

**COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY
WORK SESSION MINUTES
December 15, 2008**

The meeting of the Winter Park Community Redevelopment Agency was called to order by Mayor David Strong at 4:31 p.m. in the Commission Chambers, 401 Park Avenue South, Winter Park, Florida.

Members present:

Mayor David Strong
Commissioner Margie Bridges
Commissioner Phil Anderson
Commissioner Beth Dillaha
Commissioner Karen Diebel
Orange County representative Stan Roberts

Also present:

City Manager Randy Knight
City Attorney Trippe Cheek
City Clerk Cynthia Bonham
Deputy City Clerk Nancy McLean

CRA future project funding

Commissioner Anderson commented that since the Community Center is moving up to \$10 million he wants a clear understanding of what priorities were shifted and any other priorities. He commented that there has been some discussion about creating a Special Business Improvement District and one thought is to use some of the funds available to do a pilot program. He also spoke about Fairbanks and how they should use some of the land to acquire the right-of-way to make Fairbanks better. He stated they could use some of those funds for other mechanisms to have incentives to get a boutique hotel built or if there are areas of blight they should be doing more to incentivize direct improvements.

CRA Manager Sherry Gutch spoke about having a Main Street Program which is funded through the business improvement district. She stated the City would fund the Main Street Program as opposed to taxing the property owners to pay for the improvements. She commented that it will involve bringing in a Main Street coordinator who is an expert in retail and will develop a plan for diversifying its main streets, if necessary. She commented they could do a pilot program investing in the business corridors for 3-4 years.

Commissioner Dillaha suggested that the retail consultant speak to all of the merchants who might be interested. She stated the first thing they should do is identify what the problems are. Ms. Gutch explained that the problems could be due to not having a hotel in the Central Business District and businesses are closed during Popcorn Flicks when they could be open. She commented that the Economic Development Advisory Board is currently working on their strategic plan and is identifying their industry cluster analysis to know their niche in the region.

Commissioner Bridges suggested that they could be more proactive by putting together a type of summit or discussion for the merchants to understand their issues and see if there are avenues they can pursue with them. She explained that in a designated historic district there are ad valorem tax incentives available to them and we are not utilizing any of those. She commented that they could speak to the landlords and see what kind of solutions they might offer.

Ms. Gutch explained that they can strengthen their business districts and there needs to be more diversity within the retail mix on Park Avenue and the rest of the commercial corridors. Mayor Strong commented that one of the tools they have is the uses they allow on Park Avenue, but maybe more flexibility is something they should look at. Mayor Strong commented that he was comfortable with helping our merchants in some way but viewed it in terms of marketing help.

Commissioner Diebel asked about the restrictions on Park Avenue for certain restaurants (i.e., Five Guys Burger and Fries) to operate at this location. Ms. Gutch and Mr. Briggs responded that it has to do with the distinction of fine dining. Commissioner Diebel suggested that a future agenda have the topic of the retail mix, fine dining mix and whether to allow businesses to have frontage, etc. Ms. Gutch explained that is what the Main Street coordinator would do and look at what is not working and why it does not work.

Mayor Strong summarized that they want to look at our Main Street Programs and the historical programs that will benefit landlords (tax incentives). Ms. Gutch stated she will bring back information in February for the agenda.

Mayor Strong commented that the CRA has adopted a strategic plan and wanted to know if they want to continue with the Community Center and if they can bond it now and if so, if they want to downsize or reprioritize it. Ms. Gutch stated that the CRA Advisory Board voted to support the Community Center and the revised financial plan of \$10 million for the Community Center. She stated that she has researched looking at other cities regarding their amenities and determined we are lacking in terms of services they provide to citizens in Community Centers. She commented that she received a call from someone interested in bonding our facility and will be meeting with them on December 18.

Mr. Moore provided the Commission with a revised financial plan. Mayor Strong addressed Commissioner Anderson's comments about looking at what they are talking about in terms of cost for 2009 as to moving up in priority to prevent blight in our commercial areas. Commissioner Dillaha commented that she would like more detail of what the cost of this may be, what it is, and what they hope to achieve as a result. Ms. Gutch commented that she could prepare that before the January Advisory Board meeting. She stated they still have to fundraise \$2.8 million and if they do not raise all the funds, Phase II will be the pool (\$2.5 million). She added they can build the entire facility with the exception of the pool.

