

**Lealman Community Redevelopment Area Advisory Committee**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
**August 29, 2018 ~ 6:00 PM**

The meeting was held on Wednesday August 29, 2018 at the Lealman Community Campus, 5175 45th Street North, St. Petersburg, FL 33714.

**1. Call to Order (Steve Cleveland)**

Chairman Cleveland called the meeting to order at 6:07pm.

**2. Roll Call**

**Committee Members Present:** Steve Cleveland, Gary Grooms, Enoch Nicholson, Cheryl DiCicco, Linda Parish and Brian Ellis

**Absent Members:** Dwayne Hawkins, Linda Rochelle and Tommy Johnson

**County Staff Present:** Rachel Booth, Chris Moore, Ryan Brinson, Caroline Lanford, Blake Lyon, Jude Reazin, Gina Berutti, Shana Oberle

**3. Approval of Minutes**

Member Cheryl DiCicco asked for a correction to a typo in the first sentence of the CRA Grant Application Update section of the June 27 minutes. The Committee then unanimously approved the minutes as amended.

**4. Old Business**

• **Lealman CRA Advisory Committee By-laws Amendments**

Chris Moore presented proposed amendments to the Advisory Committee bylaws that were suggested at the June meeting so as to address previous challenges with establishing a quorum at Committee meetings. Committee Member Grooms raised concerns with one staff-suggested bylaw edit that referenced the Committee's composition "shall, to the extent possible, be composed of community advocates and community redevelopment professionals, including representation from the following fields: economic development, neighborhood revitalization, education, workforce development, architecture, urban planning, finance, marketing or public relations, and community engagement." Mr. Grooms felt this language would unnecessarily shrink the pool of eligible applicants, and further exacerbate challenges with identifying eligible and committed candidates to serve on the Committee. Staff stated that the language specifically included "the extent possible" so the selection of Committee members would both be bound to those specific employment fields, but rather that the intent was to provide additional guidance during the application process for staff and the Board of County Commissioners with regard to recommending and selecting, respectively, future members. After further discussion, the Committee passed a motion to strike the last sentence proposed by staff to Article II, Section 1, but approve the other amendments recommended by staff. The motion was seconded and was approved with five members in favor, and Member Ellis opposed.

**5. Staff Report**

• **Code Enforcement Presentation**

Jude Reazin, Pinellas County Code Enforcement Division Manager, presented on the County's various code enforcement initiatives both countywide and specifically pertaining to Lealman. Code Enforcement's south county office will be relocated to the Lealman Community Campus to

further assist the needs of the area. The office will include three full-time officers that are dedicated to Lealman, which is 1/3 of his Division's field personnel. Mr. Reazin also mentioned that his Division is working on a condemnation and demolition process for abandoned and neglected properties, since the County does not currently have policies and procedures in place. Mr. Reazin said the County is looking at procedures in other local governments such as in Hillsborough County and the City of St. Petersburg. The complicated and comprehensive nature of such an effort will take time to complete, but estimates the program could be implemented by mid-2019.

A discussion followed with Committee Members Cleveland, Parish and Nicholson inquiring about what technologies are in place to respond to complaints, how issues are prioritized, what is being done to address nuisance and repeat violators, and how absentee owners are held accountable. Mr. Reazin said that See Click Fix is the fastest way to report a complaint or they can be called into the main code enforcement office. As far as prioritization, Mr. Reazin replied that health and safety concerns get top priority such as abandoned/unsecured pools, and electrical and fire hazards. Blake Lyon, Pinellas County Development Review Services Department Director, addressed the issue of repeat violators by indicating the County had made a change to its special magistrate ordinance in terms of how the County can go about bringing repeat violators back in front of the magistrate. Mr. Lyon also indicated in the context of code enforcement "nuisance" implies reference to criminal activities and in those instances Code Enforcement staff must rely on law enforcement for support. Mr. Lyon indicated that the County does not currently have nuisance ordinance in place though it has been discussed internally and staff will need to bring it to the Board of County Commissioners for policy direction.

Mr. Lyon then gave a high level overview of the typical process followed when a code enforcement complaint is received. The complaint is first assessed via a field visit to determine if there is in fact a violation. If there is, a warning notice is issued to the property owner to give them a chance to address the issue. If the issue is not addressed a citation can be issued with the property owner being given a chance to go before a judge to address the issue. Repeat violators are then addressed through the special magistrate process which can lead to an accrual of fines of \$500 per day, per violation. Liens are then placed on the property. Foreclosing on property owners that ignore and accrue excessive lien amounts is not something the County has done historically, though the legal process and policy direction to take those steps is currently being discussed.

