

Lealman Community Redevelopment Area Advisory Committee

Meeting Minutes

November 2, 2015 6:00PM

The meeting was held on Monday, November 2, 2015 in the Crown Buick /GMC Dealership Training Room, 5237 – 34th Street North, St. Petersburg, FL 33714.

1. Call to Order

Chairman Ray Neri called the meeting to order at 6:05 P.M. and confirmed the presence of a quorum.

2. Roll Call

Members:

Ray Neri; Steve Cleveland; Gary Grooms; Dwayne Hawkins; Jorge Mercado; Cheryl DiCicco; James Roberto and Diane Plomatos **Absent Members:** Linda Umberger

County Staff:

David Sadowsky; Renea Vincent; Frank Bowman; Rachel Booth, Mary Scott Hardwick and Marcella Faucette

Also present:

Sean Ingber
Neil Brickfield

Ms. Rachel Booth served as the moderator of the meeting to keep the meeting moving along in a timely manner.

3. Approval of Minutes – October 6, 2015

Upon motion by Mr. Steve Cleveland, seconded by Mr. Jorge Mercado and carried, the minutes of the meeting of October 6, 2015 were approved.

4. Old Business

a. Sunshine Law and Committee Conflicts

Mr. Neri expressed his exasperation with the restrictions of the Sunshine Law in relation to his serving on both the CRA and LCA Boards. He further stated that he had been told that there a process in which individuals could go to the Attorney General and get an opinion. He intends to pursue this avenue.

Mr. Sadowsky responded that the process for getting an opinion from the Attorney General was very long. He further explained that the Sunshine Law is violated when the specific items of the CRA are discussed with other board members or anyone that can make decisions regarding the CRA; OR, if items that come up in the LCA are going to be brought to the CRA. Since there is a very high probability that matters that are discussed at the LCA will be discussed at the CRA, staff recommended that members not serve on both boards in order to safeguard the process and to hopefully eliminate the possibility of violating the law.

Mrs. Vincent interjected that the CRA process was intended to be a very fast tracked process in that staff is looking at getting the redevelopment plan drafted, adopted and the redevelopment trust fund established by June of 2016 (roughly 7 months). She further stated that the Advisory Committee would still exist but would probably meet less frequently which would lessen the opportunity for the overlap of subject matter. She explained that the immediate problem is the frequency that the CRA currently has to meet and the content that has to be discussed is so broad reaching that there is a high probability of overlapping with what will be discussed in the neighborhood meetings. At

this time, the focus needs to be centered on the CRA and to avoid conflicts staff is taking cues from the County Attorney's office.

Mr. Neri stated that he understood, but was concerned about discussions since the CRA Meetings are open to the public. Mr. Sadowsky stated that the issue isn't with the public.

Mr. Gary Grooms stated that he has been on the Board of Directors for the St. Petersburg Downtown Neighborhood Association for many years and to avoid conflicts, he and his fellow directors try to ensure that they don't sit on other committees together. He then gave an example regarding the writing of the St. Petersburg Downtown Master Plan Vision Statement.

Mr. Neri did not agree that the City of St. Petersburg scenario that Mr. Grooms described was the same as the current Lealman CRA/LCA issue. He then moved the meeting along.

Ms. Rachel Booth asked Mr. Sadowsky about communicating with the BOCC as a CRA Advisory Committee Member. Mr. Sadowsky stated that as a CRA Advisory Committee member, the committee will be developing and making recommendations about the proposed plan to the BOCC. He reiterated that the goal is to keep the process as pure as possible. Addressing Mr. Neri, Ms. Booth stated that Mr. Neri disclosed that he meets with the Commissioners on a regular basis. Mr. Neri responded that yes, he meets with the Commissioners but their discussions cover multiple items that don't include the CRA. Ms. Booth stated that she just wanted to ensure that the CRA was not a discussion point. Mr. Neri then wanted to make sure that speaking with the County Administrator was not an issue. Mr. Neri stated that he intends to meet with County Attorney Jim Bennett for further discussion on this issue.

b. Committee Package Materials Overview

Ms. Booth asked the Committee if they had any specific questions or comments regarding the materials that they had received at the October 6th meeting before moving forward. Mr. Neri stated that he does not fully understand the power/scope that the Committee has. Ms. Booth asked Mr. Neri to specify power or scope. He responded power. Ms. Booth then explained that the committee's "power" was to do the homework with her and to research what the community needs; what it should look like and work together to draft a plan. The plan will essentially be recommendations goals and objectives to be submitted to the CRA Agency who are looking to the Committee for guidance. She further stated that after the completion of the plan that it will up to the committee to ensure that the plan incorporates everything that they think is important for the Lealman community and addresses the issues of this community.

