

CRA CITIZEN ADVISORY COMMITTEE
OFFICIAL AGENDA
August 18, 2016
5:30 p.m.

Municipal Administration Building
Commission Chambers
201 W. Central Avenue
Lake Wales, FL 33853

1. AGENDA ITEM

1.I. Roll Call

1.II. Approval Of Minutes: July 21, 2016

Documents:

[2016-07-21CCAC.PDF](#)

1.III. Planning Session With Staff On The Revision Of The 1999 CRA Plan As Amended In 2007

City Staff will be present to provide update on proposed City Parks and Proposed Trail.

2. COMMUNICATIONS AND PETITIONS

Public participation is encouraged. If you are addressing the Commission, step to the podium and state your name and if city or county resident for the record. Please limit your discussions to five (5) minutes.

Note: The full staff memo will be incorporated into the official record

Minutes of the CRA Citizen Advisory Committee can be obtained from the City Clerk's Office. The minutes are recorded, but are not transcribed verbatim. Persons requiring a verbatim transcript may make arrangements with the City Clerk to duplicate the recording, or arrange to have a court reporter present at the meeting. The cost of duplication and/or court reporter will be the expense of the requesting party.

Persons who wish to appeal any decision made by the CRA Citizens Advisory Committee with respect to any matter considered during this meeting will need a record of the proceedings, and for such purpose may need to ensure that a verbatim record of the proceedings is made, which record includes the testimony and evidence upon which the appeal is based.

In accordance with Section 286.26, Florida Statutes, persons with disabilities needing special accommodations to participate in this meeting should contact the office of the City Clerk no later than 5:00 p.m. on the day prior to the meeting.

**CRA Citizen Advisory Committee
Regular Meeting Minutes
July 21, 2016
5:00 P.M.**

The July 21, 2016 CRA Citizen Advisory Committee meeting was held in the City Commission Chamber in the Municipal Administration Building at approximately 5:00 p.m. The meeting was called to order by Chairman Mark Bennett.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Narvell Peterson; Jean Kincaid Scott; Christopher Lutton; Mark Bennett, chair

MEMBERS ABSENT: None

CITY STAFF PRESENT: Clara VanBlargan, City Clerk; Kenneth Fields, City Manager; Dorothy Ecklund, Finance Director; Kathy Bangle, Planning & Development Director

Agenda Item 1. ROLL CALL

Agenda Item 2. Approval of Minutes: June 16, 2016

Narvell Peterson made a motion to approve the June 16, 2016 meeting minutes, Christopher Lutton seconded the motion, and the Committee unanimously approved.

Agenda Item 3. Planning Session with Staff on the Revision of the 1999 CRA Plan

Finance Director Dorothy Ecklund explained to the CRA Citizen Advisory Committee that they would have to wait to discuss Agenda Item 3 at the next meeting so they can talk with the City Manager because one of the budget items is \$40,000 for an outside professional to come in and look at the CRA plan to revise the plan. She would hate for two different horses to be working on this and there not be any communication between the two.

Chairman Mark Bennett said he understands that James Slaton could not attend the meeting because he is on vacation this week and Ms. Ecklund confirmed. City Clerk Clara VanBlargan said James Slaton and Sarah Kirkland are scheduled to attend the August meeting. Mr. Bennett said he assumes that the Finance Director and City Manager will be attending that meeting as well. Christopher Lutton asked what James Slaton and Sarah Kirkland would be talking about at the August meeting. Ms. Ecklund explained that James is very passionate about projects because he is in charge of many outside construction projects, etc. so he does want to be connected with this board. Whatever this board decides it would like to do moving forward, James would be the one managing those type of projects. He does not have an agenda; he just wants to know what this board is talking about so everyone could be working in the same direction. If the projects are regarding CRA projects that have something to do with utilities, Sarah is the project manager on that side so that is why she would like to be working with this board and be present at the meeting. Whatever is being discussed they want to be able to provide feedback.

Chairman Bennett said their homework for this meeting was to review all the documents that were provided to them in their agenda packet and to come back to this meeting with some thoughts and comments for City staff. As a board, we present that to staff to work on and they bring it back to the August meeting.

