement with a suitable successor to Verotown LLC, we may be faced with the prospect of selling Historic Dodgertown at some point in the future. In addition to the concerns about the City sale as expressed by some residents, the prospective loss of tourism and economic impact of Historic Dodgertown could have a negative effect on tourism related businesses in the County.
- The sale price currently offered (\$2.1 million) seems relatively low based upon current market conditions and an appraised value of \$3.5 million. The language in the sale contract restricting development is not well defined. County staff has concerns about potential incompatible uses adjacent to Historic Dodgertown. The specific language in the agreement is quoted below for your reference:

“ RESTRICTIONS ON USE OF PROPERTY. It is the Buyer's intention to restrict development and use of the Property to commercial uses such as restaurants, markets, professional offices, and hotels, with no residential development being permitted. The exact language of such restrictions shall be agreed to by the Seller and Buyer prior to closing.”

ALTERNATIVES:

Following are some potential options for the Board’s consideration:

1. Make an offer to the City to purchase the entire parcel. I have discussed our potential interest in the parcel with the City Manager, and he has stated that he would present any such offer to the City Council for consideration.
2. Make an offer to the City to purchase a portion of the parcel, while the prospective buyer purchases the rest. Based only upon a conceptual plan that was presented to the City, it appears that the buyer has plans to develop about half of the property in phase 1, with the remainder to be developed in a later phase 2. At this time, staff is not aware of how receptive the buyer would be to this concept. We would need to explore this further. Based upon our calculations, it appears that about half of the ~35 acre property would satisfy the large event parking needs. This parcel could potentially be developed for a passive recreation site or other beneficial uses that could accommodate parking for large events at Historic Dodgertown at some point in the future. We could also develop a common access arrangement to provide connectivity to Historic Dodgertown from the County’s portion as well as the buyer’s portion.
3. Approach the buyer about the possibility of a shared parking arrangement that could provide for the parking needs of both facilities.
4. The County has certain rights to parking on the property (see attached Parking License Agreement). Additionally, the County has various rights to ensure that any development on the site is not incompatible with Historic Dodgertown (see attached Interlocal Agreement). The County could explore these rights in further detail and take necessary actions as appropriate.

5. Take no action.

FUNDING:

Funding for a full or partial purchase is available from a combination of Tourist Tax Fund reserves (Fund 119) for \$250,000, and Optional Sales Tax Fund reserves for the remainder of the purchase price.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the Board of County Commissioners approve Alternative 2, which is to make an offer to the City for a portion of the property. Based upon staff's analysis, approximately half of the parcel should satisfy the parking needs for Historic Dodgertown. Staff further recommends that the Board grant the County Administrator the authority to negotiate terms and preparation of an agreement for Board approval.

Attachments: Aerial Parking Map
Parking License Agreement
Interlocal Agreement
City of Vero Beach Proposed Agreement for Sale and Purchase
Property Appraisal September 29, 2015