

APPROVED
MINUTES
NORTHWEST PROGRESSO – FLAGLER HEIGHTS
REDEVELOPMENT ADVISORY BOARD
FORT LAUDERDALE
100 NORTH ANDREWS AVENUE
8th FLOOR CONFERENCE ROOM
MARCH 28, 2012 – 3:30 P.M.

Cumulative Attendance

<u>Members Present</u>	<u>Attendance</u>	May 2011 - April 2012	
		<u>Present</u>	<u>Absent</u>
Steve Lucas, Chair	P	10	0
Ella Phillips, Vice Chair	A	6	4
Jessie Adderley	P	9	1
Sonya Burrows	P	9	0
Ron Centamore	P	9	1
Nate Ernest-Jones	P	8	2
Alan Gabriel	P	8	2
Mickey Hinton	P	9	1
Brice Lambrix	P	8	2
Richard D. Powers	P	1	0
Yvonne Sanandres	P	7	3
Doug Sterner	P	8	2
Scott Strawbridge	P	7	0
John Wilkes	P	7	3
Samuel Williams	A	7	3

Currently there are 15 appointed members to the Board, which means 8 would constitute a quorum.

It was noted that a quorum was present at the meeting.

Staff

Alfred Battle, Director, CRA
Sandra Doughlin, Clerk III, CRA
Bob Wojcik, CRA
Angela Wilson Brewton, CRA
Barbara Hartmann, Recording Secretary, Prototype, Inc.

I. Call to Order / Roll Call

Chair Lucas called the meeting to order at 3:40 p.m. Roll was called and it was noted that a quorum was present.

New member Richard Powers introduced himself to the Board. Mr. Powers was appointed by Commissioner Roberts and recently made a presentation to the Board on the Flagler Village streetscape improvement concept.

II. Approval of Minutes from February 22, 2012

Chair Lucas requested that the Board table approval until the April meeting so the members would have sufficient time to review the minutes.

Motion made by Mr. Gabriel, seconded by Mr. Strawbridge, to table approval until the next meeting. In a voice vote, the **motion** passed unanimously.

Presentation

III. The Whole Enchilada

Mr. Battle recalled that during the past year, new businesses in the CRA have come before the Board to present their ideas. The Whole Enchilada is an existing business in Fort Lauderdale that is expanding into the CRA.

David Cardaci, owner, stated that the business is moving into 745 North Federal Highway. He has been in the hospitality business for 12 years and has opened restaurants up and down the east coast. The Whole Enchilada opened in Fort Lauderdale six years ago in Oakland Park. The concept for the restaurant is “fast casual” Mexican dining, which is a combination of full service and fast food. The business has grown 11%-12% year-over-year, even with a good deal of competition opening up nearby.

Mr. Cardaci noted that the building into which the restaurant will expand had been in poor condition; he estimated that \$375,000 is being spent on site and building improvements alone, with a new interior, exterior, and landscaping. He added that the property will feature some green initiatives, including charging stations for electric cars, use of compostable products, and waterless toilets, among others. An aerial rendering of the site shows the addition of over 200 trees and plants to the property.

He stated that despite the recent growth in this part of the CRA, there are few restaurants in the surrounding area. The Whole Enchilada will bring in 22 part-time jobs as well as four full-time positions. Mr. Cardaci advised that they will look west of the Sistrunk area to provide these jobs, as the facility's limited parking would make it favorable to bring in employees who could bike or walk to the building.

Mr. Wilkes asked how far along the building was with its design concept. Mr. Cardaci replied that this process is complete; permits are in hand and the construction process is underway. He noted that the restaurant will have 12 parking spaces.

Mr. Ernest-Jones asked to know the business hours of the restaurant. Mr. Cardaci said they will open at 11 a.m. for lunch and remain open through 9 to 10 or 10 to 11 p.m., respectively, on weekdays and weekends. He hopes to be open for business within three months.

Mr. Battle explained that the CRA is working to provide a façade grant of \$7500 for the property. This grant program provides grants of up to \$20,000 for businesses along the Sistrunk corridor.

Mr. Ernest-Jones requested clarification of what is included in a façade grant. Mr. Battle advised that this includes anything that is visible from the exterior of the property. Chair Lucas added that the website lists the criteria for the program, including eligible and ineligible expenditures, such as landscaping, parking lot improvements, signage, and other non-structural exterior renovations.

Updates

IV. CRA Budget Amendments

Mr. Battle recalled that in November 2011, the Board had been advised that tax increment funding (TIF) would have slightly more than \$1 million remaining after a debt due in June 2013 is paid. They were also informed that the bond balances are roughly \$1.6 million and \$1.5 million. Bond dollars were taken out for two kinds of projects: infrastructure, primarily the Sistrunk project, and property acquisition.

