

Community Redevelopment Agency
Regular Meeting Minutes
Council Chambers
September 23, 2020
5:00 P.M.

Community Redevelopment Agency Board members: Reynolds Henderson, Joe Johnson, Cathy Mosley, Susan Bakalo, Planning Director Kelly Schultz, and City Manager Mell Smigielski. Mayor Campbell, Deputy City Manager Carisse LeJeune, and City Clerk Maryanne Schrader were also in attendance. Board member Darius Paul was excused.

Chair R. Henderson called the Community Redevelopment Agency meeting to order at 5:03 p.m.

2. Approval of Minutes - Chair R. Henderson asked for a motion to approve the minutes.

Motion by Board Member K. Schultz and seconded by Board Member S. Bakalo to approve the minutes of August 26, 2020. All ayes. Motion carried.

3. Citizen Comments - Chair R. Henderson asked if there were any public comments.

Citizen R. Raymond voiced questions regarding CRA sponsorship for college or technical school and requested a workshop be held. City Attorney Clay Adkinson clarified that scholarships are not part of the mission of the CRA, as the CRA does not get into educational agreements. The mission of the CRA is more to economic development partner relationships.

In response to the request from R. Raymond, Chair Henderson stated the Board could make a portion of the meeting into a workshop.

After discussion on R. Raymond's request, City Attorney Clay Adkinson said when we start getting funding, the Board will know what the budget will be. City Manager M. Smigielski said we should know the middle of next month.

Discussion ensued on setting up a Strategic Planning Session in March and discussed helping put together a plan once the surplus properties are sold.

R. Raymond mentioned the historical society and suggested creating a list of truly historic buildings.

4. Florence Park Update -

Deputy City Manager Carisse LeJeune came forward and stated at the City Beautification and Tree Board, she presented a draft example of the type of improvements that could be made at Florence Park and asked for comments on the grant. The Board supported the initiative, so Dewberry will submit the FRDAP grant. On September 29th, a workshop will be held to go over the improvements. Staff has presented the Master Plan for the Parks. They are encouraged and want to get started and were excited the CRA wants to partner with them. The City

Beautification and Tree Board will do the inventorying of the parks and afterward staff will plan a workshop for both Boards before we bring in a design consultant. They hope to have a workshop near where the actual park is located to get neighborhood feedback. They are hoping the park will be a barrier free intergenerational area for accessibility. She added she hopes each park will fit the character of the neighborhood.

Board member S. Bakalo said the pickle ball courts interests her as the Senior Center Director. She believes it will be an asset.

Deputy City Manager C. LeJeune voiced interest in receiving their opinions.

5. Surplus Property Update -

City Manager M. Smigielski said legal ads have been placed in the paper and Public Works is working on signs. The ECR will circulate to the realtors. He added bids are due on October 13th at 2:00 p.m. and the bids will be announced at the October 26th Council meeting. There are seven properties on the list. A minimum bid was set to cover the ad campaign.

Discussion ensued on the process of bidding on the properties and on other properties throughout the city which could become available. However, City Manager M. Smigielski said Public Works only gave him seven surplus properties.

6. Code Enforcement Update

Code Enforcement Officer Chris Strawn said he has 35 new violations since Monday. He added the Special Magistrate contract goes to Council on Monday and will be heard the third Thursday of each month at 2:00 p.m.

Chair Henderson asked about the Code Enforcement position. City Manager M. Smigielski said it will be posted when we receive money for the position.

Discussion ensued on blight issues throughout the city.

Chair Henderson asked about becoming more proactive. City Manager M. Smigielski said Planning is working on an amendment to the Ordinance.

Planning Director K. Schultz said they are working on implementation of the new Tyler software. The software will automatically populate the code violations against the Ordinance. However, in inputting data, they have found omissions with our Code.

Chair Henderson requested that the proactive portion be extracted in order to bring it to the Council.

Code Enforcement Officer C. Strawn said he is bringing violations to the Special Magistrate that have not contacted him. He added he is not bringing those who are trying to voluntary compliance.

Discussion ensued on the benefits of bringing an amended ordinance for proactive enforcement to help speed up the process.

Board member C. Mosely had to leave at 5:48 p.m.

7. CRA Strategic Plan Update

Chair Henderson said each Board member was tasked to send in ideas for the next five years. City Manager M. Smigielski said he only received a list from one member. Chair Henderson said blight is the true mission of the CRA. The goal was to have a list by October in order to add to the submittal of a grant application.

Board member S. Bakalo asked for an example. Chair Henderson said he submitted a list including removal of blight in the downtown area and west DeFuniak, as our mission is to remove blight.

City Attorney Clay Adkinson said remediation is the best concept. Chair Henderson said there is blight in the alleyways and suggested starting in the downtown area.

Discussion ensued regarding methods such as giving money to the homeowner to correct the problem, and categories of blight. Board member J. Johnson said compassion should be given and help the homeowners.

City Attorney Clay Adkinson advised sewer problem corrections are a city obligation. In reply to R. Raymond, City Attorney Clay Adkinson said if there was a failing septic tank, it could fall under blight.

Chair Henderson said we will get more money in the TIF, once the blight is corrected.

City Attorney Clay Adkinson suggested most communities that start a CRA have a starting point to address a section of blight which may spur improvements. A narrow focus will keep you from getting into trouble by using the money on a certain section. He encouraged the CRA to focus on TIF development or target certain blight areas.

Chair Henderson asked City Manager M. Smigielski to forward the suggestions he submitted to the Board to assist them with a starting point.

City Attorney Clay Adkinson suggested corridor connectivity standards, and what Hwy 90 should look like in redevelopment.

Planning Director K. Schultz suggested breaking it into sub-quadrants as the blight is overwhelming.

City Attorney Clay Adkinson mentioned the Board should focus on one commercial and one residential area that does not abut one another.

Mayor Campbell said if the remediation is fragmented, it will not be noticed. He likes the idea of dividing attention to one commercial or one residential area. He said property values will start to go up. After a 3-year project, people will notice.

City Attorney Clay Adkinson said we are looking if an area has received CRA funding, and it would be escalated for an offense. The owner would have a higher burden if already receiving funds. It is an incentive to keep buildings updated and divides the resources effectively.

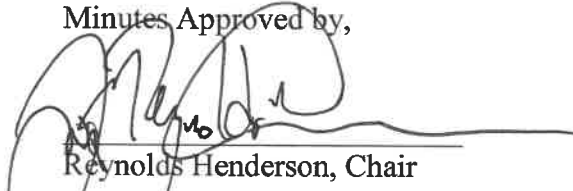
Chair Henderson said some properties are abandoned. Code Enforcement Officer C. Strawn said those will come before the Special Magistrate, so they may receive a lien or foreclosure.

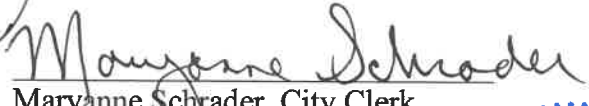
Chair Henderson mentioned commercial historic area and residential in west DeFuniak to start on, and then keep working out to get a bigger impact.

Motion by Board Member S. Bakalo to adjourn. All ayes. Motion carried.

Chair R. Henderson adjourned the meeting at 6:11 p.m.

Minutes Approved by,


Reynolds Henderson, Chair


Maryanne Schrader, City Clerk

