

THE COMMUNITY NEWS

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COMMENTARY/ANALYSIS

Update on Willow Park Card Room

No light shed by city

By **Randy Keck**
The Community News

Last week's story about the poker room that was planned for Willow Park and its subsequent cancellation was a last-minute breaking event on our press day. (You can read last week's story here: <https://www.community-news.com/2021/09/october-1-2021/>).

The optics were bad from the beginning, as the business was planned and documents signed in June, but the zoning that allowed it to happen was not passed by the city council until July.

When the zoning change was presented to the city council, it was described as zoning that would allow businesses like a movie theater or bowling alley.

While a card room is legal, it is also unusual, and the question is whether city staff was aware of the card room at the time it presented the zoning change to the city council.

The Community News has reached out to the city for clarification, but so far no light has been shed on the issue.

At about 8:20 a.m. on Tuesday, I submitted the following email to Rosealee Hoffman, Communications and Marketing Director for the City of Willow Park, with a question for City Manager Bryan Grimes:

"I am following up on the poker room story. Based on implications in public comments, I want to give Bryan an opportunity to clear the air, so I am submitting the following question for him: Were you or any city staff aware of the plans for the poker room before the city council voted for the July zoning change regarding amusements?"

As of 11:57 a.m. on Wednesday, I had not received a response, so I sent the following text message to Willow Park Mayor Doyle Moss:

"Hi Doyle - at last week's city council meeting, some of the speakers implied that you and Bryan may have been aware of the poker room before the vote was held to change the zoning to allow for amusements. I just wanted to give you an opportunity to address that if you wish. Thanks."

At noon on Wednesday, Hoffman provided the following statement:

"After the article came out in the Community News [sic], the developers for the Fort Card Room indicated that they will consult with their attorney and could potentially take action. Because of potential litigation, the City Attorney has advised the City not to make any further comments about the business."

In my mind, that statement raised additional questions. I left a voicemail message for Rose Hoffman at 3:17 p.m. Wednesday afternoon requesting clarification, but had not received a reply as of press time late Wednesday night.

Our question was: what did the article in *The Community News* have to do with the actions of the developers and their potential legal actions?

I also left a voicemail message for one of the developers, but it was not returned, either.

When optics are bad, it is incumbent on a government body to explain. So far, no one at the City of Willow Park has found it necessary to do so.

We will continue to follow the story.