Mr. Neri stated that Mr. Bowman was involved in a study that was done years ago that involved walking and gathering information door to door and that he would like to see all of that data included in the plan. Mr. Bowman interjected that what Mr. Neri was referring to was a Conditions Finding Survey that was done back in 2000 and that that information is probably too old to be included in the plan. Mr. Bowman further added that an Opinion Survey had been conducted fairly recently which was used in putting together the 2014 Findings of Necessity Report which outlines many of the issues in Lealman. Ms. Booth stated that a summary of the more recent survey that Mr. Bowman was referring to is included in the committee's packet which is titled the Citizen and Stakeholder Research Summary. Ms. Booth said that she has a copy of the survey and

will ensure that the committee received a copy also. Ms. Booth assured the committee that the data would be included in the plan as it is relevant and recent. Mr. Mercado asked if the information from 2000 was available, Ms. Booth responded that it is on the website along with any other data that had been collected.

In reference to Mr. Neri's previous comment regarding the "power" of the committee, Mr. Grooms suggested thinking of the committee's role as having "influence" not "power". Staff agreed with Mr. Groom's suggestion.

Mr. Neri stated that the Lealman community has issues with Code Enforcement and further stated that the CRA Committee needs to have some control over Code Enforcement. Staff responded that control over Code Enforcement was not in the purview of the CRA Committee's responsibilities.

Mr. Sadowsky referred Mr. Neri back to the Bylaws and explained that the Board's responsibilities were outlined in Section 2. Duties. He then read the mission of the Board. Mr. Neri then asked if the committee was only responsible for the plan and not what goes on in the community. He further stated that he had spoken with a few of the cities that had similar plans and was told that the County had tried to control them until they stood up to the County. He said that they had been able to buy and destroy property, rebuild and redevelop areas. He then asked if anything like that was going to be under the CRA Board's purview? Mrs. Vincent responded that the CRA Agency has those powers and reiterated that this Committee was an Advisory Committee to the Redevelopment Agency, which is the County Board of Commissioners. Mr. Sadowsky added that the committee does not have those powers and this committee can only function in the duties outlined in the Bylaws.

Mr. Steve Cleveland added that within the plan, suggestions/ recommendations can be made to the Agency to put into effect via ordinances. Mr. Sadowsky said that certain actions will go to work the goals and objectives of the plan.

Ms. Booth stated that if Code Enforcement issues historically and presently are an issue within the community, then the way that the committee would approach it, being an advisory board working on this plan, would be to develop some strategies to address what has been lacking and what needs to happen to create a better livable community so that those Code Enforcement issues do not exist. She stressed, however, that the recommended strategies would not solve the issues immediately.

Mr. Neri continued that in the cities the committees were the commission and had the power to do things & realizes that the County is set up differently.

Mrs. Vincent interjected that the commissions in the cities are in fact the CRA agencies.

Mr. Grooms stated that the members are elected officials.

Mr. Bowman asserted that the structure of the County is really no different than the cities in that the Board of County Commissioners will sit as the CRA Agency who has the power to dictate what goes on and this particular Committee is an advisory board who will be making recommendations to the Board of County Commissioners who sit as the Agency. He further stated that this committee will have a lot of opportunity to build things into the plan and be able to make recommendations in this area that need to be unique to the Lealman community.

Ms. Booth stated that the cities that Mr. Neri is referring to have existing plans and that they are implementing projects and programs that are in those plans. Lealman does not yet have a plan.

Mr. Grooms stated that the advisory committee members are the planners not the executors.

Ms. Vincent stated that nothing could be done without a plan in effect.

Mr. Neri stated that he was no longer confused.

Ms. Booth moved the meeting along to discuss the next item on the agenda.

5. New Business

a. Committee seat replacement following Linda Umberger stepping down

Mary Scott Hardwick from the County Administrative Office stated that one of the CRA committee members miss Lisa Umberger has stepped down she was Commissioner Gerard's appointment so she will be appointing a new person at the November 24th Board of County Commissioners meeting.

b. CRA Basics Course

Ms. Booth stated that most of the CRA Committee members had the opportunity to take advantage of the CRA Basics Course and thanked them for taking the time to participate in the training. She asked if there were any questions or comments about the course. There being none, she moved on to the next agenda item.

c. CRA website update

Ms. Booth stated that two new web sites have been established. The first one, dedicated to the CRA itself, pinellascounty.org/CRA/Lealman. This website will include agendas, minutes, current and previous studies etc. The other, pinellascounty.org/forward/Lealman/special, lists all of the special requirements that was discussed at the CRA Basics Course. Ms. Booth assured the Committee that she would email the website addresses to them.

