

**APPROVED**  
**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY BOARD (EDAB)**  
**MEETING MINUTES**  
**CITY OF FORT LAUDERDALE**  
**100 NORTH ANDREWS AVENUE**  
**8<sup>TH</sup> FLOOR CONFERENCE ROOM**  
**WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 10, 2011 – 3:45-5:15 P.M.**

<b><u>Board Members</u></b>	<b><u>Attendance</u></b>	<b><u>Present</u></b>	<b><u>Absent</u></b>
Dev Motwani, Chair	P	6	2
Sheryl Dickey, Vice Chair (arr.4:00)	P	7	1
Miya Burt-Stewart (telephonic / 4:01)	P	8	0
Al Calloway	P	8	0
Christopher Denison	A	7	1
Cary Goldberg (dep. 4:45)	P	6	1
Jason Hughes	P	8	0
George Mihaiu	P	5	3
Cort Neimark	P	7	1
Ralph Riehl	P	6	2
Adam Sanders	P	5	3

At this time, there are 11 appointed members to the Board, which means 6 would constitute a quorum.

**Staff**

Stephen Scott, Economic Development Director  
Karen Reese, Economic Development Representative  
Patricia L. Smith, Secretary III, Economic Development  
Alfred Battle, Northwest Progresso-Flagler Heights CRA Director  
Thomasina Turner, Northwest Progresso-Flagler Heights CRA  
Barbara Hartmann, Recording Secretary, Prototype, Inc.

**Communications to City Commission**

None.

**I. Call to Order / Introductions**

Chair Motwani called the meeting to order at 3:53 p.m. and roll was called. The members, Staff, and guests introduced themselves.

Chair Motwani explained that Ms. Burt-Stewart was unable to attend today's meeting in person but had requested to participate via telephone. The Board agreed by unanimous vote to allow Ms. Burt-Stewart to participate telephonically. Mr. Scott clarified that a member attending telephonically would not be able to

vote on motions, although that member could ask questions and participate in discussion.

## **II. Approval of July 13, 2011 Minutes**

**Motion** made by Mr. Goldberg, seconded by Mr. Mihaiu, to approve the minutes of the July 13, 2011 meeting. In a voice vote, the **motion** passed unanimously.

## **III. Las Olas Merchants Association**

Chair Motwani advised that the speaker for this Item was unable to attend today's meeting.

## **IV. Northwest Progresso CRA & Enterprise Zone**

Chair Motwani introduced Alfred Battle, Director of the Northwest Community Development Area (CRA). He recalled that Mr. Battle has provided the Board with updates on the CRA and the Enterprise Zone at past meetings. The Enterprise Zone provides economic incentives for investment inside the CRA.

Mr. Battle noted that Fort Lauderdale has two Community Redevelopment Areas: the Central Beach CRA, which includes a specific geographic region of the beach area, and the Northwest CRA, which is comprised of the neighborhoods within Northwest Fort Lauderdale, including the Flagler Village and Progresso areas. It consists of roughly 1400 acres, including a significant amount of residential property, large areas of industrial property, and commercial/retail property, most of which is on Sunrise Boulevard and Broward Boulevard.

Ms. Dickey arrived at 4:00 p.m.

The Northwest CRA was founded in 1995 and will expire in 2025. The 30-year time frame allows the CRA to raise capital and make the improvements for which it was created. Mr. Battle stated that the redevelopment plans for the City's two CRAs are very different, as the goals are very different in these areas. The fundamental purpose of the Northwest CRA's plan is twofold: they hope to redevelop Sistrunk Boulevard and reinvigorate its surrounding neighborhoods. This will make the area competitive within the City.

Ms. Burt-Stewart joined the meeting telephonically at 4:01 p.m.

Mr. Battle continued that the Northwest CRA is roughly halfway through its 30-year life cycle. He stated that over the past two years in particular, they are "in a really good place." At present, the \$15 million Sistrunk Boulevard construction project is underway. It will reduce the number of travel lanes from four to three within part of the Midtown Business District, and will add on-street parking,

sidewalks, light fixtures, landscaping, and other improvements in the surrounding neighborhoods. The City owns a large portion of land at the corner of Northwest 7 Avenue and Sistrunk Boulevard, and is working with a developer to bring a commercial shopping center to this site. He described other improvements that are part of the Sistrunk Boulevard project.

