

**Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA)
Meeting Minutes March 1, 2018
(APPROVED)**

3/1/2018 - Minutes

1. ROLL CALL

CRA members Present: Mayor Fultz, Commissioner Stewart, Commissioner Curtis Gibson, Chair Robin Gibson, Commissioner Howell

Staff Present: Kenneth Fields, CRA Director; Albert C. Galloway Jr, City Attorney; Jennifer Nanek, City Clerk

Chair Deputy Mayor Robin Gibson called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

2. Minutes October 3, 2017

Mayor Fultz made a motion to approve the minutes of October 3, 2017. Commissioner Howell seconded the motion.

Voice Vote:

Mayor Fultz "YES"

Commissioner Howell "YES"

Commissioner Curtis Gibson "YES"

Commissioner Stewart "YES"

Chair Robin Gibson "YES"

Motion passed 5 -0.

3. COMMUNICATIONS AND PETITIONS

Chair Robin Gibson invited the public to make comments but said that there will be opportunities to comment later on.

4. AGENDA ITEMS

4.I. Revised Draft CRA Plan

Mr. Fields explained that tonight is more of a workshop as they are looking for comments and feedback but not a vote. After this meeting we will take a revised plan back to the CRA Citizens Advisory Board for a vote and then back to the CRA again. Mr. Fields said that this is not a detailed plan or budget. This sets goals and objectives to move forward. He introduced our consultants from S&ME, Kathy Bangley, Planning Director, and Karen Thompson our Assistant CRA Director. He said that George Kramer had a presentation to make on the draft plan before the discussion takes place.

George Kramer, S&ME, explained that we want the plan to be flexible for whatever projects they want to do. They can only spend money if its covered by the plan. There are three strategic action items. He introduced his associate Adeline Collot who is available for questions as well. Mr. Kramer reviewed their process including the online surveys and the public workshop. There was great

community spirit at the public workshop. He explained what the current budget was and how it is likely to grow. He discussed possible uses for the funds including investments.

The list of priorities was established based on public input. #1 was to establish a vibrant downtown in Lake Wales. This can leverage current assets to benefit the rest of Lake Wales. #2 was establishing Lake Wales as a bicycle/pedestrian community by connecting the different areas in Lake Wales. #3 was more affordable housing including for seniors. Mr. Kramer said that we need more than retail downtown we need more experiences downtown.

Mr. Fields reported that the City is being contacted more frequently by those interested in businesses and projects downtown. There is a lot of momentum for downtown.

Mayor Fultz said that we are on the right track as many things in the document were identified as important by a large cross section of the community. He said we need to focus more on the one downtown. Lincoln Avenue will not come back to the way it was.

Chair Robin Gibson suggested reversing #2 and #3 as affordable housing is a critical need where as bicycle/pedestrian access is important to our quality of life but is more of an amenity. Focusing efforts on Lincoln Avenue harkens back to a segregated society. We should have one integrated downtown. He remembers when everything was downtown. We have to evolve.

Mr. Fields noted that there are more minority owned businesses downtown and we should promote that.

Mayor Fultz suggested more buildings with the business on the first floor and residents upstairs. Chair Robin Gibson said there has been some effort towards that idea already.

Commissioner Curtis Gibson said that we can't neglect that area even if it won't be what it was. He asked about the debt service listed in the budget. Mr. Fields explained that is current debt from infrastructure upgrades done many years ago. This will be paid off at some point. The benefit of those upgrades 10 years ago we can handle additional restaurants and businesses downtown as far as water and sewer.

Mayor Fultz said that MainStreet has a unified voice for what they want and suggested that the other areas need a unified voice.

Commissioner Curtis Gibson suggested that we need to attract more younger people downtown. Karen Thompson, Assistant CRA Director, said that there is already a shift in that direction. We need more restaurants, bars, and nightlife. Mr. Fields said that the Farmer's Market and other events are coming and growing. There are baby steps they are taking and are looking for new ideas. Ms. Thompson said that music is a destination and they are looking for ways to add it more in downtown.

Chair Robin Gibson said that new streetscapes draw people downtown. He said we should get started on this. Ms. Thompson agreed that we should move forward on it.

