

MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING OF THE FORT PIERCE REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY, HELD IN THE CITY HALL COMMISSION CHAMBERS, 100 NORTH U.S. #1, FORT PIERCE, FLORIDA, AT 4:00 PM ON WEDNESDAY, **JANUARY 13, 2021.**

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Chairwoman Linda Hudson called the meeting to order at 4:00 PM.

**2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

**3. ROLL CALL**

Present: Chairperson Linda Hudson; Commissioner Jeremiah Johnson; Commissioner Thomas Perona; Commissioner Curtis Johnson, Jr.

Absent: Commissioner Rufus Alexander

Staff Present: City Clerk Linda Cox  
City Manager Nicholas Mimms  
City Attorney Peter Sweeney

Commissioner Curtis Johnson was present by telephone conference call.

**4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

- a. Approval of minutes from the October 27, 2020 regular meeting.

Motion was made by Commissioner Jeremiah Johnson, seconded by Commissioner Thomas Perona to approve the minutes of the October 27, 2020 Regular Meeting.

AYE: Chairperson Linda Hudson, Commissioner Jeremiah Johnson, Commissioner Thomas Perona, Commissioner Curtis Johnson, Jr.

Passed

**5. COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC**

Any person who wishes to comment on any subject on this agenda may be heard at this time. Please limit your comments to three (3) minutes or less, as directed by the Chairperson, as this section of the Agenda is limited to fifteen minutes. The FPRA Board will not be able to take any official actions under Comments from the Public. Speakers will address the Chairperson, Commissioners, and the Public with respect. Inappropriate language will not be tolerated. **Sign-up sheet is located in the lobby.**

Daniel Cedeno, Item 7f.

Tim Gunther, Item 7f submitted and read into the record by City Clerk Linda Cox.

**6. FINANCIAL REPORT FOR QUARTER ENDING SEPTEMBER 30, 2020**

Director of Finance Johnna Morris provided a summary of the Financial Report for Quarter Ending September 30, 2020. Ms. Morris discussed revenue and expenditures leaving a current balance in the fund of \$1,725,427.00 which is more than was projected. Ms. Morris discussed outstanding expenditures which would bring the projected balance to \$1,402,773.00. Ms. Morris also discussed the reductions in the amount owed to the General Fund which is \$8,040,267.00.

## 7. NEW BUSINESS

### a. CRA Advisory Committee Recommendations

Chairman Mr. Charlie Frank Matthews and Secretary Kristina Gibbons of the CRA Advisory Board were present and provided three recommendations to the FPRA for consideration.

#### 1. Property located at 29<sup>th</sup> and Avenue D

Mr. Matthews stated that this property is owned by the FPRA and located behind the Percy Peek Gymnasium and is currently vacant. It is the recommendation by the CRA to put this parcel out for proposal for development according to the updated FPRA Plan.

#### 2. Attractions for families

Ms. Gibbons stated that to attract more families to the downtown area, the CRA recommends adding several pieces of freestanding playground equipment placed sporadically throughout the downtown area. The placement areas discussed included Marina Square at three locations from Indian River Drive to Melody Lane, and two areas at the Backus Museum. The equipment would consist of a modern art design, be singular, and would not take up much space. Additional pieces can be added at later dates.

#### 3. Three Targeted Corridors: Orange Avenue, US1, and Avenue D

Ms. Gibbons stated that the CRA recommends the following improvements be made to these three main corridors in our city: improved code enforcement, new signage at each gateway to the different neighborhoods including Keep Fort Pierce Beautiful signs, improved lighting, street striping, and setting a street sweeping schedule.

Commissioner Perona commented that these items were discussed at the Strategic Planning meeting yesterday and is pleased that we are all on the same page. Gateways to our community are extremely important, and we want all visitors and residents to feel welcome and have a positive experience.

Mayor Hudson commented that the Keep Fort Pierce Beautiful Committee would be interested in these suggestions because they are looking at some similar projects.

