

**APPROVED
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY BOARD (EDAB)
MEETING MINUTES
CITY OF FORT LAUDERDALE
100 NORTH ANDREWS AVENUE
8TH FLOOR CONFERENCE ROOM
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 10, 2010 – 3:45-5:15 P.M.**

Board Members	Attendance	Present	Absent
Dev Motwani, Chair	P	3	0
Miya Burt-Stewart, Vice Chair	A	1	2
Ralph Riehl	P	3	0
Mark Krom (3:48)	P	2	1
Sean de Vosjoli	P	2	1
Christopher Denison (4:04)	P	3	0
Sheryl Dickey	A	2	1
Adam Sanders	P	2	1
Cort Neimark	P	3	0
Kenny Herskowitz	P	1	0

At this time, there are 10 appointed members to the Board, which means 6 would constitute a quorum.

Staff

Stephen Scott, Economic Development Director
Patricia Smith, Economic Development Representative
Karen Reese, Economic Development Representative
Wayne Jessup, Deputy Director of Planning and Zoning
Terry Burgess, Planning and Zoning
Adrienne Ehle, Planning and Zoning
Michael Maloney, Code Enforcement
Frank Snedaker, Chief City Architect
Susan Batchelder, Assistant Housing and Community Development Manager
Scott Strawbridge, Housing Authority
Liz Davila, Recording Secretary, Prototype, Inc.
Barbara Hartmann, Recording Secretary, Prototype, Inc.

Communications to the City Commission

None at this time.

I. Call to Order & Introductions

Chair Motwani called the meeting to order at 3:45 p.m. Roll was called and it was determined a quorum was present.

The Board members and Staff introduced themselves at this time.

II. Approval of February 10, 2010 Minutes

Motion made by Mr. de Vosjoli, seconded by Mr. Sanders, to approve the minutes of the February 10, 2010 meeting. In a voice vote, the **motion** carried unanimously.

III. Introduction of New Member

New member Ken Herskowitz is a managing partner of a six-member cardiovascular surgical practice and Chief of Cardiac, Thoracic, and Vascular Surgery at Broward General Hospital. He has lived in the Fort Lauderdale area for 15 years, and was appointed to the Board by Mayor Seiler.

IV. CDBG-R Stimulus Money

Chair Motwani introduced Susan Batchelder, Assistant Housing and Community Development Manager. Ms. Batchelder explained one grant the City has worked with is the Community Development Block Grant. Fort Lauderdale received approximately \$500,000 from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act for the creation and retention of jobs. A program was established with these funds to encourage small businesses to expand or offer new services.

There is roughly \$150,000 remaining from this grant; the maximum loan being considered is \$90,000, although they will entertain requests for larger amounts. Ms. Batchelder asked that members who are aware of interested parties advise them of these available funds. Housing and Community Development is hoping to “build this program into a regular CDBG and continue it.” A loan application committee will review each application and determine whether the applicant receives a grant, a low-interest loan, or a deferred loan for the creation and retention of jobs.

Chair Motwani asked to hear the requirements for eligibility. Ms. Batchelder stated while they would prefer to provide loans to low- and moderate-income businesses, a business that is expanding and would hire an individual with low or moderate income would also be considered. Jobs created or retained must go to individuals who make less than 80% of the City’s median income, which is currently \$42,000.

Mr. Scott asked if there is a minimum salary threshold for the created jobs. Ms. Batchelder advised there is no minimum salary other than minimum wage, but there is a three-year minimum on the job. She clarified that this means the job must exist for three years, not that it must employ the same individual. There is no deadline for application.

She added that \$250,000 was allocated to this program, and an additional \$150,000 was allocated to a technical assistance program, which will offer training in budgeting, marketing, and other skills necessary to expand business.

She also clarified that the money cannot be used to pay an employee's salary, but must be used to expand the business.

Chair Motwani asked if a CRA would qualify as a low- to moderate income area. Ms. Batchelder stated Housing and Community Development works with the CRA "on a number of development projects." The income of the area is a consideration.

Chair Motwani and Mr. Scott thanked Ms. Batchelder for her presentation.