He continued that the Board had determined they would spend as many of these dollars as possible to work on the reissuance of new debt to the CRA, so they could build up their trust fund and be able to undertake more projects in the future that require CRA dollars. One way this could be done is by spending more of the bond dollars that were set aside for the Sistrunk project. Part of the budget amendment made on March 7 will “swap out” approximately \$2 million of bond funds for TIF revenue. The TIF revenue appropriation balance is now \$2.8 million due to this exchange.

The benefit of this exchange is that the revenue dollars do not have any restrictions placed on them: as long as they are used in a manner consistent with the redevelopment plan, they may be spent. Bond funds must be spent on specific purposes, and there are limitations on how they may be used.

Consequently, if there are no more Sistrunk projects, these monies would need to be either sent back to the bond institution or the CRA must determine a way to spend them elsewhere.

Mr. Battle continued that in May, he would bring a strategy before the Board for the expenditure of the \$1.5 million in bond funds. These opportunities may include the purchase of commercial or residential properties in the area. Some of the commercial properties may provide the CRA with the opportunity to solve some of its long-standing parking issues. Mr. Battle recalled that following a tour of available properties in the CRA, the City had made it clear that some properties could be purchased and placed in the CRA's inventory; the Department of Housing and Community Development may have additional ideas regarding the direction the CRA could take with these properties.

He concluded that once TIF dollars were exchanged for bond dollars, this would provide the CRA with extra funds. Mr. Battle noted that there are some projects with expenses that may be "back-charged," such as portions of the Sistrunk project. This would free up additional flexible dollars within the TIF account. The CRA is pursuing a legal opinion on this issue; if there is a favorable response, this will allow an influx of more flexible dollars for other uses, such as property acquisition.

Mr. Battle added that if the CRA is able to issue new debt, one result would be refinancing the current debt. They have until 2025, when the CRA expires, to pay back the existing debt. Refinancing would also allow these funds to be used in a more flexible manner rather than tying them to specific projects.

Mr. Wilkes asked what amount would be necessary to complete the Sistrunk project. Mr. Battle said the \$2 million was being swapped out for the \$15 million currently in the project account; he believed that the Sistrunk project could be finished with the funds currently allocated to it. He noted that bond dollars have been spent on sidewalks, light fixtures, landscaping, concrete, and other improvements, which could be back-charged to the bond. Fees for engineering and oversight are also eligible bond expenses.

Mr. Strawbridge asked if the figures apply to the current fiscal year, and if not, what period the budget was intended to cover. He also asked to know the schedule on which obligations must be met. Mr. Battle stated that bond funds were borrowed in 2004, and the CRA is now outside the normal spending time frame for bond issuances, as it should have been spent within seven years. He explained that the amounts listed were part of the capital program budget and were not related to the CRA's operating budget.

Mr. Strawbridge observed that there are proposed tasks and expenses, but no date for the timeline on which these tasks must begin, or for the time at which the budget begins. He offered the example of spending \$41,300 on a marketing strategy, asking when these funds will be obligated. Mr. Battle confirmed that the funds are included in the CRA's 2012 operating budget.

Mr. Strawbridge asked if he would need to refer to the operating budget to find out the status of a particular project. Mr. Battle explained that today's update dealt with monies that were moved; because this makes the funds more flexible, the spending priorities can be revisited in a more flexible manner as well. He pointed out that some of the funds identified in spending priorities are bond funds, and can only be spent for certain purposes. He noted that the bond repayment is due in 2013, which meant either the funds must be returned or refinanced by that time.

He concluded that because Staff has not discussed the bond issuance in significant detail, it is not yet an appropriate time to have a conversation with the Board regarding various expenditures for specific projects. Chair Lucas suggested that these priorities be revisited later during the year. Mr. Battle said he felt they should be reviewed annually as part of budgeting discussions.

Chair Lucas summarized the update by stating the flexible funds would be increased, which would allow for more projects to be undertaken as well as projected for the future.

V. Liquor and Convenience Store Moratorium

Mr. Battle recalled that in August 2011, the Planning and Zoning Board had passed a moratorium on the opening of any new liquor or convenience stores in order to control the sale of alcohol within the Northwest CRA. He noted that the Board members had also discussed this anecdotally as a condition of blight within the CRA. The Planning and Zoning Board had also touched on the possibility of applying this moratorium universally throughout the CRA.