Mr. Bowman added that if you go to pinellascounty.org a link for Lealman CRA is on the front page under *Special Interest*.

Mr. Mercado stated, in reference to the CRA Basics Course, that the Committee had been given website addresses for resources.

Ms. Booth stated that the Committee members were all given FRA membership for the CRA in which everyone could request their own passwords.

Mr. Cleveland stated that he had already obtained his password. He went to the "myfra" website, indicated that he was a member of Pinellas County then it directed him through the process of creating a password, then a password was emailed to him that allowed him to log on.

d. Public engagement strategy

Ms. Booth indicated that this section is the beginning of the workshop process. She stated that although she has some ideas, she is going to look to the Committee for additional ideas about how to engage the public. For example, in getting the public to go to the website to read about the process and complete the online surveys; getting the public out to the charrettes; to come out to the committee meetings etc.

Mr. Mercado stated that one way to get people engaged is through the LCA meetings and that at the last LCA meeting that he had made an announcement that the CRA was meeting currently twice a month at the Crown – GMC location for the time being. He then recognized a gentleman who was in attendance (Mr. Sean Ingber) who regularly attends the LCA meetings. Ms. Booth asked if he was comfortable being the voice about the CRA at the LCA meetings. He indicated that he didn't mind but would probably need to discuss it with the LCA President.

Mrs. Vincent stated that church groups are influential with their membership.

Mr. Mercado stated that he has a contact at Holy Cross /Transfiguration.

Mr. Bowman asked if there's a council of churches in the area?

Mr. Cleveland stated that there is a council of 5 Methodist churches within the Lealman community. He also named other organizations the VFW, the Moose Lodge and the Eagles.

Mrs. Vincent asked if any of the churches/organizations have meeting spaces that would be sufficient for charrettes?

Mr. Neri stated that he spoke to the R' Club. They have a room larger than the Crown – GMC Training room.

Mr. Mercado stated that he could speak with someone at Transfiguration regarding their cafeteria which is pretty large. He intends to speak with Father Anthony and contacts through the Knights of Columbus.

Mr. Grooms commented on the length of the questionnaire. Ms. Booth stated that the questionnaire was the next topic of discussion.

Mr. Cleveland indicated that an additional way to get the word out was through his volunteers. They would be able to hand out flyers as they work in the community.

Mr. Bowman asked if any of the committee members have a sense of whether the community is aware of this process? He wanted to know if there was a need to educate the community on the CRA Planning process?

There was a consensus that there was a need to educate the community on the process.

Mr. Mercado suggested that someone come out to the LCA meeting to explain the process to the community.

Mr. Sean Ingber stated that there is some confusion with the LCA Meeting vs. the CRA Meeting in the community.

Mrs. Vincent suggested an article for the Tampa Bay Times.

Mr. Mercado stated that it appears that there aren't any reporters assigned to the Lealman community. There may be some coverage if there is a bad road.

Mr. Grooms stated that the explanation needs to be very simple and reasons why they would want to be involved.

Staff agreed. Ms. Booth added that one of the goals is to do three charrettes and break them down so that the focus is going to be about what the residents really care about, i.e. transportation and residential issues.

Mr. Grooms added, objective is to get the community to tell us what they want and not for them to focus on how we're going to get there.

Mr. Mercado asked if there is some kind of email list being formed?

Mr. Bowman responded that over the last year, his staff has been developing and maintaining an email list primarily obtained from sign in sheets from community events and meetings.

Mr. Mercado asked if the questionnaire was going to be available on line.

Ms. Booth responded that yes, it would be available on line on a number of the County's websites once the committee/staff have discussed and made the necessary edits.

Mr. Bowman, specially speaking to those members from the business community, asked if there was anything that we should be doing to try to engage the business community/ business property owners in Lealman?

Mr. Grooms responded that people generally want to know what's in it for them.

Mrs. Vincent stated that anything that we put out to the public is going to have to explain why/how is this process different from the last 10 - 15 years of processes that never came to fruition. It can't be too technical but buy-in is needed. It is important to convey that yes there is going to be a funding source to make things happen. This is going to be critical.

Mr. Cleveland added that the short time that he has been involved in the Lealman community, going door to door, he gets the general response of here's another thing that's coming, they are promising this, promising that, the residents jump through hoops filling out paper work and then sit and wait and nothing happens. The community wants to see something that lets them know that things will be different with the CRA.

Mrs. Vincent responded, referring back to the County Administrator's remarks at the beginning of the first meeting, is that he wants the committee/staff to think of something transformational and he is looking for something immediate. So that is something that has to be done. There is strong commitment not only from the County Administrator but from the BOCC as well to have some sort of immediate impact and not waiting another 10-15 years to see a change.

