

Council wrong to ignore the law

Whether the Lake City Council likes it or not, the law is the law.

At Monday's meeting, the council ignored the advice of its attorney, Todd Kenyon, when it came to the legality of the appointment of Sylvester Warren to the planning and zoning board.

The council didn't even consider the item, instead pulling it from the agenda with little discussion and without allowing Kenyon to fully explain his research or opinion.

That opinion was that Warren, as a convicted felon, can't serve on a city board or committee without having his civil rights fully restored by receiving clemency.

So why is the council ignoring their attorney's legal advice and disregarding the law?

The brief reasons provided at Monday's meeting don't hold water.

Making sure the council acts legally is not "foolishness" as Councilor Chevelle Young called the item to rescind Warren's appointment.

Young also took offense that the council be asked to address items that they haven't seen in writing.

Except Kenyon provided a written report Friday to the council.

Councilor Todd Sampson had a valid question of why Warren's eligibility to serve on the committee wasn't caught previously, since this was the second time his application was considered.

But that isn't an excuse. Just because a potential problem was raised previously doesn't mean you continue to ignore it once it is uncovered.

Instead, the council disregarded its attorney and chose not to take corrective action to make sure it complies with state law.

The council doesn't get to choose which state laws it wants to follow, which state laws it wants to uphold and which state laws it can just blatantly ignore.

The law is the law.

If the councilors disagree with the law, if it feels the law is unfair and that convicted felons should be able to take office even without their rights fully restored, it could lobby state legislators to propose an amendment to the constitution to change the law.

Until then, the councilors should remember the oath they all swore when they took office: to support, protect and defend the constitution and government of the United States and the State of Florida.

It's time they faithfully perform those duties by following the law and following their attorney's guidance.