

SUMMARY MINUTES

REGULAR COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

Monday, March 3rd, 2008

A regular meeting of the Chairman and Members of the Community Redevelopment Agency Advisory Committee (CRAAC) was held at the North Miami City Council Chambers at 6:04 p.m.

(Phonetic spelling of each speaker's name may be used throughout the minutes unless correct spelling is known.)

I. Call to Order

ROLL CALL	Absent/ Present	Absences 2007-08*
Blanca Cobo	6:13 pm	3
Inez Couch	P	0
Judy Feldman	P	1
Dr. Smith Joseph	A	4
Michael McDearmaid	6:18 pm	0
Roseline Philippe	P	0
Clark Reynolds	P	2
David Rosemond	6:13 pm	1
Duke Sorey	6:19 pm	3
Armando Vidal	P	2
Mark Wolin	6:09 pm	0
* Absences from special or rescheduled meetings are not counted		

Items appear in the order they were discussed. Terry Lytle was invited as a guest to discuss the City's new Parks Master Plan under '*VIII. New business*' and the meeting began with that presentation.

VIII. New Business

A. Presentation on the City of North Miami's New Parks Master Plan, Terry Lytle, Director, Parks & Recreation Department

Terry Lytle gave a presentation on the recently completed new Parks Master Plan. The plan is to guide development, redevelopment of parks for decades to come.

Ms. Feldman inquired what the Parks & Recreation Department is doing to insure that leaf trees are planted instead of palm trees, both by the city itself and by private parties. Ms. Feldman affirmed her preference for leaf trees as they provide a thicker canopy that offers both shade for pedestrians and habitat for birds. Mr. Lytle replied that Miami-Dade Department of Environmental Resources Management (DERM) has guidelines for minimum number of trees by property square footage, and these guidelines mandate that if palm trees are used instead of leafy trees, a developer/property owner must plant 3 times as many. The City's Parks and Recreation Department tries to follow these guidelines as much as possible and are currently working with the legal department to rewrite their tree code to better conform to these standards.

Ms. Couch asked about *****inaudible*****, the building in the front. Mr. Lytle replied that it is a community center but cannot be used intensively due to the lack of parking on the site. Ms. Couch asked whether it could be fixed up to use as a location for evening community meetings. Mr. Lytle said that the Parks & Recreation Department would like to use that building more, currently the main barrier to its use in the evenings is the lack of security in the park after dark.

The CRA Advisory Committee Chair asked what the main highlight of the plan was. Mr. Lytle replied that the advice in terms of what areas need to be redeveloped the most is one of the most useful aspects of the plan. For example the plan highlights Claude Pepper Park as a resource that could benefit from some improvements. But the Westside of the city is well served by park facilities, it is the central section of the city that needs more parks. The problem of course is that there is little land available for transforming into park space. Mr. Lytle also stated that the plan lists a number of sources for possible additional funding for the Parks & Recreation Department, listed among these is the North Miami Community Redevelopment Agency. Mr. Lytle noted that the CRA has already provided funding to assist in the refurbishment of a couple of park facilities, and those facilities are providing services to city residents and funds to the city coffers.

Ms. Feldman suggested that all members of the CRA Advisory Committee should read the document and invited Mr. Lytle to come back to the Advisory Committee at a later date to discuss the plan further.

II. Approval of Agenda

The CRA Executive Director requested that Item V be dealt with before Item IV, there were no objections and the agenda was unanimously approved as amended.

III. Approval of Minutes

Ms. Couch made a correction to the minutes. She clarified that it was her that mentioned that there may be a Pawn Shop located within the property at 13305 West Dixie Hwy, not Ms. Feldman. The minutes were then unanimously approved as amended.

V. Proposed First Amendment to the Pioneer Gardens Development Agreement between the CRA and North Miami Housing

The CRA Executive Director described the circumstances that merit an amendment to the Pioneer Gardens Development Agreement between the CRA and Urban Residential Development Group (formerly known as North Miami Housing). The amendment will shift the responsibility for the marketing and sales of the units from the CRA to Urban Residential Development Group, but the CRA will retain the authority to approve the marketing plan and will pay for marketing expenses. Under the amendment, the completion date for the units has been pushed back from October 17th, 2008 to June 1st, 2010. A third change stipulated in the amendment is to allow that the construction loan could be in the form of a tax exempt revenue bond issued on terms and conditions mutually agreed to by the CRA and the developer.