Commissioner Curtis Johnson thanked the CRA for their work with these suggestions and appreciates the consistency in the community for improvements that are wanted. Commissioner Curtis Johnson inquired about the cost of the playground equipment. Ms. Gibbons explained that individual small pieces can range in price from \$1,000.00 to \$10,000.00 or more. The CRA is suggesting simple individual items to start with that can be built upon at later dates. Commissioner Curtis Johnson also inquired about the property behind Percy Peek. Mr. Mimms explained that the FPRA owns the entire parcel where the college building is located. Mayor Hudson wondered if the college might be interested in further developing that parcel, but it would be wonderful to also have it on the tax roll.

Commissioner Jeremiah Johnson inquired about the size of the parcel behind Percy Peek and the parking lot. Ms. Gibbons did not have the exact details available for the size of the parcel. Mr. Mimms added that the parking lot was designed to accommodate parking according to the square footage of the institution and the utilization of the gymnasiums, so if there is additional use, additional parking may be required. Commissioner Jeremiah Johnson inquired if there is a priority list for the locations of the playground equipment downtown. Ms. Gibbons stated that priority was not given, but a focus on the immediate downtown area is preferred. Regarding the gateways, Mr. Matthews commented that the CRA hopes the gateway distinctions would begin within the CRA

boundary but could certainly extend to all areas of Fort Pierce.

b. Micro-Transit Service Presentation by Freebee

Mr. Jason Spiegel, Co-Founder and Managing Partner of Freebee provided a presentation on an innovative electric public transportation service which is a free, on-demand, door-to-door electric transportation service. Freebee is not only a transportation solution but also an economic development tool designed to drive traffic to local businesses and promote the community. The service is fully customizable and 100% electric. Freebee was established in 2012 and currently operates a fleet of over 90 vehicles serving 20 communities throughout South Florida. The types of communities include coastal, suburban, downtown, metropolitan, and islands. The program utilizes a state-of-the-art Ride Freebee mobile app. Users without smartphone access can call a toll-free number or wave down a passing vehicle. Freebee works with each municipality to develop a specific geofenced area. Mr. Spiegel discussed the many program benefits that include reducing traffic congestion and providing connectivity between different areas of Fort Pierce. Freebee Drivers are hired locally and serve as a mobile concierge and ambassadors for the City by promoting local events, dining, shopping, and things to do in the City of Fort Pierce. Additionally, they can assist with being the eyes and ears of neighborhoods. Freebee offers a one-year pilot program with five to eight vehicles that would be an on-demand, door-to-door service within the geofenced area. Freebee is funded like all other public transportation is funded, through DOT grants, Green Grants, by local businesses and community organizations, and through advertising subsidies.

Commissioner Perona mentioned a program like this could be a solution to parking issues.

Commissioner Curtis Johnson asked if Mr. Spiegel could provide an example of a municipality that is similar to Fort Pierce. Mr. Spiegel gave an example of Del Ray Beach which offers service that either begins or ends in the commercial district. Mr. Spiegel added that the smaller vehicles are limited to roadways that are below 40mph but they can cross over roads with higher speed limits as connectivity. The larger vans could be used on US1 or to cross the bridges.

Commissioner Jeremiah Johnson commented that it looks like a solution to the current parking issues that downtown businesses face. It's a wonderful service with a lot of opportunities.

Mayor Hudson likes the ambassador aspect and advertising for local businesses.

Motion was made by Commissioner Jeremiah Johnson, seconded by Commissioner Thomas Perona to authorize staff to enter into negotiations for a one-year pilot program.

AYE: Chairperson Linda Hudson, Commissioner Jeremiah Johnson, Commissioner Thomas Perona, Commissioner Curtis Johnson, Jr.

Passed

c. Approval of the draft Development Proposal for Oaks at Moore's Creek Phase II.