V. Dr. Kennedy Homes Project

Chair Motwani introduced Scott Strawbridge, representing the Housing Authority of Fort Lauderdale, Karl Peterson of Jacobs Engineering, and Christopher Shear with the Carlisle Development Group. He explained the project is an affordable-income development on the south side of Broward Boulevard. The plan was unanimously approved the previous week by the City Commission.

Mr. Scott added that the project had been caught between the need for historic preservation and the need to improve "a dilapidated site." He noted that these two factors do not have to be competing interests.

Mr. Strawbridge informed the Board that he is familiar with the economic impact of historic preservation: in most cases, there is positive impact to a community when its cultural resources have been rehabilitated. He explained that "a huge disconnect" was created in this case, as the historic structure was a housing project. He allowed that there is historic significance to the Dr. Kennedy Homes site; however, it did not outweigh the need to provide "safe, decent housing" for the residents.

He explained that the original construction of the site began in 1941, which is outside the period of the site's significance to the Sailboat Bend area. Many Housing Authorities around the nation have dealt with similar issues, he noted, because from 1938-42, the federal government empowered local governments to construct projects like the Dr. Kennedy Homes. These structures have been demolished in many major cities over the years.

Mr. Strawbridge advised that the Housing Authority had self-initiated a plan to preserve three of the original buildings on the site. Their primary goal, however, was to maximize the green space on the site and create a more serene setting

for the project and the neighborhood. He stated that the resulting project “has balanced all those competing interests” and created a “new gateway to the City.”

He asserted that the City “had to do something better” with regard to housing, as many of the units are 70 years old; all are “cement block, inside and out” with no drywall, central air, or heat. In the new business model, using the low-income housing tax credit, maintenance funds will be self-generated. The project was recently awarded \$21 million in tax credits.

Mr. Strawbridge stated the primary reason he is before the Board is because the original site has 71 parking spaces for 132 units. Code requires that the site provide 255 parking spaces. He explained that no additional units will be created by the renovation; the site has functioned for over 70 years with less than half this number, with “minor hiccups and overflows.”

In the project’s zoning district, there is no parking reduction process; the Housing Authority must go to the Board of Adjustment to request a variance. Mr. Strawbridge observed that “thresholds are quite critical” with regard to the criteria that must be met for a variance. He also pointed out that most individuals coming before the Board of Adjustment are “asking to do something more” with their property or project, while the Housing Authority is asking to remove some of the required parking spaces. If this is done, it will allow for 57% green space on the site while still accommodating 100% more parking than is currently available.

When the project is funded in 2011, it will create approximately 450 jobs in construction; the Housing Authority’s investment in the project will be over \$25 million, of which the City’s contribution will be zero. The Housing Authority pays its own permit and impact fees, and the site has been “off the tax rolls” since 1941. School Board impact fees, Parks impact fees, and other permitted impact fees are expected to be roughly \$600,000.

Mr. Strawbridge explained that he was aware the Board had been discussing “the beach,” and requested if they take a position with regard to Code changes, “affordable housing could really use your help.” He advised that many other cities have parking Codes that specifically address affordable housing. He noted that the reserve green space could be converted to parking, should any future overflow conflict occur.

Mr. Neimark asked how displacement of the residents would be handled. Mr. Strawbridge advised a separate 143-unit project is underway and expected to be complete by the end of 2011; all residents will receive a Section 8 housing choice voucher and will receive assistance in relocation, as well as the right of first refusal if they do not wish to return to their original site. Elderly tenants will be assisted by the Housing Authority. The rent will be the same “within a couple of dollars per month.”

Mr. Neimark asked if the historical units will continue to be occupied. Mr. Strawbridge advised that one building will serve as the office; another will be a community room, with computer and library facilities; and the third will be an exercise room.

He concluded that he hoped the Board would consider making a motion in support of the amended parking.

Mr. Riehl asked if the City's parking experts are supporting his effort to request a variance. Mr. Strawbridge responded that they are supportive: Mr. Peterson has been working with the City's traffic engineers, who gave them the proper methodology to conduct a study.

Chair Motwani explained to Dr. Herskowitz that the Board has supported a review of the parking Code, particularly on the beach; the City Commission had agreed that Code was in need of a review. The City currently has an RFP out for a parking consultant to review its parking Code.

It was noted that Miami-Dade County requires two spaces per residential unit, but this requirement has been reduced to one space for affordable housing.