Mr. Battle continued that the CRA has also worked to recruit a developer to bring a grocery store to one of the neighborhoods; the terms of this redevelopment agreement have now been finalized. Save-a-Lot will be the anchor property in this location, and other tenants include Bank of America and Family Dollar. The CRA is working with the developer to recruit restaurants to come into the remaining spaces on this property.

In June, the CRA Advisory Board held a joint workshop with the City Commission, at which these entities discussed next steps and future plans for the area. Mr. Battle said there were a number of inconsistencies at present between the City's regulatory requirements and what the CRA believes is the best way to redevelop the area. He explained that the Northwest CRA plans to propose a number of changes to the zoning Code that are related to a reduction in parking requirements. This is a major issue in the area, as there is limited land availability in the Northwest CRA.

He continued that another zoning Code issue relates to the users allowed to come into the area, as some uses are discouraged within the CRA. A 2008 study determined that convenience and liquor store uses are not compatible with the CRA's redevelopment goals; as there is also an overabundance of these uses, the study recommended that they be discouraged in favor of fundamental community resources, such as drugstores, grocery stores, and other basic business establishments. The CRA will recruit both "name-brand" and "mom-and-pop" businesses to the area. Appropriate zoning revisions will be presented to the City Commission to help implement these changes.

Mr. Battle advised that the current economy provides an opportunity for the CRA to address other zoning issues, such as multi-family and low-income residential units in the area. There is presently an 84% majority of renters over homeowners in the CRA, which is out of balance with the number of residential units. A zoning opportunity to encourage more home ownership could ask developers to look at the CRA as a way to make investments that may not be available to them in other parts of Fort Lauderdale.

Mr. Battle concluded that the City Commission had urged the CRA to use its Redevelopment Advisory Board, as well as other City advisory bodies, to help foster its mission. He advised that he would help keep the Economic Development Advisory Board informed of what is underway in the CRA, and asked that they help advocate for the CRA's goals as well.

Mr. Scott explained that the City's CRAs are funded through Tax Increment Financing (TIF). When a CRA is created, the County and City agree to cap tax collections at that time, so any increases above the current level will go exclusively into the CRA to be used for redevelopment. This means, however, that the area must be declared "slum and blight." He noted that many people would like the Beach CRA to encompass a much larger area, but some residents and businesses on the beach asked that their areas not receive this designation.

He added that the intent of having a CRA is that the area has money to lend toward redevelopment and other goals, which sets these areas apart from other sections of the City and serves as an effective redevelopment tool.

Chair Motwani asked Mr. Battle to describe the Enterprise Zone for the Board members, noting that this zone creates economic incentives to invest within the CRA. Mr. Battle said Fort Lauderdale has a number of economic incentives that can be "layered" to receive direct and indirect financial assistance with decisions about relocation and investment from a business standpoint.

The Enterprise Zone program is a multi-jurisdictional program that shares its benefits with seven other cities within Broward County, including Hollywood, Dania Beach, and Pompano. While no City Staff is dedicated to this program's board, each participating city has a program coordinator. No spending is required of either the County or the participating city, as incentives are administered through the State of Florida. The City and County process the necessary applications for the State so individual businesses and developers can take advantage of the program.

The Enterprise Zone program offers some popular incentives, including a 97% sales tax refund of up to \$10,000. This is primarily intended for large-scale projects, and businesses may continuously apply for this incentive as they make additional investments. Another key incentive is the job tax credit, which rewards businesses for employing people who live within the Enterprise Zone. Industrial, manufacturing, and retail establishments use this incentive on an ongoing basis, as the employees must only work at the establishment for eight months. As long as the business continues to hire from within the Enterprise Zone each year, they may continue to apply for the job tax credit.

Mr. Battle advised that two key industries attend Enterprise Zone board meetings: the real estate industry, which is helping investors find sites for their businesses, and the tax industry, which works to find additional benefits for their customers and other ways to bring in revenue.

He described the Enterprise Zone area as approximately 20 miles; any given County may only use up to 21 square miles for Enterprise Zone purposes. Fort Lauderdale has the largest portion of this Zone and the most members on the

board. He noted that the businesses may take advantage of the job tax credit by hiring from within the Enterprise Zone in other Broward County cities. The Enterprise Zone has been in Fort Lauderdale since 1995 and is scheduled to expire in its current form in 2015. Mr. Battle noted that the program has been renewed in the past by the State legislature.