Mr. Corey O'Gorman, President of Place Planning and Design was present with Mr. Chuck Halber, President of Stuart & Shelby Development who provided a presentation on the draft development proposal for Oaks at Moore's Creek Phase II. Mr. O'Gorman provided a background of the principals involved in this development proposal and a history of this project. Mr. O'Gorman provided an overall project description, development costs, review of recent comparable housing, revenue projections, review of financing gaps between cost and revenues, and the project vision. The project for Oaks at Moore's Creek Phase II is proposed for an undeveloped parcel of land surrounded in part by the Oaks at Moore's Creek Phase I. The site has access to Avenue B and frontage along the south side of Moore's Creek. The project proposes to build 15 single-family homes to income qualified buyers. There is currently no existing infrastructure and significant lot clearing and soil work will most likely be required. The parcel must be re-platted to meet city standards. Mr. O'Gorman provided slides showing the preliminary estimates for land development,

construction, and soft costs broken down by each of the four proposed models and provided a slide showing the four different floor plans which will create visual interest in the neighborhood. Mr. O’Gorman also provided slides showing the building specifications, review of housing stock, original and adjusted revenue projections, and bridging the anticipated financing gap. The vision includes a demonstration of the FPRA’s commitment to invest in the project area; enhancing household economic demographics, elevating property values; creating a public-private partnership, rebuilding the community, and expanding the City’s tax base.

Mayor Hudson inquired if there is a standard definition for affordable housing. Mr. O’Gorman stated that affordable housing is available to home buyers with income in the range of 80% to 140% of the median income for the community the property is in. Mayor Hudson also inquired if the developers had been in touch with FPUA. Mr. O’Gorman stated only for permitting costs. Mayor Hudson recalls that with Phase I, FPRA donated the land, and FPUA donated the cost of the fees for infrastructure installation. Mr. Mimms added that a similar development was the Pioneer Park subdivision where the FPRA along with CDGB constructed the infrastructure, interior roads and CHDO built the homes and worked with qualified homebuyers for financing. The City of Fort Pierce also contributed down payment assistance for those residents which is similar to this presentation.

Commissioner Jeremiah Johnson liked the overall presentation, the layout of the proposal, floor plans, amenities, and the different styles of architecture.

Commissioner Perona is concerned about the changing markets and would like to see the best-case and worst-case scenarios for the City’s cost exposure. Commissioner Perona also inquired if local vendors will be utilized for construction and materials. Mr. Halber stated that he was provided with a list of vendors in the City of Fort Pierce and is absolutely going to use local contractors for this project. Mr. Halber is planning to open a satellite office in Fort Pierce for future projects. Commissioner Perona stressed that it is important to use local contractors. Mr. O’Gorman added that this would be a standard single-family subdivision and the streets would be maintained by the City of Fort Pierce. It would not be a gated community.

Commissioner Curtis Johnson stated that hiring local, will instill pride in the community and is interested in some sort of community standard. The affordability allows people to get in the homes and sustainability with some type of community standard allows them to remain for more than a year which will aid to increase the value. Commissioner Curtis Johnson inquired about the re-platting and if that will increase the financing gap. Mr. O’Gorman explained that the re-platting is the sub-dividing of the property. There is currently a right-of-way that is substandard to the current code requirements. A subdivision re-plot will need to be filed with the City of Fort Pierce to show the reconfiguration of the property that will establish all 15 lots, the street, and any common areas. The fees are included in the projected costs.

Mayor Hudson inquired about the building fees and if they can be waived. Mr. Mimms stated that Building Permit fees cannot be waived but in the past have been reduced and site development fees can be waived. Staff can work with the developer to determine who has what responsibility. Mr. Mimms added that with impact fees, the City does have the flexibility and there is currently a moratorium on those impact fees within the boundary of the FPRA.

Commissioner Jeremiah Johnson would like to save the oak trees that are on the property.

Motion was made by Commissioner Thomas Perona, seconded by Commissioner Curtis Johnson, Jr. to have Staff continue negotiation for a development agreement with consideration of the items discussed today.

AYE: Chairperson Linda Hudson, Commissioner Jeremiah Johnson, Commissioner Thomas Perona, Commissioner Curtis Johnson, Jr.