Mayor Fultz said entryway signs need to be a goal. Mr. Fields said that we will have design firms on contract that can help with these projects. Commissioner Curtis Gibson asked about a sign out front.

Ms. Bangle said we aren't zoned for that. We could create an exemption for us but there will be requests from others to do something similar.

Commissioner Howell said that we have given downtown money this year and next year. The Chair asked if that funding was from the general fund. Mr. Fields said that the money for MainStreet and for the director is from the CRA fund. Chair Robin Gibson cautioned about misuse of CRA funds. Commissioner Howell asked about funds going to other parts of the CRA besides the downtown. Mr. Fields said that once projects are established then funds can be distributed throughout the CRA. Chair

Robin Gibson said something needed to be in the budget for affordable housing. Ms. Bangley said that the items for CIP for 2018 are in stone as they are in this year's budget but the rest can be changed.

Commissioner Howell said that more shops and restaurants need to be open past 2pm for working people. She also said that there are terrible looking areas throughout the City including around the City Administration Building. Ms. Bangley said money can be budgeted for clean-up and infill housing to help with other areas. There can also be funds for workshops to help owners get clear title to property so that it can be sold and improved. Her team is going to work on those issues.

Commissioner Howell said she liked the idea for Lincoln Avenue to have more residential areas upstairs and more stores but that it is hard to have a business on Lincoln due to neighbor complaints. Ms. Bangley there is a focus in the plan on that area and they are trying to improve communication with potential business owners and remove past negative impressions.

Commissioner Curtis Gibson said we need to be unified with one voice and bring groups together and hopes the Assistant CRA Director will work on that. Ms. Thompson agreed and said she is working on that.

Charlene Bennett, resident, recommended including B Street and Lincoln Avenue in the Pedestrian points of connection. Commissioner Stewart agreed saying we should include Lincoln Avenue by making it an extension of Downtown.

Chair Robin Gibson mentioned the area between Downtown and Lincoln Avenue with a building that needs to be torn down or cleaned up. We need to replace it to help link the two areas together.

Mayor Fultz said that he has heard a lot about what happened with the two separate downtowns and there are still hurt feelings that remain. Without connecting the two areas then everything will still be divided.

Chair Robin Gibson said that by modifying the physical layout it will help. Ms. Bangley said that the Housing Authority has a grant application in with the State of Florida for Grove Manor refit. Mayor Fultz said he is going to meet with Director Kirkland to find out what is going on. Mr. Fields said we need to coordinate better with the Housing Authority to work together.

Chair Robin Gibson asked Mr. Kramer his thoughts on what has been said. Mr. Kramer said he appreciates the input and can make the changes as has been suggested. He said that the affordable housing will be a larger capital investment. Regarding Downtown and streetscapes he emphasized the need to form partnerships such as like with Florida's Natural and other companies. Mr. Fields said he would like to see a visitors center and MainStreet office downtown. The Chamber would like to move downtown.

Chair Robin Gibson would like more directional signs for Bok Tower that send tourists along the lake. Ms. Collet showed a section that lists grant possibilities for many of the projects identified such as improving neighborhoods. Chair Robin Gibson recommended more signage identifying the historic districts. The signage would build pride, recognition and identity. Mr. Kramer said they have historic preservation experts in their office that can help with some of the signage.

Mayor Fultz said he liked the idea of a business incubator that maybe Warner University and SBDC could work together on. Rusty Ingley, President of MainStreet, said there is a demand for office space and an incubator is a good idea. He toured the one in Winter Haven that would be a good idea for Lake Wales. Hopefully some type of incubator space is coming in the future. Rusty suggested that we should direct most of our limited funds to one downtown. Mayor Fultz said it is important to build relationships to encourage people to get out of their comfort zones.

Mr. Fields said that many younger chefs look to relocate to smaller towns away from the big cities. Mr. Ingley agreed and said he has heard of people doing that here in Lake Wales. Chair Robin Gibson said that destination restaurants can draw tourists here and we can get that back.

Commissioner Howell asked where those lists are from the workshop. Ms. Collot said that she has these and used them in developing the priorities in the plan.

5. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

The CRA meeting was adjourned at 7:41 p.m.

Chair/Vice-Chair

ATTEST:

City Clerk/Deputy City Clerk