Vice Chair Dickey asked if the City could look into a HUD Zone designation. Mr. Battle said this possibility exists; this Zone would be federally established near the boundaries of the former Enterprise Zone program, which is slightly smaller than the Zone's current version. He offered to provide Vice Chair Dickey with further information.

Chair Motwani asked to know the current boundaries of the Enterprise Zone. Mr. Battle said the CRA is within this Zone, which is bounded by Riverland Road, Commercial Boulevard, and Prospect. He noted that this is not a square area like the CRA.

He continued that certain census tracts were used to establish the Enterprise Zone boundaries, including poverty statistics. An area with high unemployment automatically receives consideration, as does an area with vacant properties or no development. He noted that this was why parts of Las Olas Boulevard that were once lacking in active development qualified for the Enterprise Zone.

Mr. Riehl asked if all the streets in the Northwest CRA are paved. Mr. Battle said there are some areas in need of repaving, and some alleyways are not paved, but all usable roads have been paved.

Mr. Riehl asked Mr. Battle for his opinion on safety in the area, including police and fire services, and whether he felt these services could be increased. Mr. Battle said there were no issues with fire services; while he agreed crime could be an issue in any urban redevelopment area, the discussion focuses more on how true redevelopment can be achieved if crime is a problem. The CRA is interested in infrastructure that could help deter crime.

Mr. Riehl asked if the EDAB should recommend the allocation of additional resources to help the Northwest CRA deal with crime or other issues that could be holding back redevelopment. Mr. Battle said if the Board wished, they could discuss the issue and arrive at a conclusion about what they felt might work best, as the City Commission prefers a high level of specificity for such recommendations.

Chair Motwani recalled that the shopping center at the corner of Sistrunk Boulevard and 7 Avenue had come before the Board when they were helping allocate Recovery Zone bonds. They had ultimately recommended that the City Commission allocate some of these funds to the project. He asked if the

developer was successful in using the Recovery Zone bond. Mr. Battle said they had found it to be too expensive and ultimately used their own resources, which were less expensive than the bank financing.

He advised that the developer has additional issues to resolve before the City can transfer the land to him. This is planned for September 2011, as Save-a-Lot would like to open the store within a specific time frame.

The Board thanked Mr. Battle for his presentation.

#### **V. New Business Assistance Coordinator Position**

Mr. Scott recalled that one of the key recommendations made by Business F1rst was to hire an individual as a Business Concierge for the City. This person would work directly with businesses to “ease the way through” the City’s regulatory processes. He reported that the City has hired Laura Gambino, guest, to serve as Business Concierge beginning on September 1, 2011.

Ms. Gambino introduced herself to the Board. She is a native of south Florida and a graduate of Florida International University, with a Master’s degree from Nova Southeastern University. She has worked with the Greater Fort Lauderdale Chamber of Commerce and was Executive Director of the Hollywood Chamber of Commerce. She has also served on numerous advisory boards in south Florida cities. Her focus is primarily on business development.

The Board recognized Ms. Gambino with a round of applause.

Mr. Scott noted that the Business Concierge program is being created “from the ground up,” and explained that when Ms. Gambino takes office, he would invite her to all EDAB meetings to present her own report on the progress of her position. He again emphasized that the Business F1rst program was instrumental in convincing the City Commission to create this new position, and praised the Commission’s dedication to economic development. He thanked Chair Motwani and guest Dan Lindblade, President and CEO of the Greater Fort Lauderdale Chamber of Commerce, in particular. In turn, Mr. Riehl recognized Mr. Scott’s work toward adding this new position.

Chair Motwani stated that the initial round of interviews and surveys by Business F1rst brought some recommendations to the City, some of which have already been addressed by the City Commission. The next phase was to take specific projects in need of follow-up and divide the members into subgroups to work on these projects. Chair Motwani oversees the Process and Ordinance Review Committee, which addresses many of the concerns expressed regarding the Building and Planning and Zoning Departments.

Chair Motwani noted that to show the City's commitment to Business F1rst's efforts, the heads of both these Departments have been extremely active in the committee's meetings. He added that one focus is the improvement of the efficiency of processes at both Departments, which would make it easier on users, residents, and business owners who become involved in these processes. They also hope to add more services online to make it easier for these individuals to access these Departments without physically visiting them.

