

APPROVED
MINUTES
NORTHWEST PROGRESSO – FLAGLER HEIGHTS
REDEVELOPMENT ADVISORY BOARD
FORT LAUDERDALE
100 NORTH ANDREWS AVENUE
8th FLOOR CONFERENCE ROOM
FEBRUARY 27, 2013 – 3:30 P.M.

Cumulative Attendance

<u>Members Present</u>	<u>Attendance</u>	<u>May 2012 - April 2013</u>	
		<u>Present</u>	<u>Absent</u>
Steve Lucas, Chair	P	7	0
Ella Phillips, Vice Chair	A	6	1
Jessie Adderley	A	5	2
Sonya Burrows	P	6	1
Ron Centamore	P	7	0
Nate Ernest-Jones	P	7	0
Alan Gabriel	P	4	3
Mickey Hinton (arr. 3:45)	P	4	2
Brice Lambrix	A	3	4
Richard D. Powers (dep. 5:00)	P	6	1
Yvonne Sanandres	A	5	2
Scott Strawbridge	A	6	1
John Wilkes (dep. 4:50)	P	6	1
Samuel Williams	P	4	3

Currently there are 14 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, Economic and Community Reinvestment Manager
Sandra Doughlin, Clerk III, DSD/ECR
Lisa Edmondson, Recording Secretary, Prototype, Inc.

Communications to City Commission

None.

I. Call to Order / Roll Call

Chair Lucas called the meeting to order at 3:41 p.m. Roll was called and it was noted a quorum was present.

II. Approval of Minutes from January 23, 2013 Regular Board Meeting

Motion made by Mr. Gabriel, seconded by Mr. Wilkes, to approve. In a voice vote, the **motion** passed unanimously.

III. Flagler Garden Funding Request

Chair Lucas explained that this was a follow-up Item from the January meeting, at which the Flagler Village Community Garden was first discussed. He recalled that the Board members had raised a number of questions in January which would be addressed today.

Mr. Battle agreed that there had been a good discussion regarding funding of the community garden at the previous meeting. The Board was provided at that time with an overview of the project, including estimated costs; however, he had recommended that representatives of the project come back before the Board to present a business plan, which would help the members better understand the operational side of the garden.

He pointed out that the project's total capital costs reflect a slight increase from the previous discussion, with total construction costs anticipated at slightly over \$100,000. Annual operating expenses are projected to be between \$5400 and \$7800 as the garden's separate phases are added. Expenses are expected to be offset by memberships in the garden.

Mr. Battle concluded that Staff's recommendation was to fund half of the costs from Phase 1, which is the construction phase. This would cost approximately \$18,177.

Chad Scott, representing the Flagler Village Community Garden, stated that the lease for the property has not yet been signed. He advised that he would like the members to be comfortable with the document before it is executed. He also provided copies of the garden's business plan and funding strategy, explaining that the goal is to ask the CRA to match 50% of the funds raised for each phase of the project, beginning with Phase 1.

He gave a brief overview of the business plan, noting that some questions asked at the January meeting were addressed in the document. Although the garden will be a not-for-profit effort, they will use a business plan with goals and objectives, which will be met through membership dues and limited fundraising.

Mr. Scott recalled that event parking had been discussed by the Board at the previous meeting, and reported that because the garden is located within a Regional Activity Center (RAC) and will be on church property, there is no

parking requirement. The church parking lot will be shared for any events on a first-come, first-served basis. Mr. Scott noted that ample street parking is available as well.

He continued that the garden's operating budget includes the Florida Power and Light (FPL) and irrigation meters. Membership dues are estimated at \$85 per plot per year; in the first year, it is not expected every plot will be leased. There will be an additional minimum \$2000 required through fundraising. Variables within the operating budget include insurance, electricity, water, filings, garden supplies and sundries, and funds reserved for repairs. In a worst-case scenario, membership dues alone are expected to cover all the garden's costs.