With regard to the absentee owner question, Mr. Lyon indicated it is a difficult issue to address given State statute requirements mandating property owners being given the opportunity to address issues, and the inherent challenge the County faces in locating those owners. Significant progress has been made with a local judge to allow absentee owner cases to be brought to the court system. Mr. Lyon concluded that the overarching goal is to be fair, transparent and consistent in all cases. He also reported that staff is working to establish a lien settlement methodology for properties with excessive liens that adheres to state statutes and meets three minimum requirements: (1) the property is brought back into compliance, (2) the taxes are paid and (3) the lien settlement amount has to cover any direct costs incurred by the County during the process.

Committee Members then inquired if there was anything they could do to help in the condemnation and foreclosure process. Mr. Reazin indicated that as they continue to develop policies and procedures they will certainly reach out to the community with questions, as well as

for support in identifying other ways various community groups can be of assistance to help effectuate change in the community.

- **Linking Lealman (Complete Streets) Presentation**

Caroline Lanford introduced the item by discussing progress made in the study since it was last brought before the Committee. Ms. Lanford then introduced Jared Schneider with Kimley Horn who reviewed various improvements identified in the study that could be included into the County's future Capital Improvement Program. These projects would create a safer, accessible and efficient transportation network for all users. A few projects that were discussed included: sidewalks, multi-use paths, signage, bicycle lanes, enhanced turning lanes, bicycle racks, medians, lighting, benches, crosswalks, and improved public transit. Mr. Schneider then shared the outcome of two public workshops and highlighted the top three main priorities that the public wanted to focus on and ranked them as follows: (1) sidewalks, (2) landscaping, and (3) general street maintenance.

Chairman Cleveland asked when another project update likely would occur. Mr. Schneider said that their intentions are to have the plan wrapped up by the end of the year, and asked if the Committee could in the interim review the handouts provided to ensure that the improvements identified are in line with the community's vision and adequately addresses any safety concerns. Ms. Lanford also encouraged Committee members as well as the general public to go online and take the updated survey.

- **CRA Grant Applications**

Mr. Moore provided updates to the commercial and residential grant programs, including payment being issued for the first completed commercial grant. He also provided updates on the residential program, most notably that the County would be using a title company to escrow the grant funds in order to help streamline the contractor payment process, while securing lien waivers prior to disbursement of funds. The County is drafting a three-party contract to be executed by the County, the homeowner and the contractor, so as to provide additional consumer protections to the residents, which should be finalized within the next week. Funds have already been escrowed for several residential grant applications, and once the three party contract is finalized and executed, a notice to proceed will be issued to the associated homeowners and contractors.

Chairman Cleveland asked if there are any staff dedicated 100% to the CRA to administer these programs. Rachel Booth said that the Planning Department's Redeveloping Section is primarily assisting with administering the CRA programs and grants, however we do not have any full time staff dedicated 100% to the Lealman CRA. A discussion followed with the Committee consensus being that at least one or two full time staff are needed and should be paid for out of the County's General Fund and not TIF funds. A motion was made to request the County fund one or more staff focused full time on Lealman CRA program and grant administration.

- **LCC Tenant Status**

Mr. Moore indicated that long term leases for the Broach School and Excelerated Teaching Services, Inc. are being drafted and these entities would occupy the entirety of the single story building. Additionally, a long term lease for the YMCA is also being drafted to administer an Early Learning Academy on the first floor of the two story building. These three tenants will occupy the vast majority of all of the rooms that will be leased to external tenants at the Campus, and as such

staff has prioritized these negotiations. Discussions are ongoing with other tenants that were pre-selected through the Letter of Intent established earlier in 2018. Some of these tenants have had to withdraw themselves from consideration given their operations likely would conflict with other tenants that will be occupying space; i.e., those focused on young and special needs children. Other tenants have indicated they may not be able to pay the lease rates established by the County. As these negotiations continue staff will address the need to implement a second Letter of Intent process to identify additional prospective tenants.