He advised that one major hurdle is funding these technological improvements, which may require infrastructure changes. At a previous meeting, the new City Manager had referred to "a pool of funds" that may be available for this use. The committee has also researched the technology used by other cities. Making submissions and revisions possible online would reduce some of the costs associated with bringing documentation to these Departments.

On the Ordinance Review side, Chair Motwani recalled that the Board has also looked at changes to the City's Sign Ordinance and parking Code, which meant some issues were addressed by the time they reached the committee. They are also reviewing the noise Ordinance. He concluded that Business F1rst's goal is to ensure that the City's businesses succeed and continue to invest in the City, while balancing the needs of both businesses and residents. He stated he would bring more information to the Board as it becomes available.

Mr. Goldberg left the meeting at 4:45 p.m.

## **VI. Director's Report**

Mr. Scott reported that three weeks ago, the City held an anniversary celebration with its sister city of Medellin, Colombia, which included an Economic Development Breakfast with that city's delegation. The event included an exchange of presentations about the two cities. He explained that Medellin is working to revitalize its cultural and other assets and hopes to expand business. He characterized the event as a positive experience.

He continued that he had attended a meeting with the new City Manager earlier in the day. A group called Property Owners Las Olas (POLO), consisting of property owners on Las Olas Boulevard, wished to address some of the issues related to the Boulevard. Mr. Scott noted that most merchants on Las Olas rent space from the property owners. POLO meets once monthly to discuss issues, which range from trash cans not emptied on a regular basis to consideration of the taxes this area brings into the City for reinvestment and upkeep. He advised that the City Manager had addressed at least one issue of concern immediately.

Mr. Scott continued that many of the concerns raised by POLO would require additional money. He concluded that the ongoing dialogue will continue between the City and POLO as well as between the POLO members themselves.

Saturday Nite Alive continues to be held each week. Mr. Scott pointed out that in its third year, this program features up to 16 events and will continue on every Saturday night throughout the summer. He encouraged the Board members to attend if possible. Attractions include musicians, vendors, and street performers.

Mr. Scott advised that he and the City Manager are planning a series of corporate site visits. These visits are currently scheduled with some of the City's bigger industries, including Citrix and Bosch. He asked that any members aware of businesses in need of help let him know, and he would find out if a site visit was possible.

Mr. Scott recalled that some of the topics members have asked to discuss at upcoming meetings include a presentation on The WAVE streetcar, a discussion of the proposed FEC railway, and a crime report from the Police Department. Chair Motwani noted that some scheduling flexibility remains in the coming months, and encouraged the members to suggest additional topics.

Mr. Scott added that he is also working on an Economic Development Plan for Fort Lauderdale. He stated that he intends to bring this Plan to the Board as it is in progress, so members can offer their input. The goal is to create an economic development vision for the City over the next five years.

Vice Chair Dickey asked if the City's Visioning Committee would provide input on the Economic Development Plan, or if the Plan would be separate from that advisory body's work. Mr. Scott said he was not certain at this point, but he will continue to work closely with members of the Visioning Committee, including Mr. Lindblade.

Mr. Lindblade advised that the Visioning Committee takes a much broader approach and includes all sectors of the community. Chair Motwani said the consultant who is handling the visioning process has worked with him on ideas specifically geared toward economic development; he provided information on the work done by the Board and by Business First, and had apprised the consultant of some of the business community's concerns.

Mr. Lindblade noted that he had been asked for information on human resources development in the local hospitality industry, but he had not been able to provide a great deal of information. He asked the Board members if they were aware of any new jobs in this industry that could be coming online in the next one to two years. Mr. Scott noted that there are plans related to the growth of Port



Everglades. The members discussed prospective renovations to and growth in the City's hospitality industry, including possible hiring by existing hotels.

Mr. Lindblade stated that the Chamber of Commerce has created a Council of Economic Advisors, which they expect to reach out to community business leaders in order to determine future growth with regard to hiring and expansion. This would help quantify the issue and provide additional fodder for discussion.

## **VII. Old / New Business**

- **Communications to City Commission**

None.

There being no further business to come before the Board at this time, the meeting was adjourned at 5:08 p.m.

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