



MINUTES

CRA Review Committee Meeting

5:00 PM - Thursday, December 9, 2021 - City Hall

CALL TO ORDER: 5:02 P.M.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF QUORUM AND PROPER NOTICE

PRESENT: Marie Aliberti, Bryan Broomfield, Nan Cobb, Christine Cruz, Willie Hawkins, Gail Isaac-Thomas, Horace Jones, Karen LeHeup-Smith, Tom Popieski and Chairman Michael Holland

EXCUSED: Vice Chair Emily Lee

1.0 COMMITTEE ITEM

1.1 Overview of the CRA and discussion regarding process for review and conclusions

Chairman Holland asked everyone to introduce themselves and announced that there would be no public input at that meeting but there would be opportunities for public comment at future meetings.

Each Committee member introduced themselves as follows: Nan Cobb, Gail Isaac-Thomas, Marie Aliberti, Willie Hawkins, Tom Carrino, Horace Jones, Tom Popieski, Bryan Broomfield, Karen LeHeup-Smith and Christine Cruz.

Tom Carrino, Interim City Manager, invited members to move to the audience seats so they could better see his presentation. He explained the purpose of the appointment of the CRA Review Committee to review the history, solicit feedback and prepare a vision for the future. He explained the purpose of a Community Redevelopment Agency stating that it is totally funded through local tax dollars and does not receive any state or federal dollars. He provided an overview of the history of the CRA, what their funds may be used for and how the CRA funds may be leveraged to encourage development. He reviewed the original master plan, the various updates, the creation of the downtown master plan and East CRA master plan. He cited various projects included in the various master plans. He noted the extension of the CRA for another 30 years in 2016 and replacement of all of the earlier plans with the newly adopted plan.

Mr. Carrino reviewed the 2016 plan including various projects and goals and stated that in 2017 the CRA hosted a number of community meetings and a public survey. He cited the top comments received from the online and hard copy surveys as follows: 1) Clean-up properties; 2) Landscaping; 3) Participation in infrastructure; 4) Improve the aesthetics; 5) Code enforcement; 6) Police presence; 7) Enhancing Magnolia Ave. and Bay St.; 8) Connect Ferran Park to the Eustis Sailing Club and Trout Lake via a multi-use path; and 9) Housing improvement program. He explained the boundary expansion of the CRA in 2018 to incorporate Sharp's Mobile Home Park and the process required for that expansion. He provided a map showing the boundary change.

Mr. Carrino then reviewed what has been accomplished within the CRA including the following: 1) Enhanced aesthetics including streetscape improvements, demolitions, façade improvement grants, street tree planting and park improvements; 2) Supported appropriate redevelopment including creating flexible land use framework, encouraging mixed-use where appropriate, created a developer's toolkit and supported private development financially when appropriate; 3) Developed and maintained parks and open space including Ferran Park, Palmetto Plaza, Eustis Lake Walk, Splash Pad and Carver Park; 4) New and upgraded infrastructure such as stormwater projects, street trees, new and repaired sidewalks, road resurfacing, lighting projects, reconstructed McDonald Avenue, improved electrical infrastructure, signage and wayfinding, and Kensington gateway improvement; 5) Public Safety with addition of CRA dedicated police officer and other public safety programs. He stated that moving forward with the Review Committee they want to solicit input, develop a vision for the CRA, potentially amending the plan, and develop budget and policy priorities for future projects. He stated staff's recommendations for the next steps as follows: 1) a public input meeting; 2) staff would process the input and bring back a summary of the suggestions; 3) potentially hold a second public input meeting; 4) bring back any additional suggestions to the committee for final recommendations; and 5) go back to the City Commission if they wish to amend the CRA plan.

Mr. Carrino then distributed a copy of the CRA budget to all of the Committee members. He also put up an enlarged map of the CRA showing streets and the boundaries.

Chairman Holland opened the floor to questions from the committee members.

Horace Jones asked if the budget includes both the east and west CRA with Mr. Carrino indicating the budget is for both sides of the CRA district. Mr. Jones asked if there would ever be separate budgets for the east and west side with Mr. Carrino responding that there would probably always be one budget for the entire CRA.

Mr. Jones asked if there was ever a question as to how much was spent on the east side versus the west with Rick Gierok, Public Works Director, indicating he does have some information on that and Mr. Carrino indicating a report in the agenda packet that provides a five-year analysis of what has been spent in the east versus the west. He added they have not been able to do that for the entire history of the CRA as it would be difficult to go back to 1990 to break out those figures.

Bryan Broomfield cited the need for the Committee to have information regarding the available budget for projects. He indicated that he has begun to reach out to residents of the east community and that is a concern that has been expressed.

Mr. Carrino stated his expectation that specific projects would arise during the public input meetings and then they can adjust the budget accordingly.

Christine Cruz asked to have discussion regarding financing and past and current CRA budgets so they have a better understanding of what can be done.

It was a consensus of the Committee to have a budget meeting scheduled prior to the public input meeting with Mr. Carrino indicating that would be schedule as the next meeting of the committee.