The CRA Advisory Committee Chair asked why the decision was made to shift the responsibility for the marketing and sales of the units to the developer and to choose a revenue bond for the financing of the project. The CRA Executive Director responded that the marketing had been shifted to the developer to facilitate the developer's pre-sales requirements for financing, and because it is standard industry practice for a developer to be responsible for marketing. William Wallace IV then explained that the CRA had agreed to explore the option of a revenue bond due to the amount of potential monetary savings that could ensue from pursuing this financing mechanism over a conventional construction loan.

Moved by Mr. McDearmaid, seconded by Ms. Philippe

To recommend approval of the Proposed First Amendment to the Pioneer Gardens Development Agreement between the CRA and North Miami Housing

Approved 9-1 with Mr. Wolin against

IV. Status update regarding the CRA Commercial Grants Program and discussion of the program's eligibility requirements and guidelines

The CRA Executive Director distributed a pictorial report to the committee on the CRA funded Commercial Beautification and Rehabilitation projects and gave a brief summary of the program.

Ms. Couch commented that one of the recipients of a CRA Beautification Grant, the property at 12325 NE 6 Ave, may be breaking city code by having too much ground floor window obstruction. The CRA Executive Director replied that all of the buildings that have received grants meet the city's present code requirements.

On the topic of introducing financial hardship requirements for businesses or tenants applying for assistance through the commercial grants program, the CRA Executive Director advised that he had reviewed similar programs operated by other local government and redevelopment entities, and none of them had such requirements. Ms. Feldman felt that the original intent of the program was to beautify the city and revitalize its commercial corridors and was not intended as a charity for struggling businesses. She expressed the opinion that this program is one of the few things the CRA is doing a great job on and it's success is highly visible, she advised that introducing financial hardship requirements into the program might result in the CRA getting sidetracked from the program's original intent.

Ms. Couch felt that the language in the program's eligibility requirements that state that improvements to residential portions of a commercial structure are not eligible for CRA grant assistance should be removed to coincide with the city's new comprehensive plan and its promotion of mixed use development. The CRA Advisory Committee Chair agreed and called on the committee to advise the CRA Board to amend the guidelines to better fit with the new mixed use zoning designations upon their adoption. The Advisory Committee Chair went on to state that the guidelines should be kept as simple as possible to avoid unnecessary bureaucracy that would only serve to discourage potential applicants to the program.

Moved by Mr. McDearmaid, seconded by Ms. Feldman

To recommend making no changes to the CRA Commercial Grant Program application guidelines for the time being. But to update the guidelines in the future to correspond with any future changes to the city's zoning code, with particular reference to mixed use zoning.

Approved 10-0

VI. Status update and recommendation regarding the purchase of two (2) duplex properties adjacent to the Pioneer Gardens development site

The CRA executive Director summarized the progress of the purchase negotiations for the two duplex properties thus far. The property at 13890 NE 5 Ave. appraised at \$215,000 and \$260,000, and the seller has agreed to sell at \$260,000. The property at 13850 NE 5 Ave. appraised at \$318,000 and \$325,000, but the seller recently refinanced the home for \$320,000 and is thus looking for a purchase price significantly more than the appraised value to cover

her debts and allow her to purchase a new property. The CRA Executive Director then asked the Advisory Committee to recommend to the CRA Board that they give the CRA the authority to negotiate a purchase price higher than the appraised value of \$325,000 but not to exceed 10% over that appraised value.

Mr. McDearmaid commented that home prices have actually been dropping considerably since those appraisals were done, and in this market those appraised values are probably more than fair. The CRA Executive Director explained that the acquisition of that property is important so that the CRA can assemble all the parcels in that block into the Pioneer Gardens site. The CRA Attorney then explained that the CRA has the legal authority to purchase property beyond its appraised value, furthermore the CRA is not looking to resell and make a profit out of this property, but rather it is an essential part of an affordable housing project.

Mr. Wolin criticized the concept of not acquiring all of the parcels within the block at the earliest stage of project development. The CRA Executive Director replied that, pursuant to the Munisport Agreement, the CRA is required to provide land to the developer for the construction of affordable housing.

Moved by Mr. Sorey, seconded by Ms. Couch

To recommend giving the authority to the CRA to negotiate a purchase price for the property at 13850 NE 5 Ave for up to 110% of the highest appraised value of \$325,000.

Approved 9-1 with Mr. Wolin against

VII. Old Business

Nothing was discussed.

VIII. New Business (continued)

Ms. Philippe requested that the CRA Advisory Committee be permitted to discuss the matters that come before them without input from the CRA Board, since the CRA Board will get their chance to discuss the issues and make final decisions on them at their own meetings.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:12 pm