Ms. Cheryl DiCicco asked if it were possible to do some sort of post card mail outs that briefly explains what's going on, give us your email address and we'll send updates to what's going on etc.

Mrs. Vincent/ Ms. Booth responded, that yes that was definitely doable and that it would be a way to cement the dates for the charrettes.

Mrs. DiCicco continued that it something simple to make them aware and that they can peruse the website for more information at their leisure.

Mr. Grooms suggested also adding a simple statement about what's different this time, i.e that now there's a funding source dedicated to the improvements.

Mr. Bowman asked if community events with flyers on the table would be good. Mr. Grooms responded that not everyone goes to every table at community events.

Mr. Sean Ingber stated that the postcards were a very good idea as postcards were sent as notification for the Symposium and the venue was packed.

Mr. Bowman stated that staff has the resources to mail notifications to the property and business owners as well as to the renters and Mr. Cleveland's group can pass out flyers.

Ms. DiCicco asked if the charrettes were going to address both residential and business owners.

Ms. Booth responded yes and that there is going to be a grouping of objectives/goals that can lend to each other.

Ms. Booth then moved the meeting onto the next agenda item.

e. Stakeholder Interview Questionnaire

Referencing the questionnaire, Ms. Booth stated that she was aware that there are a lot of questions. She explained her thought processes on drafting such a lengthy questionnaire. She stated that there is not a lot of time so in order to get the process going she'd like to get as much information as possible as quickly as possible. She stated that the questions were important for her to get a sense of what data is pertinent and that they were important to the committee in term of what they are hearing from the community. She asked the Committee to be mindful of the importance of the influx of information that is needed before eliminating questions from the questionnaire.

Ms. DiCicco stated that the questionnaire was very long and suggested putting it online in parts, i.e. click here for transportation, click here for redevelopment etc. so that people would look at and respond to the questions that are important to them. This way there would be some response opposed to I don't the time to complete all of these questions.

Mr. Cleveland added that the online version also needed to be created in a way that someone could logon save and be able to come back to it opposed to have to start over again.

Mr. Bowman added that there must be some way to enable multiple responses. Ms. Booth stated that she believes Survey Monkey had that capability.

Mr. Mercado asked if there was a way to split the questions between residential and commercial as if too many don't pertain to someone, they may not continue filling it out.

Ms. Booth stated that while there is an effort to get everyone engaged, she doesn't want to inadvertently exclude anyone. The Plan is looking at why is this area struggling? Why don't people choose to move here? She doesn't want to exclude the people who drive in to Lealman to work there. She wants to know what it would take for them to consider moving to the Lealman community.

Mr. Grooms stated that he would like the community to be more attractive to his employees and is interested in knowing what it would take to consider relocating to Lealman.

Ms. Booth asked the committee to individually take some time to write their comments / edits on the questionnaire and turn them in to her for review.

f. Plan Objectives Titles and Focuses

Ms. Booth asked the committee to look at the objectives listed below to see which ones could be grouped together as the focus for three charrettes.

- Objective 1 – Economic Development and Innovation
- Objective 2 – Infrastructure
- Objective 3 – Residential Rehabilitation and Redevelopment
- Objective 4 – Commercial Activity and Redevelopment
- Objective 5 – Land Use, Zoning and Urban Form
- Objective 6 – Healthy Community
- Objective 7 – Sense of Place
- Objective 8 – Sustainability
- Objective 9 – Funding, Financing, Management, and Promotion

The following suggestions for the grouping of objectives were given:

1, 2, 5

6, 7, 8

3, 4, 9

g. Charrette Focuses – Combining Objectives

Ms. Booth stated that she is anticipating that the charrettes will cover a three day period during the second week in January 2016. The tentative dates are Wednesday the 13th; Thursday the 14th; and Friday the 15th, between 3:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. with an open house on Saturday, the 16th.

Mr. Mercado expressed concern over people having to take time off of work for 1-3 days.

Mr. Grooms suggested maybe 3 Wednesdays in a row.

Mr. Ingber expressed concern of having only a one day session as it may exclude some individuals from participating if they have to work.

Ms. Booth indicated that finalizing a plan/ schedule for the charrettes will require further discussion.

6. Additional Business

None

7. Adjournment

There being no further business, Mr. Neri asked if there was a motion to adjourn. Mr. Dwayne Hawkins made the motion and Mr. Jorge Mercado seconded the motion. The meeting adjourned at 8:10 p.m. The next meeting is scheduled for Monday, November 16, 2015 at 6:00 pm.