

LEALMAN CRA ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Meeting Minutes

October 6, 2015 6:30 p.m.

The meeting was held on Tuesday, October 6, 2015 in the Crown Motors GMC Dealership Training Room, 5237 – 34th Street North, St. Petersburg, FL 33714. Those in attendance were:

County Executives:

Commissioner Charlie Justice; Commissioner Kenneth Welch and County Administrator, Mark Woodard

Members:

Ray Neri; Steve Cleveland; Gary Grooms; Dwayne Hawkins; Jorge Mercado; Cheryl DiCicco and James Roberto. **Absent Members:** Diane Plomatos and Linda Umberger

County Staff:

David Sadowsky; Gordon Beardslee; Renea Vincent; Frank Bowman; Rachel Booth and Marcella Faucette

Frank Bowman served as the moderator of the meeting to keep the meeting moving along in a timely manner.

1. Welcome from County Executives

Mr. Woodard addressed the group by first giving some context to the significance of the first meeting of the CRA Advisory Committee. He stated that earlier this year, the Board of County Commissioners adopted the County's Strategic Plan, which incorporates five (5) broad goal areas. Within each goal there are 5-6 strategies. Underneath each strategy are "Doing Things" (tasks) that are done every day at the department level to accomplish the strategies in support of the goals. He stated that one of the goal areas is *Continual Economic Growth and Vitality*. Within that goal, one of the strategies is investing in communities that need the most, such as the Lealman Community. Establishing a Community Redevelopment Area (CRA) within the Lealman Community is an example of "Doing Things". A CRA is a fundamental tool for economic development throughout cities of a county. In Pinellas County, the Lealman Redevelopment Area is the first Redevelopment Area within the unincorporated area. This is the first time in the history of Pinellas County that this economic and development tool has been leveraged to make real, meaningful economic change within the unincorporated area. Mr. Woodard then stated that he applauded the leadership of the County Commissioners. He then pointed out that the Strategic Plan has three broad themes, 1) *Optimism for the future*; 2) *With partners we can do more* (CRA Committee and the broader Lealman community are the County's partners because everyone has to work together to get the job done); and, 3) *Sense that the County wants to do things to serve the public* (the establishment of the CRA, the establishment of this advisory committee to the Board of County Commissioners, the work that will follow to make everything real to lift this community up, using the resources of the County is exciting). Mr. Woodard concluded by stating that he was excited about this new endeavor and didn't want to miss attending the first meeting. He then welcomed and thanked the Committee for their time and service.

Commissioner Charlie Justice thanked the Committee for committing themselves to a work product result that is going to change the lives of the people in the Lealman Community. He then expressed gratitude for their service. He stated that he had heard about Lealman years ago from Mr. Neri and several other Lealman representatives while in the State Legislature before becoming

a part of the County Commission. He informed the group that although there was an awareness of the problems in Lealman, now is the time of opportunity. The geography, natural resources and the human resources are now available. Over the years, those working in the Lealman community have seen a variety of organizations and entities come in and offer ideas and have some grand plans and then sort of fade away. Now the opportunity is here and the County is committed to supporting the building up of Lealman. He concluded by thanking the Committee for their service and offering his support.

Commissioner Welch echoed Commissioner Justice's discussion in that there is a strong commitment to the building of the Lealman community and thanked the Committee for their service and what they have done and are doing individually to help the community. He stated that the Lealman community has made some incremental gains such as the garbage collection franchise through James (Roberto) and Ray (Neri), which is still the envy of other parts of the unincorporated area. He stated that residents from other areas are asking how they get that type of service in their areas. In addition is the success of the Adopt –A- Block program and many other good things that are happening. He expressed how exciting it was to have a dedicated 30 year funding source to the community; something that has never been done in the unincorporated area. He explained that the Advisory Committee was established so that the citizens are the driving force, as this is not a countywide event, it is a community event. He concluded with his gratitude and support of the Committee.

