

Lealman Community Redevelopment Area Advisory Committee

Meeting Minutes

August 24, 2016 ~ 6:00 PM

The meeting was held on Wednesday, August 24, 2016 in the Crown Buick /GMC Dealership Training Room, 5237 – 34th Street North, St. Petersburg, FL 33714.

1. Call to Order

Chairman Ray Neri called the meeting to order at 6:05 P.M. and confirmed the presence of a quorum.

2. Roll Call

Members: Ray Neri; Steve Cleveland; Sean Ingber; Jorge Mercado; Cheryl DiCicco; James Roberto, Gary Grooms and Diane Plomatos; **Absent Members:** Dwayne Hawkins

County Staff: Rachel Booth, Chris Young and Marcella Faucette

Public: Bill Losasso, a.k.a. Pastor Bill

3. Approval of Minutes – July 27, 2016

Upon motion by Mr. Jorge Mercado, seconded by Mr. Sean Ingber, the minutes of the meeting of July 27, 2016 were unanimously approved.

4. Old Business

- **CRA Logo Update**

Mr. Chris Young provided copies of the logo prints received from the Pinellas County Communications Department. The Committee was disappointed with the wait time and the product that was submitted for their review. They were not able to see any relation between the questionnaire that they were asked to complete for Communications and the product that was received. Disappointment was also expressed in missing the deadline for having a Lealman logo represented on the new Lealman community garbage cans. There was unanimity in the belief that more options would have been available had the Lealman community contest taken place. Additionally, the Committee was in agreement that the prints were aesthetically pretty but that they did not depict an explainable message. There was further agreement that the logo must have a relatable general message and that if it could not be explained, that it was not worth it.

Ms. Booth asked if the Committee would be interested in having Communications come to a future meeting to work with them and to hear about the committee's expectations/vision for the logo. All were in agreement to give Communications the opportunity provide additional options.

Upon motion by Mr. Jorge Mercado, seconded by Mr. Steve Cleveland, that the CRA Advisory Committee reject the logo prints submitted by the Communications Department and ask Communications to come to the next meeting to discuss the committee's expectations/vision for the Lealman logo.

5. New Business

- **Prioritized Programs Review and Discussion**

Mr. Young provided the committee a packet of draft prioritized program descriptions based on the July 27, 2016 prioritization activity. The Committee was tasked with reviewing and providing feedback. Mr. Young informed the Committee that the program descriptions were only drafts and will be refined. Ms. Booth added that the purpose of reading the program descriptions was to ensure that the language used was meeting the intent of the program. Mr. Young also informed them to pay attention to the numbers but they could also be adjusted, i.e. percentages, monetary amounts etc.

Mr. Grooms expressed concern that while it was good to see the business community flourish and benefit from the programs described, as a business owner he didn't see how an existing business would benefit. A new business, could potentially move across the street from him, become competition, and benefit from the programs, which were not available to him.

Mr. Grooms as well as the other members of the committee stated that there should be some consideration for the existing businesses in Lealman who have consistently invested in their businesses over the years and wanted to know what could be done for them.

Mr. Neri added that residential owners are also paying high fees for trying to improve their properties.

Ms. Booth stated that some of the programs addressed incentives such as property tax exemptions and expedited permitting which can reduce or eliminate fees.

Mr. Grooms pointed out that while the goal is to attract new businesses now, many will wait until they can take advantage of the programs as they are implemented.

Ms. Booth asked Mr. Grooms, to try to provide the next meeting examples of incentives that would offset previous investments.

When asked what has been done in other CRAs for situations like this? Mrs. Booth responded that some CRA's have recognition programs that range from a recognition plaque to a financial award. In a Downtown Main Street setting, that recognition could go a long way.

Mr. Mercado asked if there was a way to waive permitting fees as well as expediting them could be added to the **Expedited Permitting Program**. Ms. Booth stated that such language should have already been in there as a funding mechanism.

Mr. Mercado then asked what the County's definition of a small business was as there may be some situations where some local businesses will not fit in that category depending on the definition of what constitutes a small business. Ms. Booth stated that she will research it to find out. The committee, wants to know what the County's current definition of a small business is and would like to add some verbiage to it, i.e. so that the requirements on permits be consistent.

Mr. Sean Ingber refocused the conversation back to reviewing and providing feedback on the draft programs.

The committee asked if it were possible to have an executive summary for each of the programs instead of in a boilerplate format. Ms. Booth stated that each program needs to be able to stand alone as a signal document and each program needs to be evaluated on its own elements.

An inquiry was made regarding the programs having reoccurring references to the Pinellas Technical School, St. Pete College and the Florida Workforce Program. Ms. Booth explained that these institutions were cited as opportunities for partnerships. Several committee members were in agreement that they would like to see the success rate for these institutions before they are associated with the CRA programs.

Due to the nature and specialized skills involved in Mr. Groom's business, Ms. Booth asked him to pay attention to the **Mentoring and Apprenticeship Sponsor Program** and provide input and expertise.

The committee expressed concern about the **Clean Team Program**, in its similarity to the Adopt -A- Block Program that is currently operating within the community; specifically, the day listed for program operation and reference to hiring local residents for the team. Staff was

questioned as to whether or not a small business was being started. Mr. Young explained that the Clean Team is not a job, that it is intended to be utilized or made of an organization or volunteer group.