Mr. Lutton asked Ms. Ecklund to explain the "Draft Five Year Capital Improvement Plan for FY'2016/17–2020/21" sheet included in the agenda packet. Ms. Ecklund said the Commission and the CRA Board has not approved the proposed Five Year CIP yet and she is not sure what staff member put those items on there. Some of the items are community redevelopment so those are not necessarily the CRA because there are some Code Enforcement vehicles listed. Mr. Lutton inquired about the walking trail listed on the document and Ms. Ecklund said that is a question for James Slaton. He is the one to explain what that

encompasses and grant money that goes with it. Chairman Bennett said he wondered what the trail was, the trail's purpose, and because of its costs if it was a FDOT project. Mr. Lutton said the document does not describe the project or provide information about it. Chairman Bennett said that under walking trails, it shows CRA as the department but on the project sheet, it shows the funding source as the City. Ms. Ecklund explained there are two funding sources for that project and again James would have to be here to talk about the project. Part of the project might be paid with impact fees, which would be the City, and the other part could be paid with CRA funds. That is not her decision to make. James would have to explain the allocations.

Mr. Lutton asked if the tax increment revenue was from CRA and Ms. Ecklund confirmed. Chairman Bennett said that caught his eye. It is not a merited project. The trail in town is a good idea but is that the best use of CRA dollars. At the last meeting the board talked about focusing on coming up with some priorities that are more oriented toward fixing the built environment, getting buildings fixed, pumping out neighborhoods and things like that. He does not know if doing the trail and paying for it with CRA dollars accomplishes the goal of fixing up the built environment. He would like to see more CRA money going toward demolition and acquiring lots so the City can give them to builders or sell them etc. Ms. Ecklund said this conversation needs to be with the City Manager and James Slaton but she will speak for them if need be. Chairman Bennett asked Ms. Ecklund how the trail would be funded and Ms. Ecklund said that would be the City Manager's decision because it is his budget, which is why he needs to be at these meetings.

Mr. Lutton said he had not seen the Martin Vargas study before that was included in the agenda packet. There are some interesting ideas in there and some of them are still viable. It is a nice document to keep looking back at. He will spend the time reading it to determine if the plan is worth spending the money redoing it. Planning & Development Director Kathy Bangley explained that the proposal was for the downtown only and not the CRA at large although it is a component thereof. Mr. Lutton asked if the idea is for the consultant to redo the entire CRA plan and Ms. Bangley confirmed and said the last update was in 2007. Chairman Bennett said he was glad to see there was some money set aside in the budget for a CRA plan update. There is some statute that said any project must be consistent with the CRA plan. Mr. Lutton asked if that is in the current, year's budget and Ms. Bangley said no, it is in the proposed budget being considered for adoption. Mr. Lutton said he did not see that and Ms. Ecklund said it might have been added after the board received its agenda packet.

City Manager Kenneth Fields who had just arrived at the meeting, said in the last budget proposal the Commission considered a week ago Tuesday there was \$40,000 for a CRA plan update and \$40,000 designated for the beginning of a downtown revitalization plan. At Tuesday night's budget workshop, meeting a proposal was made to increase the \$40,000 for the downtown to \$100,000 and for the increase to come out of the existing CRA reserves, which is yet to be voted on by the Commission. Mr. Lutton said \$100,000 is a lot of money. Mr. Fields clarified that staff had recommended \$40,000 to begin a downtown revitalization plan and one of the Commissioners recommended increasing that to \$100,000 without clearly defining what that money would be used for although the reply was creation of a Main Street organization of some kind consisting of downtown businesses, community leaders, etc. but that was not clearly stated. Commissioner Lutton said from a tax paying citizen standpoint he would want to get a \$100,000 return on that money.

Chairman Bennett said since their emphasis should be on the built environment and if CRA money is going to be spent on a trail, less money should be spent on a trail and more money spent on demolition and land acquisition to get new structures built. The City of Auburndale has \$50,000 available to fix up a building; the City of Winter Haven just implemented a program for their CRA to subsidize residential development in the downtown up to \$5,000 a unit. The developer pays it and then gets it back in rebates; and the City of Haines City has a façade grant program. Chairman Bennett said he is not here to tell staff how to accomplish goals, he is just throwing them out as options of ways to accomplish the goal of improving the built environment.