2. County Staff Introductions

County staff introduced themselves: **David Sadowsky**, Pinellas County, Senior Assistant County Attorney; **Gordon Beardslee**, Pinellas County, Planning Department Director; **Renea Vincent**, Pinellas County, Community Development & Planning Division Manager; **Frank Bowman** Pinellas County, Community Outreach & Development Section Manager; **Rachel Booth** Pinellas County, Principal Planner; and **Marcella Faucette** Pinellas County, Program Planner

3. Advisory Committee Introductions

The Committee members introduced themselves: **Ray Neri**, Lealman resident, Lealman Community Association (LCA) President and board member of several Pinellas County boards; **Steve Cleveland**, Adopt-a-Block Director and General Contractor; **Gary Grooms**, Owner and CEO of Mesh Fabricators; **Dwayne Hawkins**, Owner and CEO of Crown Motors; **Jorge Mercado**, Lealman resident / LCA Board Member, Defense Contractor; **Cheryl DiCicco**, Lealman resident, retired Principal of Lealman Intermediate School and currently runs a small non-profit; **James Roberto**, Lealman resident and business owner since 1985 –County Recycling, Inc.

Two members were unable to attend. Mr. Bowman introduced them as **Diane Plomatos**, Executive Vice President of Alps South and **Linda Umberger**, Lealman resident and 15 year LCA Board member. He then directed them to the CRA Advisory Committee and County Support Staff contact directory, located in their binders.

Before Mr. Sadowsky started with the Committee Bylaws and Sunshine Rules, Mr. Woodard, excused himself. Before exiting, Mr. Woodard stated that he wanted to leave the Committee with two thoughts; one, a teaser and the other a challenge. Regarding the teaser, he stated that there is something already in the works that he cannot discuss at this time; however, it is something that had the potential to be transformational. He then challenged the Committee to do something transformational as they have the political support via the County Commissioners and his personal commitment as the County Administrator help to get it done, to serve the public. He then excused himself. Commissioner Welch also left at this time.

4. Committee By-Laws and Sunshine Law Overview

Using the handouts provided to the Committee, David Sadowsky, County Attorney, covered and explained when necessary, the salient components (i.e., committee composition, duties, responsibilities, absences etc.) of the Committee By- Laws and Sunshine Laws(i.e. meetings, communication, voting, conflicts, conflict forms etc.) Mr. Sadowsky also reviewed the list of members appointed to the Advisory Committee as well as their appointment terms. There is no limit to the number of terms that can be served.

Mr. Jorge Mercado expressed some concern regarding the Sunshine Law as he and two other Committee Members (Ray Neri and Linda Umberger) also serve as Board Members of the LCA.

Mrs. Renea Vincent asked if the determining factor was fact finding vs. voting. Mr. Sadowsky stated that general fact finding or discussing fact-finding information is okay; however, voting on items that are up for discussion is not allowed. He then added that when trying to determine if there is a conflict of interest, one has to consider if the concern, issue, remedy etc. is unique or a benefit or economic gain to the individual or to his or her relatives or business, above and beyond that would be available to the general public. Mr. Mercado asserted that there will be common topics between the two groups such as the Adopt- A –Block program and wanted to ensure that no lines were crossed. Mr. Sadowsky told the Committee that agendas for the meetings are usually provide ahead of time and to call him or County staff if they have questions regarding any potential conflicts.

Mr. Bowman stated that there is a desire to get the business community more involved and that there are hopes that a business association forms from the CRA Committee's efforts. He then stated that there wouldn't be a problem if there was a discussion regarding the need for streets in Lealman that need to be paved or sidewalks that needed to be constructed in the community; that would be a scenario that could not be discussed outside of the meeting.

Mr. Ray Neri stated that the concern stems from the fact that issues in Lealman are initially brought to the LCA and then will be brought up before this Committee, where the Committee members will not only discuss but also may have to vote. He continued that there are 1 to 3 members that will automatically be eliminated from the voting process because in addressing and correcting the issue could inadvertently be a benefit to one of their properties. Mr. Sadowsky reiterated that that scenario would not be one of personal gain. In this case, the whole neighborhood or street could benefit from the improvement.

Mr. Sadowsky said that whereas the LCA is more detailed oriented, the CRA Committee is more policy oriented. The Committee is an advisory board to the County Commissioners regarding the development of the CRA Plan and that would be the main business of this Board. He further stated that he would be attending the meetings and that if there are any questions that he would be there to provide guidance as there is a very high propensity for the overlap of discussions.