Passed

- d. Sunrise Theatre Update

Director of the Sunrise Theatre Sharon Engle provided an update on the Sunrise Theatre for the Performing Arts since the pandemic. Since opening in 2006 the Sunrise Theatre has served as the economic engine and has been the catalyst for the revitalization of historic downtown Fort Pierce. Ms. Engle discussed the economic impact on the community. The Sunrise Theatre draws thousands of patrons benefiting nearby restaurants, retail stores, and personal service businesses and plays a vital role in the Fort Pierce economy. Due to COVID-19, the Sunrise Theatre was among the first establishments to close and will be one of the last to reopen.

On March 12, 2020, when the theatre closed, they were on track to have a financially successful season. As the closure continued and to keep the community engaged, the theatre was able to offer different activities such as virtual streaming concerts, coloring contest for children, pre-recorded acoustic mini-performances, guitar raffles, and offered online full-length pre-recorded concerts. The staff has reviewed and implemented new venue procedures, policies, and codes of conduct to ensure the health and safety of patrons. Ms. Engle further discussed cost-saving measures that were taken such as the layoff of one full time and other temporary part-time employees, having the remaining staff work minimal hours and furlough days, moving staff to the upstairs office so the main part of the building could be closed, powering off equipment, terminating or reducing services, and reducing, holding, or canceling service contracts. Staff continues to work minimal hours.

Ms. Engle discussed current operations and various changes that have been implemented as well as the finances and expenses. Financial relief is expected from the Cares Act Grant and the Save Our Stages Act Grant.

The Sunrise Theatre plans to open its doors for performances beginning January 21, 2021. Seating will be limited to 50% capacity and new safety procedures and protocols are in place. Ms. Engle will be working with the Sunrise Theatre Advisory Board Strategic Planning Committee to develop a five-year strategic plan. Ms. Engle discussed grant programs that will help subsidize the lost revenue.

Ms. Engle also provided a slide showing the current schedule for January through June 2021 and shared a promotional video for the Sunrise Theatre of Performing Arts and its safety protocols.

Mayor Hudson is looking forward to the re-opening of the theatre and feels it was missed by the community.

Commissioner Perona said the Sunrise Theater was on an uptick over the past five years. It will be interesting to see how redefining business with new safety measures will impact the performances.

Commissioner Jeremiah Johnson inquired about how many requests for venue rental have come in. Ms. Engle stated there have been a lot of inquiries, but the artists must be willing to travel. Mainly tribute acts are coming in. Other rentals inquiries have come in such as the John Carroll graduation, Ocean Village's annual meeting, and St. Lucie County Chamber of Commerce will be holding an awards show.

Commissioner Curtis Johnson thanked Ms. Engle for their hard work during these unprecedented times and inquired about virtual events going forward. Ms. Engle did say that there was a 12-week virtual series of pre-recorded shows which was provided to the theatre at no cost and in turn, provided to the community at no cost. During the last week of December and the first week of January, a virtual pay-per-view was offered. The cost of the theatre to produce a virtual show would not be cost-effective.

- e. Discussion of Code Enforcement Programs to address slum and blight in the community.

Code Compliance Manager Peggy Arriaz provided a brief overview of Code Enforcement programs and projects. The new Clean & Safe Community Initiative (CSI) program with expanded criteria began on October 1, 2020. Since the start Code Enforcement has addressed three new condemnation cases, two new cases to secure vacant structures and pools, 142 lot clearing cases, 24 new cases for non-operative vehicles, two new cases for bees, wasps, and dangerous insects, and three new cases for graffiti. Pursuant to the City Code, if the nuisance has not been remedied the department may cause the nuisance to be abated at the expense of the property owner. After abatement of the nuisance, such expense shall become payable within 30 days after which a lien and charge will be made upon the property. Such lien shall be enforceable in the same manner as a tax lien in favor of the City of Fort Pierce. Said lien may be foreclosed on as provided by law.