Commissioner Anderson had concerns with the bond issues long term rate and it being reasonable. Mr. Moore explained that the person he spoke with today stated they are financing at 4% and 5%. Ms. Gutch stated this is important for their timeline because in order to be under construction in September they need to bond in either February or March.

Representative Roberts stated he supports the concept but had concerns with doubling the size from 20,000 square feet to 40,000 square feet; he did not want to move forward unless they have all the money in hand; and did not like not having a pool because it is the center piece of this facility. Ms. Gutch explained that it will be a City wide center and they need to program it as such.

Commissioner Diebel expressed being uncomfortable with the bonding issue they were going to face. She stated it would be good to extend the life of the CRA and put an initiative behind it and approach the County Commission to do that. She commented that she would be more comfortable with that rather than having \$9 million left that is bondable at the end of this project. She commented that if they could not extend the life of the CRA then she would like to extend the boundaries of the CRA to encompass the Fairbanks corridor. She stated they could fund the streetscaping and the \$1.4 million could come out of the CRA budget versus the general fund.

Commissioner Anderson commented that if they could take the roadway as the gateway to the CRA he would be in favor of revisiting these priorities. However, in terms of the development activity on the north and south of Fairbanks, he would rather not see that in the CRA. Commissioner Anderson asked if they could succeed in getting the roadway. Ms. Gutch stated she was not sure if legally they could bring in the right-of-way up to I-4 without taking in any of the abutting properties. She commented that the CRA has specific goals and priorities. Attorney Cheek explained this in further detail.

Commissioner Diebel spoke about the budget and stated they were obligated to fund the second half of the Fairbanks Improvement project and already have a funding place holder of \$1.5 million. She stated they can pull that from the general fund, place it in the CRA and have funds left over to fund the operations of the Community Center. She was uncomfortable with our ability to pay for the operations after it is built and wanted to put together a budget that supports that. She suggested partnering with City Manager Knight to approach the County to see if they can resolve the financial issue with the Community Center. Commissioner Anderson agreed that this is the approach to take and with some improvement there will be a benefit. Mayor Strong suggested Representative Roberts approach Commissioner Segal and then they can have a public meeting. Ms. Gutch stated she could attend with Mr. Roberts. Ms. Gutch commented that a consideration should be specially assessing at a 100% to help redevelop that corridor. Commissioner Diebel agreed that will be the ultimate end goal.

Ms. Gutch spoke about expanding the CRA to include the proposed JW Marriot property. Commissioner Diebel asked about the JW Marriot developer agreement. Mr. Briggs responded and provided further information on the hotel. Ms. Gutch answered questions.

Mayor Strong suggested they put together what they want the Commission to explore. Ms. Gutch stated it will be on the CRA Advisory Board in January and on the CRA agenda in February.

Commissioners Dillaha and Bridges commented that they were also supportive of the Community Center. Commissioner Bridges stated that she did not want to put the pool on the back burner because it is a revenue generator.

Other items discussed:

Commissioner Diebel gave City Manager Knight a reminder about the possible modification of the vacation policy and to bring forward the suggestion of changing the title on the strategic plan under "good government practices." She commented that she is receiving a number of emails on Fleet Peoples Park and questioned if that should be an agenda item. She also mentioned that they have scheduled the work for the discussion on the Parks and Recreation fee waivers in January and will report back to the Commission after they have that meeting.

Mayor Strong asked about scheduling a work session on the Parks Master Plan. Commissioner Bridges commented that the Parks and Recreation Department will be having a work session to review the plan. She suggested the work session be scheduled after the Parks meeting. Mayor Strong agreed. She also stated that Attorney Cheek is working with her and the Parks Board about the memorandum of understanding and that may be the reason behind all the emails on Fleet Peoples Park.

Commissioner Diebel stated that she would like to discuss on a future agenda what part of the survey supports our strategic initiatives and what part of the survey results came in contrary to our strategic initiatives and priorities. She added that this would help them understand where the plan is or is not supported and if they need further public opinion.

Commissioner Dillaha addressed having coffee talks in the morning and the evening since so many residents are working during the morning hours. She also suggested having a town meeting in January for citizens to ask questions and receive answers from the Commission. Mayor Strong agreed.

City Manager Knight commented that another work session is to be scheduled for the Home Acres project in January. The Commission agreed this could wait until February or March.

The meeting adjourned at 5:52 p.m.



Cynthia S. Bonham, City Clerk