Commissioner Justice said that sometimes depending on the conversation, he has to excuse himself in order to stay in compliance with the Sunshine Law.

Ms. Booth suggested that initially, the development of the CRA plan should be viewed as a high level of goals, objectives, policies, and initiatives that can be worked on that will address many of the issues brought to the LCA. She also suggested open dialogue and that when the LCA Agenda is finalized, that they ask immediately if they think a topic on the agenda poses a potential conflict. Ms. Booth stated that later on in the process, there will be discussions regarding specific projects or issues where there could be a high potential for conflict but as the CRA Plan moves along, they will have been identified early on.

Mr. Bowman then moved the meeting along to the selection of a Committee Chair and Co-Chair.

5. Elect CRA Advisory Committee Chair and Co-Chair

Mr. Ray Neri was unanimously elected as Committee, Chair. The motion was made by Dwayne Hawkins and seconded by **XXXX**. Mr. Neri nominated Mr. Dwayne Hawkins as co-Chair, however he declined. Mr. Neri then nominated Mr. James Roberto, which was seconded by Mr. Jorge Mecardo.

6. Approve regular Committee meeting schedule

Ms. Booth recommended twice a month. Based on discussion, it was the consensus to meet twice a month initially from October through January, in trying to plan for at least three charrettes/public meetings. She directed them to page 6 of Attachment 1 that lays out the timeline for the project. Advisory Board will meet on the first and third Mondays at 6 o'clock tentatively at the Crown for small meetings and bigger venue must be chosen for larger meetings. Mr. Bowman stated that that can be figured out at a later date. The next meeting was tentatively set for October 26, 2015.

Mr. Bowman then introduced the availability of a third party training seminar to the group. A CRA basic training course is being offered by the Florida Redevelopment Association on October 21st in Tampa starting at 8 a.m. located at 211 North Tampa Street. Interested Committee members were asked to sign up with Mr. Bowman after the meeting.

7. Lealman CRA: Where we have been and Where we are going

Ms. Booth stated that the long term goals of this CRS Plan is to identify some projects but going forward it is best to look at it as more of an overall high-level policy document. She further stated that there are numerous infrastructure areas in general throughout the CRA boundary that needs addressing; however, this Plan is not intended to focus on the issues on Street X and Avenue Y. Moving forward, the intent is to approach the Plan with a variety of Plan objectives (which are not written in stone, but serve as guidance. For example, Objective 1, Economic Development and Innovation – for this objective, the Committee will look at different initiatives that we think would address certain areas (i.e. in one of the business districts are there any programs that we could implement within the CRA that address the economic issues- innovative, transformative projects that would apply to that objective.

Mr. Neri commented that if the County wants the residents to buy in, that it would be necessary to pick some easy to do things that can be accomplished quickly. Ms. Booth responded that the Plan has to be created and adopted before projects can be done.

Mr. Bowman reminded the group of the teaser that Mr. Woodard left them with and that it was noteworthy. He further stated that the County Administrator and all of the County Commissioners are committed to seeing this Plan through to fruition. They want to see this Plan work and Lealman

improve. Mr. Bowman continued that there is a sidewalk project coming up and there was a recent re-prioritization of non-arterial roads that need repair. There were approximately 12 or so items on the improvement list and 8-9 of them or in Lealman that staff has been advocating for since 2007.

Mrs. Vincent interjected that Lealman has its own bullet within the County's Strategic Plan and we're starting to see a lot of policies, the way things are prioritized and ranking procedures for how things get into the CIP are shifting as well as the criteria to the benefit of Lealman.

Mr. Neri stated that basis for success is if we there is a positive economic impact in the area. He stated that we have training available in the County and wanted to know if there was a way to get some of the businesses involved in Joe's Creek so that the County could subsidize some of the cost to get people back to work.

Mrs. Vincent said that those are the types of concerns/ suggestions/ discussions that need to be brought up during these meetings to get them into the Plan.

