



MINUTES

CRA Review Committee Meeting

5:00 PM - Thursday, January 13, 2022 - City Hall

CALL TO ORDER: 5:01 P.M.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF QUORUM AND PROPER NOTICE

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

ABSENT: Horace Jones

1. WORKSHOP ITEM

1.1 Review of Community Redevelopment Agency budget

Tom Carrino, Interim City Manager, announced that Horace Jones could not be present. He noted there are a number of flyers available - one for the upcoming New Year Health Fair and Block Party and a draft flyer for the CRA Review Committee community input meeting scheduled for January 25th at 6 p.m. at the Curtright Center. He also announced that the quarterly CRA Board meeting was rescheduled for February 3rd.

Mr. Carrino indicated there were hard copies available of the files that were emailed to the committee. He then provided a presentation which explained what is a CRA and its purpose. He provided a brief history of the Eustis CRA which was created in December 1990 and was extended in 2018 for another 30 years and will expire in 2047.

Mr. Carrino then explained what CRA funds can be used for and provided a review of the historical expenses since 1990. He stated approximately 31% has been spent in East Town, 57% in downtown and the remainder have been CRA-wide expenses such as staff costs. He then provided a breakdown of the 2021 East-West property values. He explained the difficulty in trying to compare how much revenue has been generated from the two different areas. He stated staff would have to look at each individual parcel within the CRA and compare its 1990 value to its current value which would be extremely time consuming. He then explained how the CRA is funded stating that the various taxing districts are foregoing revenues which are then paid into the CRA. He indicated that in 1990 the taxable value of the entire CRA district was \$36,752,074 and in 2021 the value was \$104,176,400. He explained how staff computes how much the CRA fund collects each year and they send a bill to

each taxing authority once the taxable values are received from the Property Appraiser. He stated the CRA's revenue to-date for FY2021-2022 is \$855,811. Mr. Carrino then reviewed the 2021-2022 expenses for Administration and explained that 20% of the Economic Director/CRA Administrator's salary is funded through the CRA. He then reviewed the Programs and Projects expenses. He noted that funds have been set aside for a demolition incentive program but that has not been introduced as of yet. He noted the \$1,000 for wayfinding signs and explained what those are.

2. COMMITTEE DISCUSSION AND PUBLIC INPUT

Gail Isaac Thomas asked about a wayfinding pole by Palmetto Plaza with Mr. Carrino explaining one is located near Kensington but at that time it has not been used by any of the businesses.

Tom Popieski asked about debt service with Mr. Carrino explaining they can use CRA funds for debt service for infrastructure projects and noting that they have done that for property.

Mr. Carrino then reviewed various Carry-over Projects. He summarized the overall finances for the CRA stating that actual revenue is \$855,811, approved expenses in the current fiscal year of \$674,369, carry-over projects totaling \$827,875, total expenses of \$1,502,244 and approximate fund balance of \$1,250,000.

Mr. Popieski asked if the amount of Fund Balance is set statutorily with Mr. Carrino responding that the City has an internal policy with Mike Sheppard, Finance Director, indicating that the City requires a 90-day reserve. Mr. Carrino added that the funds are reserved for future projects. He indicated that the Fund Balance should not be overly large as it would imply that they don't need the money. He then noted that the community input meeting is set for January 25th.

Christine Cruz asked for an explanation of the over/under expenditures on the spreadsheet with Mr. Sheppard indicating that figure is an approximate cash value and does not include the rollover projects. Ms. Cruz then asked for a list of CRA initiatives.

Mr. Carrino asked for a clarification of what she was requesting and she indicated a list of what was included in the CRA initiatives on one of the slides.

Mr. Carrino responding that is included in the budget information and is on Page 10. He explained there are two line items with one for new gateway grants and ones for "committed" grants. He reviewed the other items as follows: 1) \$30,000 for Economic Development Incentive Program; 2) \$10,000 for Miscellaneous CRA Development Incentive; and 3) \$7,000 for the CRA Demolition Assistance Program. He gave a brief explanation of each of the programs.

Ms. Isaac Thomas asked if the Bates Avenue beautification program is in the budget with Mr. Carrino explaining it is not. He indicated that the CRA Board can

amend the budget at any time and establish priorities. He then explained that previous discussion was held regarding a streetscape project for Bates Avenue; however, it was decided not to do it because the road could not continue through to the lake due to the wetlands. He indicated that the thought was to possibly do Macdonald instead since it goes through. He explained that there was a conceptual plan drawn but no engineering was ever done so it was not included in the budget. He noted that he was not with the City when that decision was made. He emphasized his understanding that, at that time, it was felt that if the road could not go through to the lake, then they shouldn't do the beautification there.

Monica Buggs questioned why the road needed to be connected in order to get the beautification with Mr. Carrino explaining the beautification project was to include getting the infrastructure and look in place to encourage investment along the corridor. He indicated his understanding that the through was that the CRA should invest on a corridor that goes through.

Ms. Buggs responded that, where the beautification was to be done, was not in that area so it did not make sense to her.

Further discussion was held regarding where the Bates Avenue streetscape was intended with Mr. Carrino acknowledged that the City does still have the presentation by Gladding Jackson. He indicated the project never advanced and no engineering or right of way acquisition occurred.