The committee members all agreed that currently in the Lealman community, there are groups of volunteers working in Lealman to improve the community who do not live there. They were concerned with the negative message that the proposed language could send to those volunteering from outside the Lealman CRA.

Mr. Ray Neri addressed, Pastor Bill Losasso, a.k.a. Pastor Bill, President of the Florida Dream Center which runs the Adopt-A-Block Program, and asked how many volunteers work with the program. Pastor Bill responded that there are approximately 150 volunteers with approximately 140 coming from outside of Lealman.

The committee does not want to upset any existing relationships with any of the non-profits that are currently volunteering in the community.

Mr. Young reiterated that as this is a draft, the language can be adjusted. Replacing proposed language with more general verbiage such as, utilizing, encouraging, welcomes local volunteers, community members, or interested parties.

The committee was interested in using language similar to that used in Keeping America Beautiful where the County provides bags, dumpster supplies etc.

Mr. Neri stated that the Adopt-A-Block Program has been committed to Lealman for 21 months and asked if from the County's point of view, could the CRA provide them a space to work out of instead of having them haul their supplies etc. in and out? Ms. Booth stated that that is something that can be explored. Mr. Neri continued that the Florida Dream Center does more than just clean up the community. He said, they are involved in the prevention of child trafficking as a part of their mission. He stated that he was under the impression that they would be given space to utilize at the former D&D property and inquired if that isn't the case anymore and wanted to know how to get around them having to pay rent. Ms. Booth stated that they are occupying space in a building that will also be used for community services and all of the incoming agencies and organizations will have to pay for space.

Ms. Booth explained that every particular situation is different. In regards to the Florida Dream Center they will be receiving operating cost grants, etc. from the county. What the County is trying to do for agencies, organizations, departments and non-profits who are willing to come into the CRA, is to give them space to have a presence in the community that enables them to carry out their own visions and missions at a below market and subsidized rate.

Mr. Neri then wanted to know how this decision was made, was it staff, department heads etc. Ms. Booth explained that this was driven by ongoing discussions between Administration and Commissioners.

Mr. Neri then wanted to know about the availability of the firehouse once the current tenant leaves. Ms. Booth explained that part of it is going to be driven by the vision of the CRA Plan, the CRA programs that are activated and the market. The firehouse was purchased as an acquisition for redevelopment.

Mr. Neri wanted to know if he could make a request to the County for the Florida Dream Center to operate out of the firehouse. That statement was clarified by Mr. Jorge Mercado, who stated Mr. Neri would not be going as a representative of the CRA, but as a resident.

After additional explanation regarding capital investments and capital improvements, Mr. Neri stated that there appears to be a conflict with dollars/cents vs. being people-oriented.

Mr. Steve Cleveland, the Executive Director, of the Florida Dream Center (FDC) interjected that the FDC is working with the County on a daily basis trying to overcome obstacles as a team trying to make it better for the community. Ms. Booth thanked Mr. Cleveland for his comment.

Mr. Mercado refocused the discussion back to the task at hand and picked up on the **Residential Facade Grant**. The committee discussed the disqualifying criteria. Ms. Booth stated the criteria was listed as how they typically stand in other programs; but encouraged the committee to pay attention to the community that they are trying to make them work in. Every community is different and to think about scale. If this program doesn't work for Lealman, we could take out the things that don't work so that the program can be successful.

While reviewing the **Mentoring and Apprenticeship Sponsor Program**, the committee discussed whether or not there was a commitment and reinvestment component to the program, as well as whether or not it was an exploration type component similar to the Boy Scout's Explorer program where individuals are placed based on their interest or more of a paid mentoring program. Ms. Booth intends to do more research on the various types of Explorer programs. Mr. Grooms pointed out the necessity for some type monitoring so the "apprentice" receives the desired training and is not used for menial jobs such as cleaning etc.

Mr. Steve Cleveland expressed interest in the Land Acquisition/ Bank Program, regarding whether or not the CRA would be doing public right acquisitions so that the CRA could purchase land to build parks, baseball fields, softball fields, a pool etc. to serve the community and a way to maintain them? Additionally, he asked if an entity/organization bought land and erected a facility for community uses but did not have the funds to operate it, could CRA funds be used for operation purposes.

Ms. Booth responded yes but said that the committee has to be cognizant that the funds being annually received is relatively small so that while that may be a possibility, it has to become a program.

6. Comments

Mr. Mercado stated that due to some changes in his schedule, he will no longer be able to attend meetings on the 4th Wednesday of the month and asked the committee to consider another day to meet. After a discussion, the committee agreed to meet on the 4th Tuesday of each month.

7. Next Meeting Date and Items for Next Agenda (Tentative)

- September 28, 2016
- Programs Discussion Continue

Upon motion by Mr. Steve Cleveland, seconded by Mr. Jorge Mercado, the Lealman CRA Advisory Meeting will meet on the fourth Tuesday of every month at 6:00 p.m in the Crown Buick /GMC Dealership Training Room, 5237 – 34th Street North, St. Petersburg, FL 33714. The recommendation was unanimously approved.

8. Adjournment

There being no further business, Mr. Neri asked if there was a motion to adjourn.

Upon motion by Mr. Jorge Mercado, seconded by Mr. Steve Cleveland, the meeting adjourned at 7:35 p.m. The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, September 27, 2016 at 6:00 pm.