Mr. Bowman stated that staff believes and feels that the leadership is in agreement that the ultimate long term success in this is going to be in expanding the business community. He stated that the County has a resource in Joe's Creek Industrial Park that is not viable/vibrant at all at this time. Some major questions as a part of this Plan is, What can we do to make Lealman more attractive to businesses? What kinds of infrastructure improvements can we make? What can we do to bring more labor skills to the area to attract businesses?

Mr. Neri asked if Grady Pridgen still owned Joe's Creek Industrial Park. Mr. Gordon Beardslee responded that Mr. Pridgen no longer owns the industrial park and that it was recently purchased by a company out in California, in addition to 3 other industrial parks in Pinellas County. Mr. Beardslee also stated that Mr. Mike Meidel, Director of Pinellas County's Economic Development Department, intends to reach out to the company to try to get some insight into their intentions /plans.

Mrs. Vincent stated that all of the other County Departments that could offer some valuable input or assistance will be involved in this process as well, as Planning/ Community Development is not trying to work in a vacuum. She added that representatives from those departments will attend the CRA Meetings in the future. She went on to give an example of how Community Development will be involved, as subset areas within the CRA boundary that will be established as revitalization strategy areas under HUD/CDBG regulations in our Consolidated Plan.

Mr. Bowman reminded the Committee that Mr. Woodard has challenged the Committee as well as the staff to be creative/ transformational and to think outside of the box and identify things that can be done in the area that will have an impact. He continued that something that has emerged innovatively in the City of St. Petersburg's south side CRA Plan is a focus on individuals and households. It is a reality that the Lealman area needs better access to healthcare, educational and job training opportunities and that can all be part of this CRA Plan.

8. Overview of Committee package and hand-out materials

Ms. Booth encouraged the Committee to review the information in their books which will provide all of the background information for the CRA.

9. For the Next Meeting

Ms. Booth encouraged the Committee to think about associations that would help the group to reach the public and work toward prioritizing policies. She also suggested that they write down questions and ideas.

10. Open Discussion

Mr. Bowman stated that the Committee members have all come with expectations and asked if anyone had any suggestions as to things that staff needs to be looking at or if they had any comments or impressions?

Mr. Steve Cleveland stated that he has noticed, via the Adopt- a- Block activity on Saturdays in the Lealman community that a lot of the professional teams from St. Pete and Tampa want to bring corporations into the community to help, which will draw more attention/publicity to Lealman. Ms. Booth agreed and added that in the long term that those are the kinds of initiatives that can be applied in creating better public and private relationships for an impact and will contribute heavily to the success and vitality of the Plan.

Mr. Neri asked about the possibility of a newsletter and Mr. Bowman responded that emails of the residents are being collected and that Planning is currently working with the Communications Department on an online newsletter.

Mr. Gary Grooms stated that it's important to stay on topic and focus on the success stories of what has been done here and how it can also be done other places.

Ms. Cheryl DiCicco wanted to know if agendas will be coming from Mr. Neri. Mr. Bowman explained that agendas will be coming from staff and that staff will be the driving force due to the timeline for completing this project. The reasoning behind the short timeframe is that every year the new tax base numbers come out. The County wants to get the CRA Plan done, approved and adopted and the Tiff established in the current value period. The County does not want the values to go up before the Plan is approved due to the fact that the money is generated in the incremental increases from year to year so we wanted to start as low as possible in this current year. He further stated that the Committee would be getting the agenda and the backup materials in advance via email. Mr. Dwayne Hawkins will receive his via regular mail as he does not use email. Ms. DiCicco then asked about the minutes. It was established that Mrs. Marcella Faucette will be responsible for the minutes.

Ms. DiCicco additionally asked what charrettes were. Ms. Booth explained that a charrette was a fancy word for public involvement where for 5 or 6 tables are organized with information about issues or objectives which provides citizens an opportunity to ask questions and provide immediate feedback for our project. She stated that we are planning for at least 3 and the agendas for the meetings will be the precursors for upcoming charettes. She is hoping that this will keep the CRA Committee meetings focused.

Adjournment

There being no further business, Mr. Neri asked if there was a motion to adjourn. Mr. Grooms made the motion and **XXXX** seconded the motion. The meeting adjourned at 8:20 pm. The next meeting is scheduled for Monday, October 26, 2015 at 6:00 pm.