Vacant lots for foreclosure are in the process of being identified that have outstanding liens and are non-conforming parcels with the potential for either future development or joining a neighboring property. The next step would be to conduct a title search to ensure there are no superior liens. Once this has been completed, the file is forwarded to the City Attorney for processing. Code Enforcement is currently targeting specific areas with a high number of vacant lots that can be foreclosed on by the City. Once title is transferred to the City, the City can release the liens. If necessary, lots can be combined or re-platted to meet current codes. The lots can either be placed in the land trust or put out to bid as surplus land. The goal of the foreclosure is to take unused, financially burdened properties and find ways for them to be developed into usable, tax-generating properties. Ms. Arriaz provided slides for three example properties that identify their location and potential and are currently being reviewed.

Code Enforcement continues to identify additional areas for future foreclosure. Title searches have been completed on several properties and forwarded to the City Attorney. Additional title searches must be completed.

Commissioner Jeremiah Johnson inquired about the CRA's presentation earlier this evening regarding improved Code Enforcement for three areas, Orange Avenue, US-1, and Avenue D. Ms. Arriaz explained that those corridors are scheduled to be visited beginning in February with the intention of having compliance by Easter.

Commissioner Curtis Johnson inquired about the number of lot-clearing violations that remain outstanding. Ms. Arriaz advised the board that approximately 40% of the violations are in compliance or working towards compliance. Ms. Arriaz stated that the large number of vacant lots sold through tax sales contribute towards the properties not in compliance. Out of town businesses that purchase these properties through tax lien sales buy in bulk and have no real intention of maintaining them.

f. Parklet Program Update

Economic Development Manager Shyanne Harnage gave a brief update on the Parklet Program. There are currently 12 businesses that occupy 15 parking spaces in the downtown area. Ms. Harnage provided a slide listing the business and showing their locations. Ms. Harnage would like to see the program continue and have the FPRA re-evaluate the status of the program in April.

Commissioner Johnson inquired about a parklet on the corner of 2<sup>nd</sup> Street and Avenue A which does not appear to be in use or used only occasionally. Ms. Harnage will reach out to the restaurant owner to find out what their intended use is or if they are no longer using it.

g. FPRA Board Meeting Schedule

City Manager Nick Mimms presented a proposed schedule for the FPRA. Currently, the FPRA meets quarterly. Because of increased interest and development in Fort Pierce, it is proposed that the FPRA meet monthly going forward to meet the needs of the community.

Commissioner Jeremiah Johnson fully agrees with meeting monthly but suggested moving it to the third week of the month. City Attorney Peter Sweeney suggests the third Thursday of the month. Mayor Hudson also would like to have it on the third week of the month. City Clerk Linda Cox will identify a date during the first three weeks of the month that is not in conflict with other committees or meetings.

It is the consensus of the FPRA board that they will meet monthly on a date to be determined.

h. FPRA Programs and Activities Update - First Quarter FY 2021

Mr. Mimms provided a memo regarding an update on the FPRA Programs and Activities for the first quarter of FY2021 which includes Kings Landing, Lindsay School of the Arts, Fisherman's Wharf, Retail and Business Recruitment, Surplus Property, 708 North 18<sup>th</sup> Street, 414 Avenue D (f/n/a King's Inn), The Root, Means Court Plaza and the Avenue D Streetscape, and Lincoln Theatre.

Mr. Dale Matteson, CEO of Audubon Development provided a brief update on the King's Landing project. They have identified a potential hotel partner, Mainsail Lodging & Development out of Tampa. Their hotels are a part of the Marriott Portfolio Tribute Collection. This will be a substantial upgrade from the previous partner having 140 rooms. Audubon Development has received a Letter of Intent which was forwarded to the City Manager and Economic Development Manager. Audubon Development is seeking assistance from the Economic Development Council to help facilitate this agreement. The site plan is essentially completed and in the hands of the engineers. The architecture has remained the same. Mr. Matteson thinks Mainsail will bring wonderful energy to this development.

**8. STAFF COMMENTS**

None.

**9. BOARD COMMENTS**

Commissioner Perona commented that the Walker Study has been completed and the Parking Committee will bring a recommendation to the FPRA at an upcoming meeting.

**10. ADJOURNMENT**

Chairwoman Hudson adjourned the meeting at 7:20 PM.

ATTEST:

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CITY CLERK

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CHAIRPERSON