Ms. Cruz asked how the public input meeting would be advertised with Mr. Carrino indicating that can be done a number of ways including distributing flyers and social media. He noted they could put it in the water bills but that takes time due to it taking about a month to cycle through all of the routes. Ms. Cruz indicated she is also an administrator for Eustis Word of Mouth and she could place it on there. She expressed willingness to monitor that so they have all of the comments.

Chairman Holland reminded everyone that as a committee for the City of Eustis they do fall under the Sunshine Law. He indicated that if something is on social media they should not respond to it. They can read it but not respond to it. He recommended they speak with the City Clerk if they have any questions regarding the Sunshine Law.

Willie Hawkins asked about the tax increment funding with Mr. Carrino explaining there are four participating taxing districts including the City, the County General Fund, Lake County Ambulance MSTU and the Lake County Water Authority. He further explained that what goes into the CRA is any increase in taxable value since 1990. He emphasized that the property owner does not pay an additional tax just a portion of your property taxes goes into the CRA.

Mr. Hawkins asked how much the CRA has grown over the years with Mr. Carrino stating he would have to pull the historical tax base data. He stated the CRA is realizing approximately \$831,000 in revenue in the current fiscal year.

Mr. Hawkins asked how much the CRA typically spends within the fiscal year with Mr. Carrino indicating that it fluctuates based on the projects budgeted for each year. He said the current fiscal year does not have any big projects only sidewalks and street resurfacing. He noted that \$400,000 has been budgeted for rehabbing the seawall but that is continuing to be monitored to see what has to be done. He explained that unused/unbudgeted funds continue to roll over from year to year.

Mr. Carrino indicated the CRA does have certain recurring costs citing the following: 1) A portion of the director's salary; 2) The new police officer position; and 3) Streetlights. He stated the overall budget varies based on the projects.

Mr. Hawkins asked for additional explanation about the CRA closing the gap for rental developments with Mr. Carrino explaining that the developer will apply to the CRA for assistance as the rents that may be obtained from the development are insufficient to justify the construction cost. The developer will provide their financials and the CRA will work with them to rebate some portion of their taxes in other to close the market gap.

Mr. Hawkins asked about the process once their recommendations are approved by the Commission with Mr. Carrino explaining the need to focus on budgeting for identified projects. He commented on previously discussed projects that have not been completed.

Chairman Holland asked for input regarding scheduling a financial meeting with a consensus to meet on Thursdays at 5 p.m. It was agreed to meet Thursday, January 13th at 5 p.m. He explained the absence of Vice Chair Emily Lee to attend a ceremony in New Orleans at which her brother would be given an honorary doctorate by Southern University. Karen Leheup-Smith indicated she would be out of town but was fine with them meeting without her.

Ms. Cruz asked Mr. Carrino to email out any additional financial information prior to the meeting.

Chairman Holland noted that Mr. Carrino is also available for private meetings if they have specific questions.

Mr. Broomfield commented on the need to get information out to the community regarding what projects will be undertaken and for those projects to be completed. He commented on the history of the black business district.

Nan Cobb commented on what may be needed to bring commercial development into the East CRA and how Mr. Carrino can assist with that.

Mr. Broomfield further discussed how and where the commercial district might be located and developed. He also commented on the need to bring the residents together as one community.

Mr. Hawkins commented on other funding opportunities in addition to CRA funds such as a CDB grant.

Tom Popieski asked to receive additional information about what other funding may be available.

Mr. Jones noted housing mentioned in the plan and asked what type of housing is planned with Mr. Carrino indicating that the housing projects that have already been worked on have been "affordably priced" housing but not tax credit housing or subsidized income. The plan talks about programs for mixed-income residential units. He stated he thinks they are doing that with some of the development agreements where they are trying to keep the costs affordable for the area.

Mr. Hawkins responded that some of the developments are pricing people out of the market.

Chairman Holland commented on the need for someone to attend the Black Chamber of Commerce meetings noting it may provide an opportunity to attract businesses to the area. He asked for the next meeting to be the community meeting. He stated he would like to have a lot of their business completed by April.

Discussion was held regarding the date for the community meeting and how to publicize that meeting.

It was agreed to hold the community meeting on Tuesday, January 25th at 6 p.m. It was also agreed to reach out to the school and see if they can meet at the Curtright Center cafeteria or gym.

Gail Isaac-Thomas expressed thanks to everyone that agreed to serve on the committee and cited the need for the committee to help everyone work together.

Marie Aliberti asked everyone to say a prayer due to the recent loss of her mother.

Chairman Holland asked for prayers for Josh Mullaly's family due to the death of his father.

Mary Montez, City Clerk, explained the Sunshine Law and how they cannot discuss the business of the Committee among each other. She emphasized that, if they put something out on social media, do not send to each other and do not respond to each other. She stated the committee members cannot speak to each other or the Commissioners regarding the business of the committee. It was confirmed that all information will be sent out to all of the members and, if it is emailed, do not "respond to all".

Chairman Holland recommended that they not respond to any comments on social media.

2.0 ADJOURNMENT: 6:08 P.M.



MARY MONTEZ
Deputy City Clerk



MICHAEL L. HOLLAND
Chairman