Mr. Strawbridge added that there are 212 trees presently on the site; Code requires 252. The plan is expected to result in 412 trees on the property.

Motion made by Mr. Riehl, seconded by Mr. Neimark, to support the Dr. Kennedy Homes redevelopment as presented, and to support the request for a parking variance. In a voice vote, the **motion** carried.

VI. Sign Ordinance

Mr. Scott explained that this discussion was continued from the February 2010 meeting, where the Board began discussing the Sign Ordinances at the City Commission's request.

Chair Motwani stated that the Board was tasked with examining the Sign Ordinance to learn whether improvements or modifications could be made in order to encourage economic development. The first six sections of Code were discussed at the previous meeting, while the last six sections will be discussed at this meeting; there will be an "overall discussion" at the next meeting, and recommendations will be made. In reading through the Code, he felt there were a number of legal and safety concerns that the City must protect, while at the same time the Board's concern is that the Code be friendlier to businesses.

Mr. Scott advised that one issue he hears about regularly is that of sandwich boards, which were discussed at the previous meeting. It was explained that the City must “walk a very fine line,” as loosening the sign Code too much can open the door, constitutionally, to billboards. He cautioned that the Board should take this concern into consideration, and perhaps discuss it further at the next meeting. He suggested the Board focus on a few specific items relating to economic development, most of which “occur fairly early” in the Code.

Another aspect of the conversation is that a few years ago, there was a proposed new Sign Ordinance developed by the Planning and Zoning Board. He recommended that before the next meeting, the Board should review that document and consider it from an economic development perspective.

Mr. Burgess explained that the City Commission “didn’t like” the proposed new Ordinance, as the Commission in favor of fewer and smaller signs. Despite the review and approval of the Planning and Zoning Board, there was resistance from the City Commission due to “some of the dimensions and types of signs.”

Mr. Scott felt it would be important for the Board to learn how the proposed changes had differed from existing Code. Chair Motwani added that the Planning and Zoning and Code Enforcement Departments can share insight about “what’s out there” and work with the Board to improve it. He noted that there may be parts of Code that “nobody wants in there” that have not been revisited, and these may offer an opportunity for immediate consensus and possible recommendations before moving on to potentially controversial issues.

Mr. Maloney cautioned the Board to realize that some changes could be “a slippery slope:” the current Ordinance is not always properly enforced in all areas, which leads to more and more signs being put up, which have an effect on the community. He advised that at the last meeting, he had understood some of the City’s smaller businesses were hoping to use smaller signs and sandwich boards.

Chair Motwani agreed that the smaller businesses are seeking a way to “get their name out there” during difficult economic times; he felt the Board was tasked with encouraging these smaller businesses.

He recalled that they had also discussed the approval process during the previous meeting; it had been noted that while the community perceived that sign approval “took quite a long time,” this was no longer accurate. He suggested that the Board discuss planning for the time when the economy recovers, as well as a “marketing effort” to inform the community that the time frame for approval is now much shorter.

Mr. Riehl suggested Planning and Zoning might “shepherd” smaller businesses through the approval process. Mr. Burgess explained that the Department mainly works with sign companies and not the individual businesses.

It was noted that the question had been raised regarding why the Sign Ordinance is “so complicated.” Chair Motwani recalled that there had been the suggestion of providing a primer on how to read the Code without being intimidated by its language. He proposed that Staff create a document of this nature and perhaps post it on the appropriate website.

Mr. Burgess pointed out that while this may help, the best solution is for owners to meet with Staff members and discuss their questions about Code. He advised that there is a front counter at the Department with members who may be able to address these questions; individuals may walk in, or appointments may be made with Staff.

Chair Motwani observed that a small business owner might first choose to visit the website, where the Code might be daunting. While it may make sense to those who are experienced in reading it, it may seem “illogical” to a layperson unless a guide is available.

Mr. Burgess stated since the previous meeting, Staff is rewriting the sign application to simplify it, reducing the number of requirements that must be produced with the application in some cases.

Mr. Krom asked if there has been consideration of certifying or accrediting the sign companies to identify those who “know what they’re talking about.” Mr. Burgess explained that most companies deal with multiple cities and several different Codes. In the past, the City has had a Sign Advisory Board to make approvals, in a manner similar to the Planning and Zoning Board, but it was “not a good thing.” Chair Motwani agreed that this could create a prohibitive expense for small businesses. He felt a “layman’s guide” to the Code would make the application process easier.