Ms. Cruz noted that on Page 19 of the report there is a Bates Ave. streetscape listed with no expenditures and on Page 18 there is listed the Bates Ave. land acquisition with no expenditures. She then asked about the CRA Street Rehabilitation and what streets were to be done.

Mr. Carrino explained that every year Public Works has a street maintenance index that is used to prioritize the streets to be resurfaced each year. He indicated he did not have a list with him of the streets that have been resurfaced since about 2014. He explained what the streetscape would have entailed not the street maintenance. He added that the \$50,000 for Road Rehabilitation is strictly for milling and repaving. He noted that a streetscape project would be much more expensive.

Mr. Popieski referred to Page 10 and asked if the grants have been applied for with Mr. Carrino indicating that line item is for grants coming from the CRA not grants the CRA is applying for.

Ms. Cruz asked if the CRA is committed to providing those grants with Mr. Carrino indicating they are committed to those already applied for. He indicated it has been a very popular program that has had a big impact and he would not recommend sunsetting the program.

Ms. Isaac Thomas asked when the gateway applications are accepted with Mr. Carrino explaining they are accepted year-round. She asked if Generations on

Kensington would qualify with Mr. Carrino explaining that only properties on the corridors qualify. He stated the areas included are Bay Street, Grove Street and Orange Avenue and a portion of downtown. He confirmed that the program could be expanded if the Commission wishes to do so.

Chris McCollum expressed concern regarding the number of makeshift camps at the end of Clifford in the wooded area.

Mr. Carrino stated that, in the past, the City has asked the Police Department and Public Works to do clean up and they can do that again.

Mr. McCollum clarified it is the wooded area where Salem dead-ends and is mostly wetlands. He suggested making that a nature preserve so the homeless can be kept out.

Ms. Cruz asked about the procedure for the gateway grant with Mr. Carrino explaining the program and the procedure for applying. He stated it is for both inside and outside the CRA and is a matching grant for up to \$6,000. He cited the types of work that are eligible for the grant. He further explained that different departments review the estimates to make sure the work is appropriate and not overpriced. She asked how to create a new beautification program with Mr. Carrino indicating it could be done and cited what would be required. He said as long as it is City funds it can be administered however the City wants. He confirmed that both residential and commercial properties are eligible. He indicated that the geography has been expanded a couple of times.

Nan Cobb reported on how the program was promoted and a meeting that was held with approximately twenty people in attendance. She commented on how successful the program has been.

Mr. Carrino cited the areas currently eligible - Bay and Grove, SR 19, Orange Avenue and Hwy. 441, and a portion of downtown between 19.

Willie Hawkins asked if there is a limit on how much a developer can obtain from the CRA with Mr. Carrino explaining how the CRA can award funds to assist with a development. He said it is limited by how much in new taxes the development will generate and how much is really needed to close the market gap.

Mr. Hawkins asked if there are other programs that could be utilized if they are not eligible for CRA funds with Mr. Carrino giving CDBG as an example that the City and the CRA could use. He indicated he did not know if there are other programs that would help a developer.

Mr. Hawkins asked if there is a mechanism to help residents apply for grants from other sources with Mr. Carrino stating he did not know. He then noted there is a Small Business Development Center which is partially funded by Lake County and UCF. He stated there are other programs that assist small business owners but it is not something the City has done in the past.

Mr. McCollum cited the Washington Avenue historic district and noted that a lot of the homes that need repair. He asked if they are eligible for those grants with Mr. Carrino indicating those are not eligible for the gateway grants.

Mr. McCollum commented on the benefit to the community in beautifying those homes with Mr. Carrino indicating his understanding that most historic preservation programs are about tax credits rather than funds.

A member of the audience asked if there are funds available for equipment or playground equipment at Palmetto Plaza with Mr. Carrino indicating there are funds that could be budgeted for that but it is not currently budgeted. He noted that when Palmetto Plaza was constructed people asked for a grill but the CDBG funds could not be used for that so the CRA paid for it. He indicated it would be a CRA Board/Commission decision about including it in the budget.

Emily Lee asked about funding for a shade over the stage with Mr. Carrino responding it is in the five-year capital plan but not in the current year's budget.

Mr. Sheppard stated it could be paid for with Sales Tax Funds if it is over \$25,000 and has a five-year life.

Mr. Carrino announced that the next meeting would be January 25th at 6 p.m. at the Curtright Center. He indicated he would provide a brief presentation and then hear input from the community and probably do a dot exercise. He indicated staff's intent to go door-to-door to distribute flyers for the health fair and the community input meeting.

Ms. Isaac Thomas asked about the rescheduling of the CRA meeting with Mr. Carrino explaining it is the quarterly meeting and is being rescheduled to February 3rd so it could be held at 5:30 p.m. as there is an LPA meeting on Jan. 20th.

Mr. Carrino emphasized the City's dedication to moving forward and making improvements to the entire CRA.

Mr. Holland thanked everyone for attending and reminded the Committee members they are subject to the Sunshine Law and need to avoid discussing committee business outside of the meetings.

3. ADJOURNMENT: 6:01 P.M.

**These minutes reflect the actions taken and portions of the discussion during the meeting. To review the entire discussion concerning any agenda item, go to www.eustis.org and click on the video for the meeting in question. A DVD of the entire meeting or CD of the entire audio recording of the meeting can be obtained from the office of the City Clerk for a fee.*

CHRISTINE HALLORAN
City Clerk



MICHAEL L. HOLLAND
Chairman