Other items reflected in the operating budget have a certain amount of flexibility, as their budgets may be increased, decreased, or eliminated. These include quarterly workshops, which will be free educational events that engage the community. Printing and advertising costs would spread the word about the garden and retain memberships, as well as advertising the workshops and other events. Future community outreach projects would include working with local schools to hold plantings, making curbside improvements in the surrounding neighborhood, and assisting other communities with start-up costs for their own gardens.

Mr. Williams asked why the CRA would need a community garden from a practical standpoint. Mr. Battle replied that non-tangible, non-capital projects can contribute to the overall goal of redevelopment, including sustainable development and community involvement. The garden will be located on private property for the benefit of the community, which would mean the CRA would only be asked for 50% of the funds necessary for Phase 1. He also pointed out that there is both community and City interest in sustainable development of this nature, as reflected by the creation of a specific Ordinance to encourage the development of community gardens and urban farms. He felt the project could be nurtured and developed into a bigger and better opportunity for the area.

Mr. Williams asked how the Board might be assured that the garden would not become poorly maintained or "an eyesore" later on. He also expressed concern that there could be runoff water containing pesticides or other chemicals. Mr. Scott replied that funds are reserved for repairs, and pointed out that the project has been incorporated as a nonprofit, with bylaws and articles of incorporation. When new members join the Board, they will be able to review these documents if they wish.

He added that although the garden is not intended to be branded as an organic garden, individuals with plots must first get approval before they may use non-

organic chemicals in tending their plots. This will allow the garden to be treated for pests in the event organic pesticides do not work.

Mr. Battle noted that at present, the garden has not agreed upon the term of its lease for the church property, as they had wished to hear feedback from the Board regarding the appropriate length of time. He explained that because the CRA is being asked to contribute to the garden's phasing, they would like to know how long the garden's commitment to the community will be in place.

Chair Lucas recalled there had been discussion at the January meeting regarding the Board's charge for investing its funds. He advised that his understanding called for the CRA to invest in projects that would generate tax increment financing (TIF) and/or improve the neighborhood. He commented that he would be in favor of funding to the garden, as they have provided a well-thought-out, complete plan for the project; in addition, he felt providing matching funds over three phases was a reasonable plan, as it would be incumbent upon the garden to perform if they wished to ask for additional funds in the future.

Mr. Williams observed that the garden would need to be marketed to residents of the neighborhood in order to gain their interest in participation. Mr. Scott said he felt if memberships were being accepted at this point, there would be a great deal of interest. He noted that no memberships have been taken thus far, as they are presently offering \$500 sponsorships for founding gardeners in order to help fund the construction phase.

Mr. Battle asked how much money has been raised by the garden thus far. Mr. Scott responded that they have received 10 to 15 small business donations over the last month, as well as a state grant for \$3400. Three founding gardeners have also committed to the project. A total of nearly \$12,000 has been raised so far, of which \$6839 remains after expenses.

Mr. Gabriel stated that while he was in favor of the garden, he was also concerned with the idea of providing CRA funding for it. He pointed out that in the case of most grant funding, the applicant would be asked to present certain requirements before they are entitled to receive any funding; however, this would not be the case for CRA funds, which was of concern to him. He explained that he would have difficulty authorizing the expense of \$18,177 without requiring deliverables.

He continued that if the Board provided, for example, a façade grant, they would have restrictive covenants on the property in the event the project failed, so they could recapture their funds. Because the property is owned by the church and not the garden, there would be no guarantee of recovering these funds if there

was a default. Mr. Gabriel concluded that until these concerns were addressed, he was unable to recommend funding the garden.

Mr. Battle explained that one reason for concern was that the garden's memberships might ensure its operability for a limited time, such as one year; however, if no memberships carried on to the next year, there would be no garden, despite the funding provided by the Board. Typically, if the Board contributes to a real estate or infrastructure project, the result is a building or other improvements, which would have lasting benefits. If there is no garden, however, the Board would have no way to recapture its investment. He noted that the concern for this investment is greater because there is no tangible result of the garden.