Mr. Scott requested a description of where sandwich boards could be used. Chair Motwani recalled they are not allowed in public rights-of-way, such as the walkways in public shopping centers; awning signs are only allowed in certain districts. He felt these are two examples of issues that affect small businesses in particular, and a way to modify them creatively could be “a good start.”

With regard to snipe signs, Mr. Scott pointed out that there “doesn’t seem... [to be] a strong desire to see snipe signs.” Mr. Burgess described these signs as “something that attracts attention,” such as painting the side of a truck, having a costumed employee in front of a business, or posting a small sign on a tree or in

the ground, such as political campaign signs. He clarified that sandwich boards do not fall into this category.

Mr. Riehl stated there are two sandwich board signs used by the City at a beach parking lot; they have attached these signs to a pole by a chain so the signs will not constitute a safety hazard. Mr. Burgess stated that directional sandwich signs, such as for parking, may be used on private property.

Mr. Scott advised that there are two kinds of sandwich boards: those placed directly in front of a store, which can be brought inside, and those set back from the road at shopping centers rather than placed near the road for better visibility. He felt the second category constituted a greater safety issue than the first.

Mr. Maloney noted "when we stopped enforcing" in certain shopping centers, larger and larger sandwich board signs were placed out front. He offered this as an example of how "it starts to escalate," and how relaxing Code can result in more signage. Mr. Burgess clarified that strip centers are allowed to have a sign with the names of all tenants "equal in size," including the anchor store.

Mr. Scott summarized that the Board seems to be in agreement regarding the "layman's guide," and still need to revisit the Code changes proposed in 2004 to determine if any of its suggested changes would address current economic development issues. He asked if there is consensus on "loosening" the regulations on sandwich boards directly in front of stores. It was noted that this could be a consideration on private property.

Mr. Burgess advised there are other ways to post signage in addition to sandwich boards, such as window signs; these signs are "not really counted" as part of the number of signs, and there are limitations on how much window space can be used. He cautioned that if regulations are loosened on sandwich signs, the result could be "very difficult to control."

Ms. Ehle recommended that it is important to state the intent behind any changes to Code, so these reasons are not lost as time goes on. She suggested a two- to three-sentence statement of the intended purpose of any changes to accompany the proposal itself. Chair Motwani agreed with this.

Mr. Scott stated at the next meeting the Board "focus exclusively on sign Code." Chair Motwani also felt this would be necessary so they could arrive at any final recommendations at that next meeting.

Mr. Scott added that he had spoken to members of the Realtors' Association of Greater Fort Lauderdale, who had "strong feelings" about the enforcement of real estate-related signs. Mr. Maloney advised that the "temporary open house" signs

used by realtors fall into the same category as snipe signs when they are placed along the street “in the swale area.”

Mr. Scott asked Mr. Sanders to provide some key points on this issue at the next meeting, or present the Board with the information before the meeting.

Chair Motwani and Mr. Scott thanked the representatives from other Departments who had attended today’s meeting.

VII. Director’s Report

Mr. Scott reported that the Business First program is “winding down;” they expect to visit less than their goal of 50 businesses, but believe 42 or 43 site visits will be possible. The survey of “close to 900 businesses” has been completed, and the report on the findings has yet to be prepared. The Business First team anticipates their final report will be complete in early or mid-April, and the “rollout” of the program is expected to be later in that month.

He reminded the Board that the St. Patrick’s Day parade will be held on Saturday, March 13; over 100 floats or participants are expected. There will also be a festival from 11:30 a.m. until 9:00 p.m., with the parade scheduled for 2:00 p.m.

The Air & Sea Show has officially been canceled, as sufficient funds could not be raised.

VIII. Old / New Business

Chair Motwani requested that a discussion of turtle lighting be added to an upcoming Agenda once the discussion of the Sign Ordinance is complete. It was also noted that former member Patricia DuMont, or another member of the Centennial Celebration Committee, could present information regarding the upcoming City Centennial in 2011.

Mr. Krom asked that the Board discuss the results of the Business First study as well.

There being no further business to come before the Board at this time, the meeting was adjourned at 5:11 p.m.