Chairman Bennett asked what the intent is for the next meeting. Mr. Fields said the goal would be to facilitate writing of a new CRA plan to establish goals for the CRA. This requires input from this board and the citizens. Now, that we actually have some discretionary funding in the CRA for the next few years we

need to decide what we are going to do with it. We were successful this past year with the money that was set up in the CRA for demolition and code enforcement. The money that was set aside for demolition allowed us to attract some county CDBG money. We had hoped to do 10 structures this year but we are going to end up doing 12 or 15 instead. Ms. Bangley said 10 structures have been demolished already and the City has not paid for any of them, yet. Mr. Fields said the money set aside for next year was to update the plan in the direction we want to go. We allocated \$75,000 again for code enforcement in next year's proposed budget. The other \$40,000 proposed by staff was to start the development of a focused downtown revitalization plan. The downtown is not going to go anywhere without a huge amount of citizen input. We need to know what people want to see in Lake Wales especially in the downtown. It is a long involved process and it requires many community meetings. The proposal was to get a facilitator to come in and help develop that plan and then that proposal was bumped up to a \$100,000 to jump start Main Street again. This will be discussed again at the next budget workshop and this board can weigh in on that for the Commission would be happy to hear what it has to say. This will not happen overnight. It will probably be a one or two year process. Unless you get broad citizen buy-in on what they want in the downtown, nothing will work. If you develop a community on consensus, it will begin to attract some business entrepreneurial type that we need. It just takes one good project to lure people to follow.

Mr. Lutton said he is prepared to talk about this a little more right now and start editing the existing plan, which are the simple things that have changed since the last update and then look at the priorities. He said when you talk about demolishing terrible looking buildings it is great to hear that some of the property owners are doing it themselves. If the City liens the property it demolishes it will eventually own the property, which the City is not in the business of buying and selling property. This could create a conflict because you might have some developers asking why certain people get all the property so it is not good to rear that ugly head. It would be interesting to know how many structures the City demolished in the last couple of years and how many of those properties the City owns as a result. This board needs to come up with directions to give to citizens on what they can do, what kind of incentives we want to give, how do we want to get rid of the property or if we want to put another house or commercial building on it etc. which will be good direction to the City Commission. Ms. Bangley said we have not taken ownership of any properties in the last two years through this process. We just placed about \$50,000 worth of service liens on the non-ad valorem tax roll for next year that has been owed the City for the last 10 years. She explained that we have not gone the foreclosure route yet but had many discussions on what to do. Commissioner Lutton said if we are not careful, we could spend \$18,000 on a piece of property that might only be worth \$5,000.

Narvell Peterson said most of the properties are too small to build a home so no one wants to buy them. Habitat, however, could put some type of small single-family home on there. Ms. Bangley said many of the lots located in the older parts of town are small. Habitat usually consolidates two properties that are side by side and builds a home on there. The only thing the government probably can do instead of building that new house is set the stage for clear title so the land is ready to go, Chairman Bennett said a way to fix up a neighborhood would be to tear down what is bad and build something new.

Mr. Lutton said his house is within the CRA and he pays tax dollars for that. If we are singling out an area, that tax is not benefiting him as a general citizen. The Martin & Vargas master plan for downtown has ideas and examples for City parks and things like that. When he was on the planning board, they talked about putting a park on the piece of property on the other side of Scenic Hwy, between there and the Presbyterian Church. Although, it might be considered infrastructure, the positive thing for the City to do is make it a City street park. A greenscaping project is better around the downtown because everybody can enjoy it and it would draw people and businesses down there. We just spent a lot of money on two streets there doing landscaping. Mr. Fields said that was one of the ideas about the trail or the idea of a corridor between the Depot Museum up to the Library and down to the lake, which is an underused asset to the downtown. So far, the railroad seems to be cooperative but we have to maintain their right-of-way. We need to create some type of attraction there to bring people to the downtown. This year's budget addresses some of those issues. The large infrastructure investment that was made about eight years ago made it possible for anything to be built downtown. We have fire coverage and sewer lines in place there, which has to be in place before anything can be built in the downtown. We are starting that process but we need citizen input, which begins with this board to keep the process going. This leads to putting money aside for built projects. The greenscaping trail and the newspaper bin projects are important. The

newspaper bin project will be done this year to clean up the mess in front of the Post Office and on Market Street.