Mr. Gabriel added that in this case, the property owner was not able to make any guarantees regarding the Board's contribution. He concluded that he would need to be more comfortable with the risk the Board would take if they funded the garden.

Mr. Scott stated that the garden is also a community project, which is in line with the CRA's charge to spend tax dollars to improve the area. He reiterated that when the garden raises funds, it is indicative of community interest. He suggested that one solution might be a legal structure in which the City would be allowed to take over the garden in the event of failure.

Mr. Ernest-Jones remarked that while there is risk involved with the investment, he felt the Board should also focus on the bigger picture, such as the aesthetic improvement to a highly visible site. He pointed out that it is also difficult to quantify a large investment made to a private developer, as the resulting structure could lose value over time or be foreclosed upon. He concluded that the aesthetic appeal of the project would go a long way toward the overall improvement of the community.

Mr. Wilkes said he did not feel the context of the project had changed significantly from the previous month, as there were no guidelines, conditions of funding, or ability to enforce the lease. He pointed out that funding the garden would be indistinguishable from funding any other charitable organization providing services to the community, many of which did not make funding requests of the Board. In addition, he felt it should be determined whether or not individuals were willing to pay for their garden plots, as he did not believe most other communities charged \$85 per plot. For this reason, he did not feel the business plan was realistic.

Mr. Wilkes stated that he shared the concern regarding the lease, as these documents were typically more complicated than the lease described for the

garden. He said if the Board made an investment in the project, they should be willing to commit to following up on its success. He concluded that while some risk may be acceptable, the question remained of how much risk the Board should be willing to take, although he suggested that they should consider funding the project at a later time if this concern was addressed.

Mr. Battle commented that he did not see a way to make the members more comfortable with the proposed funding structure, which called for the Board to fund the garden only when the project demonstrates that they can raise a like amount of money. He noted that the Board's standard protocol is to provide "the last money in" when helping to fund a project.

Mr. Centamore asked if funding must be available for all phases of the garden before the project can be completed, or if the garden would already be operable before funding is sought for phases 2 and 3. Mr. Scott replied that construction for phase 1 would begin as soon as the money was available, with a groundbreaking event planned for Earth Day (April 20, 2013) if the Board provided matching funds. This event would raise money for phase 2. Mr. Centamore suggested that providing funds on a sliding scale would serve to lessen the Board's risk to an extent.

Mr. Ernest-Jones added that it was not within the Board's purview to review the merits of the garden's lease. He pointed out that this was the responsibility of Staff, and Staff has recommended approval of funding the first phase. While he felt it was difficult to distinguish the community garden from other charitable organizations, he also observed that similar organizations have not made requests of the Board. He concluded that the community, business sponsors, and a private property owner have given their support to the project, and proposed that they ask for specific results in return for their donation rather than decline to fund the garden altogether.

Mr. Williams stated that he felt the Board should determine whether their concern lay primarily with the amount of funding requested or the concept of the garden itself. He pointed out that concerns have been expressed with both these aspects of the project.

Motion made by Mr. Williams that Staff goes back and takes a look at [the garden] again, with the group, and see if they can lower the exposure from the standpoint of the dollars and the CRA. The **motion** died for lack of second.

Motion made by Mr. Ernest-Jones that the Advisory Board approves the full requested amount of \$18,177 toward the first phase of the community garden, on the condition that an equal amount of dollars are raised. The **motion** died for lack of second.

Motion made by Mr. Wilkes [for Staff] to come up with a set of standards or guidelines whereby the Board can approve individual projects for allocation of CRA funds, as to the matter of funding and the percentage of funding.

Mr. Wilkes explained that his intent was to create a set of standards for projects similar to the garden, such as nonprofit projects.

Ms. Burrows commented that the major stumbling block for the project appeared to be the fact that the garden was not the landowner. Mr. Wilkes said his concern was that the church might decide to request funding for another charitable project in the future. He added that the garden would be a non-TIF-producing entity, despite the good it could do for the community, and concluded that while the Board might want to fund the project, they did not seem to know how to achieve this goal.