- **Little Libraries Update**

Ryan Brinson provided a brief update and showed the group on a map the locations of the Little Libraries that have been delivered. Mr. Brinson said that there are four Libraries remaining and asked the group to recommend a few locations. Cheryl DiCicco suggested one location could be near the Hospital or cemetery since there is a lot of foot traffic and Ms. Parish suggested one near the R'Club off of 49th Street. In the interest of time the Committee directed staff to choose the remaining two locations.

- **CRA Project Signage**

At the request of the Committee at their last meeting, Mr. Moore presented four versions of signs to advertise completed projects that were paid for by the Residential and Non-Residential Grant Improvement Program. The Committee did not like the four versions that were presented and asked for staff to create a simplified version with the established logo on a white background. The Committee had no concern with the verbiage proposed for the sign.

- **Duke Energy Partnership**

Mr. Brinson gave an update on the Duke Energy Phase 2, Neighborhood Energy Saver kick-off meeting that was held at the Campus last month. He said that there was a strong turnout of about 60 residents of Lealman that showed up for the presentation and the catered meal that was paid for by Duke Energy. Mr. Brinson also told the Committee that Duke Energy gave the County an award to recognize our community partnership with them. Chairman Cleveland concluded the item by mentioning that he has seen the Duke trucks in the area making house calls and was glad that the County and Duke Energy are partnering up with this exciting program.

## **6. Advisory Committee Member Comments**

Member Grooms addressed a code enforcement situation within the Joe's Creek Industrial Park located within the boundaries of the Lealman CRA. He said that there are a handful of small business representing approximately 100 jobs and hundreds of customers served that were notified that they are in violation of the requirements of the M-1 Zoning District, which prohibits these types of business uses, which include CrossFit gyms, dance studios, martial art classes, and gymnastic facilities. Mr. Grooms felt that these small businesses have a tremendous contribution to the community and they are vital to the success of Lealman's economy and revitalization. He further went on to say that they provide educational, health, fitness and employment services to hundreds of residents living in Lealman and around the community. Chairman Cleveland agreed with Mr. Grooms and suggested that the Committee petition the Board of County Commissioners to request that special consideration be given to these businesses in the M-1 District to allow these uses to be permitted whether through a Special Exception or re-zoning process.

The Committee felt the M-1 District needed more flexibility when it came to permitting uses and felt that the existing development regulations are counterproductive to attracting entrepreneurs and

small businesses to the Joe's Creek Industrial Area. Rachel Booth mentioned that Planning Department staff have been working on a form based code that would only apply to the boundaries of the Lealman CRA. Ms. Booth said that the form base code is intended to provide use flexibility by looking at the building form first and use second, with the purpose of achieving the community's overall vision. The form base code would essentially be a Special Area Plan overlaid onto the CRA boundaries to facilitate and foster the growth all of the goals objectives and strategies that are within in the CRA plan.

Chairman Cleveland said that the form base code is a long term approach to handling the situation, however the Committee needs to do something in the interim to prevent existing business from shutting down and moving elsewhere. The discussion continued with the Committee passing two motions that address the zoning issue in the short and long term. The short term solution motion, which passed unanimously, requested that the Pinellas County Code Enforcement Division be granted latitude and leniency to non-conforming businesses in the M-1 District that are not permitted to operate legally. The motion to address the issue long term, which also passed unanimously, directed Planning staff to look into developing flexible development regulations such as a form base code approach for the Lealman CRA to support the existing the CRA redevelopment goals and objectives.

The discussion continued with the Committee deciding to draft a letter from the Chairman to the Board of County Commissioners about the above zoning situation as well as the CRA staffing matter discussed earlier in the meeting.

Chairman Cleveland's comments again addressed the nuisance ordinance. Mr. Lyon replied that staff is essentially drafting a white paper to be provided to the County Administrator and Board of County Commissioners that outlines all of the factors involved with addressing the matter, including establishing policies and procedures for the foreclosure process, as well as condemnation and demolition policies and procedures.

## **7. Citizen Input**

Many of the business owners impacted by the Joe's Creek Industrial Park zoning conformance issue were on hand and expressed their appreciation to the Committee for addressing the issue on their behalf. One business owner asked if the County had a business occupational license or a business tax that would provide proof that their use of the property is conforming to the zoning. The business owner further added that it has been very successful in other neighboring jurisdictions within the County for addressing issues such as those described in Joe's Creek Industrial Park.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned approximately at 8:40 pm.