



MINUTES OF THE COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY BOARD MEETING
CITY OF NEW PORT RICHEY
NEW PORT RICHEY CITY HALL COUNCIL CHAMBERS
5919 MAIN STREET, NEW PORT RICHEY, FLORIDA
September 24, 2019
IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THE REGULAR CITY COUNCIL MEETING

MINUTES

ORDER OF BUSINESS

1 Call to Order - Roll Call

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Rob Marlowe at 6:32 p.m. Those in attendance were, Director Jeff Starkey, Director Chopper Davis, Director Altman and Director Murphy.

Also in attendance were Executive Director Debbie Manns, City Attorney Timothy Driscoll, City Clerk Judy Meyers, Finance Director Crystal Feast, Fire Chief Chris Fitch, Economic Development Director Charles Rudd, Public Works Director Robert Rivera, Library Director Andi Figart, Parks and Recreation Director Elaine Smith, Development Director George Romagnoli, Technology Solutions Director Bryan Weed and Human Resources Manager Bernie Wharran.

2 Discussion Regarding the Potential Purchase of the Former Walgreens Property

Executive Director Manns introduced the item to the Board. She stated that the purpose of this agenda item was to discuss to see if the City's CRA Board would have any interest in purchasing the property. It is 1.4 acres in size. The property is a critical corner for the city. The last time there was a considerable investment on US19 was back in 1965 and was Southgate Shopping Center. She stated private investment always follow public investment. The formula for economic growth is indicative of the fact that we have to have a partnership in order to bring projects to culmination. The City has partnered for revitalization with the Hacienda, MSL and Sims Park. The time is now to authorize the executive director to move forward with due diligence in order to purchase the former Walgreens property. She stated that the Board wants to advance a positive identity and something that will draw people off of US19 into our downtown district. This is our opportunity to do it. She stated that she has had conversations with the property owner and they have agreed to a \$1,750,000 purchase price. Funds are available in the CRA. We need to advance this as a priority. Upon opening the floor to public comment, Marilyn deChant came forward and stated that property is economic feasible and must stay within the downtown image that has been created over the last thirty years. That will be a crucial area for the 80k cars that go by everyday as an opening gate to the downtown. Bob Smallwood came forward and stated that the price tag is too high especially with the split zoning. Business cycles have a way of repeating themselves. It is a key piece coming into the city but the price point seems high.

US19 property is not worth what it used to be. With no one else coming forward Chairman Marlowe returned the floor to the Board. Chairman Marlowe stated it was an odd parcel with the split zoning. He stated if we moved forward with purchasing the property and took the northern portion of it and used it to build an entrance feature to the downtown and then sell the balance of the parcel to whoever will ultimately redevelop the remaining parcels leaving us with the piece of the parcel immediately adjacent to US19. His thinking is that over the years there has been some consensus of having a grand gateway over Main Street and although that may not be feasible there may be another option that can be done. Director Starkey then showed the entrance to Safety Harbor. He would like to see oak trees planted on both sides of Main Street at US19 similar to Safety Harbor. Director Davis stated he has been taking pictures of different places in Clermont where they are doing decorative features. They are also using pillars at the entrances at the new apartments along SR54. Director Murphy stated this could be an oasis along US19. Director Altman stated that it was timely of the work session earlier today. The one property we did not talk about was the church property along River Road. We can be true partners with a developer. He is excited to have this opportunity to take this role and have a public/private partnership. We have an opportunity to lead the state. He stated he recognizes the resistance whether it is the right price but we need to hold that corner and make it be what we want. Chairman Marlowe stated this may be a once in a lifetime opportunity to secure the entrance for generations to come. Having MSL and a nice entrance at US19 would be good bookends for the parcels along Main Street. It has some good redevelopment opportunity. Director Starkey stated he wants it to work but the biggest blemish he hears is the purchase of property that we have taken a loss on. He wants that corner to work but in his heart he does not feel this is the right. It is a lot of money. He stated he wants the Rivergate to work. It is a huge risk. Director Davis stated that years back there were hundreds of thousands in the CRA and the decision was made to by land that was being underused as an investment. One thing they didn't do back then that we have now is have an economic development team. The renovation of Sims Park has helped redeveloped downtown. We are investing in the corner that will bring us a multitude of business opportunities. A way to have control is to have pieces of property. He then showed some photos of the Publix in Islamorada. Director Murphy stated he agrees with most of the comments but he is hesitant about buying it but also hesitant of losing it. He thinks that it is worth the investment in order to make it what we want it to be. Motion was made to authorize the Executive Director to negotiate as she has requested. Executive Director Manns stated that she appreciated Mr. Smallwood's comments but she stated the last two letters of interest were at \$2 million.

Motion made by Pete Altman and seconded by Matt Murphy. The Motion Passed. 4-1. Ayes: Altman, Davis, Marlowe, Murphy Nays: Starkey

3 Communications

Chairman Marlowe stated there was some discussion with the County regarding possibly adjusting the bounds of the CRA and he did not think that it was an appropriate demand especially after the discussion of annexing Leisure Land and Van Doren which is the poster child for slum and blight but if it will help move things along as Director Altman stated earlier if there are some areas that probably are not ever going to need CRA help to improve he would not be adverse to discussing it with them. Director Starkey stated that the County has a problem with our whole city being a CRA but there are only two areas he believes that could be in question. If we had gated communities the argument may be stronger but we are trying to do the county a favor by taking over Leisure Lane and Van Doren. It is low income and slum & blighted areas. We want to improve the quality of life for our residents that about these areas. Director Starkey stated we have never misused our CRA funds as long as he has been on Council. We follow state law. We have a strong argument to keep it as it. Director Murphy stated they have never really sat down and looked or have driven through the city. If they took an effort to look the County may not be as adamant about it.

4 Adjournment

There being no further business to consider, upon proper motion, the meeting adjourned at 7:14 p.m.

(signed) _____
Judy Meyers, CMC, City Clerk

Approved: _____ (date)

Initialed: _____