Mr. Battle stated he was concerned with the idea of creating guidelines for recommendations for projects of this nature, as this could result in a lack of funding for non-typical projects that could help build community. Mr. Gabriel said another concern was that funding the project could set the precedent of funding other charitable work within the community without setting a standard for this type of use of CRA funds.

Mr. Scott said approval of funding could send a message to the City that the CRA is supportive of larger-scale community projects such as the garden, which are undertaken with a high level of professionalism. He cautioned that if the Board is unable to reach a level of confidence with the project, this might dissuade members of the community from doing this type of work for free. He concluded that supporting the garden could result in greater interest in similar projects throughout the City.

Mr. Gabriel **seconded** Mr. Wilkes' **motion**, noting that if Staff developed a set of guidelines by which to measure this and similar requests, the Board would then be able to apply these guidelines to the request for funding the garden.

Mr. Williams advised that the Board should not "box [itself] in" by creating guidelines for all types of new or atypical projects: they should have the ability to use their discretion to determine if a project has merit and fits into the overall goals of the CRA. He added that he did not feel their decision on the garden would set a precedent by which all other community-oriented projects would be judged: instead, each project should be expected to stand on its own.

Chair Lucas agreed, stating that Staff has vetted the request and the Board should be able to rely upon their judgment. He felt the risk of the project was

mitigated by the business plan. Mr. Ernest-Jones noted that the garden has already raised nearly \$12,000 on its own; in addition, he did not feel the **motion** provided clear direction for Staff with respect to the guidelines they would be asked to create.

In a roll call vote, the **motion** failed 2-6 (Chair Lucas, Ms. Burrows, Mr. Ernest-Jones, Mr. Hinton, Mr. Powers, and Mr. Williams dissenting).

Mr. Battle suggested that the Board consider deferring the Item for further discussion.

Motion made by Mr. Williams, seconded by Mr. Wilkes, to defer this [Item]. In a voice vote, the **motion** passed unanimously.

IV. Director's Report

None.

V. Communication to CRA Board

None.

VI. Old / New Business

Chair Lucas requested a status report on the proposed incentive program to bring businesses into the Sistrunk Corridor. Mr. Battle said while he did not have a status report on this item, the Board members would probably be asked to attend a workshop with the City Commission before the 2013-14 CRA budget is submitted; he expected that the incentive program would be part of this discussion. Mr. Battle advised that the Board members would be able to raise this and other concepts with the City Commissioners at the workshop.

Mr. Gabriel asked if there are CRA funds available for use. Mr. Battle estimated that there is \$2.5 million in reserve, and it is anticipated that TIF revenues will increase this year. Upcoming projects may include a proposed Wal-Mart Neighborhood Market, which is expected to ask for a rebate, and the Housing Authority, which is expected to request help in funding a streetscape project.

Mr. Gabriel recalled that the CRA had set aside funds for an advertising wrap on a trolley. Chair Lucas said the CRA has not received a bill for this expense, although the Transportation Management Association (TMA) has included the funds in their budget. He added that the TMA has been asked to assume operations of the former Housing Authority bus route, and the Board will be asked to consider funding the portion of this route that runs throughout the CRA.

He noted that ridership on this route averages 40 passengers per hour, which is the highest ridership of any TMA route.

Mr. Gabriel explained that he had asked about funds because it could be useful to set aside a certain amount for use in “soft projects,” such as the Flagler Village Community Garden. Mr. Battle said the Board could set these funds aside for use on a project-by-project basis, or they could create a line item for these projects within the budget. None of the \$2.5 million in reserve funds is earmarked for specific projects.

Mr. Ernest-Jones asked if it would be reasonable to expect projects that request funds from the Board to work with the Urban League or a similar organization as a condition of funding. He explained that an association of this nature could ensure that projects hire from local residents within or immediately outside of the CRA. Mr. Battle said projects could be encouraged to make their best efforts to hire from within the area; however, it would be unlikely that this practice could be enforced as a condition.

VII. Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the Board at this time, the meeting was adjourned at 5:01 p.m.

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