He explained that when the moratorium was issued, Staff was given one year to further research the issue and propose an ordinance that would regulate activity, help stimulate redevelopment, and encourage more businesses to invest in the CRA. This research included a comparison of the CRA area to other parts of the City from a crime standpoint. Mr. Battle observed that within a two-year period, there were nearly four times as many police reports taken in the Northwest CRA as in other areas of the City. The data also showed there is an oversupply of these businesses in the CRA, as evidenced by several studies done over the years.

He noted that between 2008 to early 2012, there have been nearly 10,000 police reports taken for the entire CRA area. He referred the members to a map included in their backup materials, which showed the location and intensity of reported crime within the CRA. He noted that many calls and/or incidents appear to take place close to liquor or convenience stores, including a location with two convenience stores across the street from each other. This particular location has the highest incidence on the list for police reports taken.

Mr. Battle concluded that there seem to be basic operational issues at many stores of this nature, and stated that he felt the moratorium was timely, as it allowed the City sufficient time to examine the conditions that may contribute to a lack of investment in the area. He observed that individuals are often seen "hanging out" near these stores during both day and night, which gives a sense that there is little or no enforcement in the area. This could discourage a potential investor in the CRA from opening a business nearby.

He added that there are also associated issues with health and wellness in the area, as these stores may not provide healthy food options. Mr. Battle advised that it may be possible to address this from a redevelopment standpoint, perhaps by encouraging the businesses to take different actions for the betterment of the community.

He continued that while there may be regulatory actions or intervention available to the Board, the difficulty is applying it without violating an individual's right to own and/or operate a business of this nature.

Mr. Sterner suggested that it might be possible to take advantage of the nuisance abatement process in the case of businesses that have multiple arrests, reports, or infractions within a certain time frame. Mr. Battle agreed that this has been identified as a potential tool for regulation. Another tool would be the acquisition of a conditional use permit to be obtained by these businesses. The condition would apply if a business crosses a particular threshold on the number of nuisance calls, crime reports, or violations of State alcohol and beverage laws.

He concluded that the City Commission would like to be apprised of the Board's feedback before they take up the issue of a possible restrictive ordinance. As the moratorium expires in August 2012, he stated that the Commission would like to see a policy outline prior to this date.

Mr. Strawbridge remarked that he saw benefits to taking a more stringent approach to licensing these businesses. He noted that another potential tool might be making the sale of alcohol incidental to the sale of other items: for example, a store owner might be asked to provide a 60/40 ratio of food or other necessities to liquor.

Mr. Battle pointed out that some businesses will be grandfathered in under any restrictions. He added that spatial restrictions might be used to prevent the overabundance of these stores within a particular area; another, more aggressive possibility might be that alcohol sales might be restricted within a neighborhood.

Ms. Burrows noted that another prospective restriction was limiting a store's hours of operation, and asked if alcohol sales could be restricted to within certain hours. Mr. Battle agreed, noting that restricting the hours for alcohol sales but allowing individuals to purchase other goods could be seen as being within the best interest of the community. "Single-serve" sales in particular could be restricted in this manner.

Mr. Hinton commented that allowing single structures to have a business on the bottom floor and a residence on an upper floor contributes to the problem in some neighborhoods. He added that the police must also do a better job of addressing enforcement issues, as citations do not seem to be effective in many cases.

It was determined that Staff's recommendations on regulating these businesses would be brought back to the Board at a later time.

VI. Director's Report

Mr. Battle introduced Angela Wilson Brewton, who advised the Board that there is an upcoming business education seminar on April 11, 2012. The seminar will focus on how to do business with the City and County. The City's procurement director will give a presentation on doing business with local governments, including tips on the procurement and RFP processes. The seminar will be free of charge, and many presenters will be available to meet with attendees on a one-on-one basis after the event.

Mr. Battle continued that the Sistrunk project is now 80% complete, and Florida Power & Light (FPL) is installing transformers and completing the undergrounding of power lines. The Northwest Gardens 1 and 3 are nearly complete as well, with work being finished on the social center, nearby pocket park, and streetscapes. Mr. Strawbridge added that 22 families have moved in thus far.

Mr. Battle noted that there are some fairly large properties for sale in the area, and recommended that Board members direct anyone they know with an interest in development to the CRA, as Staff can put them in contact with the sellers.

VII. Communication to CRA Board

None.

VIII. Old / New Business

Mr. Strawbridge observed that the B Cycle program, which operates bicycle rental kiosks throughout the City, might be a good addition to parks within the CRA, such as Sistrunk Park. Although the program has only been in effect for a relatively short time, he pointed out that it has been very successful. Mr. Battle suggested that a representative of the program be invited to address the Board at a future meeting.

IX. Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the Board at this time, the meeting was adjourned at 4:50 p.m.

[Minutes prepared by K. McGuire, Prototype, Inc.]