Mr. Lutton said a grant funding facade program should be a priority of the CRA, which is important to do. Most of the facades in the downtown area look to be in fairly, good condition which is concerning because if we spend a million dollars on façade appearance in the downtown they have to look good. He would like his tax dollars spent on stuff that he can personally enjoy.

Chairman Bennett said he lives in a subdivision where the roads have not been paved since the subdivision was built in the early 70s. Now, there are potholes and deteriorated streets there. CRA money could be used to redo that but spending it on the trail could spur downtown and create that greater public benefit.

Mr. Lutton said we could list in the CRA plan the other parks we have such as the dog park, Soccer Park, and Skate Park. Ms. Ecklund asked that the board wait until the consultant does what he has to do. Mr. Lutton said the board needed to edit the plan before a consultant does what he has to do. It is better for a hired professional to take the revised document and verify what is listed, expand etc. Mr. Lutton said if you give an engineer or a planner a blank slate you typically will not be happy with what they come back with. Ms. Scott said that is what we did before. A person from Winter Park came in and developed the plan like Winter Park, which did not work for Lake Wales. Ms. Bangley said when we go to develop the scope of work for the RFQ or RFP to hire somebody we could get this board's input, Commission input, and possibly citizen input. We need to update what we have first and create the scope of work so we do not end up with a Winter Park plan suggested for Lake Wales. So we want to make sure our RFP asks for what we want. Mr. Fields said when it comes to developing plans of this nature you have to meet with the community to get input on issues to before starting to write a plan or it will not work.

Mr. Lutton said the board needed to correct the current plan as a starting point so a professional does not have to do a lot of legwork. Some people have a residential vision and can see those 25 years ahead. Citizens can think of things what we might not think of. It does take citizen input. Mr. Peterson said it is a good idea to get the citizens involved so we can be on top of issues and get input on what we need to do to make this City a better place to live, which are things that should have been done yesterday. Mr. Lutton said CRA tax dollars should be spent on something that everyone can enjoy such as the trails. Chairman Bennett said the challenge would be defining that fine line between focusing on the built environment versus infrastructure. He can see where putting a trail in a park would spark the community around it to accomplish the goal of a built environment but in his mind, demolishing structures and acquiring the land may be more of a direct focus. This is all good stuff. The idea of the trail has a merit but his only concern is should CRA money focus that much on it.

The Committee reviewed the 2007 CRA Plan and staff provided input as to what projects had and had not been completed. Mr. Lutton asked about Monk Griffin Trail and staff did not know what that was. Chairman Bennett said he heard it was a trail to be built around Crystal Lake.

Mr. Lutton said the entryways are in the budget and he personally thinks that should be the #1 priority because it is important to lure people off our two major highways into the downtown or else they will not know what we have here.

Chairman Bennett said at the next meeting the board would hear what the rest of staff has to say, find out what happened at the City Commission meeting and get an update on the CIP and whatever else the Commission is proposing, and then the board will know at that meeting if they are comfortable providing a recommendation to staff.

COMMUNICATIONS & PETITIONS

The public did not attend.

Chairman Bennett asked if the third Thursday at 5:00 p.m. is good time to meet because sometimes the Historic District Regulatory Board meets that night at the same time. Ms. Bangley said the Historic District

Regulatory Board only meets about twice a year for about 30 minutes. Mr. Fields recommended moving the CRA Citizen Advisory Committee meeting to 5:30 p.m. only when the Historic Regulatory Board is meeting at 5:00 p.m. He said it might be necessary at times for both boards to have a joint meeting if the need should arise.

Mr. Peterson said he has a problem with garbage cans left out on his street and all around in the neighborhood. If that happens in Haines City, residents will be fined. Something should be done about that in Lake Wales as well. Ms. Bangley said City Code does stipulate when cans can be put out and within what time frame they must be put back. She said Code Enforcement is working toward creating a fine schedule but in the right now, all they can do is cite them for a violation and ask that they comply.

There being no more business to discuss, Chairman Bennett adjourned the meeting at approximately 6:19 p.m.

Chairman/Vice-Chairman

ATTEST

City Clerk Clara VanBlargan, MMC