

CRA BOARD MEETING
December 2, 2013
7:00 p.m.

Board Members Present:

Shirley Groover Bryant, Presiding Officer
Tambra Varnadore, Chair
Charles Smith, Vice Chair
Tamara Cornwell
Jonathan Davis
Brian Williams

Staff Present:

Mark Barnebey, City Attorney
Jeff Burton, CRA Director
Jim Freeman, City Clerk
Allen Tusing, Public Works Director
Scott Tyler, Deputy Chief of Police
Deanna Roberts, Administrative Assistant

Presiding Officer Bryant opened the CRA Board meeting at 7:19 p.m.

1. CRA BOARD AGENDA APPROVAL

MOTION: Commissioner Cornwell moved, Commissioner Smith seconded, and motion carried unanimously to approve the December 2, 2013 CRA Board Agenda with the removal of Item 3b from the Consent Agenda and moving it as a separate item as Item 4A.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT none

3. CRA CONSENT AGENDA

- A. Minutes: November 4, 2013
- B. Relocation of the CRA Office (**Removed**)
- C. Blalock Walters Legal Bills
- D. Recommendation of MLK Park Contractor RFP
- E. Budget Resolution 2013-04

Commissioner Williams pulled Item 3D for discussion.

MOTION: Commissioner Williams moved, Commissioner Cornwell seconded, and motion carried unanimously to approve the December 2, 2013 CRA Consent Agenda with the exception of 3D and with the removal of Item 3B.

Commissioner Williams opined that with only one bid received, it would be appropriate to go out to bid again. Commissioner Smith disagreed as it might jeopardize the funding in place, and the park is already a year behind. Mr. Burton asked Commission not to penalize the one contractor who met the requirements of the RFP. He reminded Commission this is only an acceptance to sit down and negotiate.

Mr. Burton advised Commission there is still \$200,000 in the Restore Act earmarked for MLK Park. It is still in Congress and has not trickled down.

Commissioner Varnadore expressed concern over the fact that there is not another bid to compare this to, and the fact that the estimate is nearly a half-million dollars over what the engineer had projected.

Mr. Burton advised Commission that the project has been extended twice with the Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD).

MOTION: Commissioner Smith moved, Commissioner Williams seconded, and motion carried unanimously to accept Stellar's bid and allow the Mayor and staff to negotiate a plan for Martin Luther King Park; and, to poll potential bidders who attended the pre-bid regarding lack of responses.

Mr. Barnebey stated the contract amount will be subject to whatever the City has available. Currently, the \$1.5 million is not budgeted, so there will need to be a budget amendment, or the numbers will have to come down. The City will need to have commitments from SWFWMD before entering into that contract.

4. MLK PARK UPDATE

Bob Gause of Allison Gause informed Commission that he had been sworn. He advised the Board that the project has permits, and there was one response to the RFP. The park is located by the Palmetto Youth Center and will take advantage of a property that has been a problem for the City. This will turn it into an asset for the community.

The one bidder that responded has a good track record with the City. Now that Commission has taken action, he will look at options to bring the project down into budget. A time extension has been requested from SWFWMD to begin construction in March and to complete by the end of 2014. SWFWMD monitors when projects start to slide, and we need to make sure we don't slip off the funding chart. He informed Commission that he is optimistic that at least Phase I will come in under budget.

5. RIVERSIDE PARK BOAT RAMP UPDATE

Mr. Gause stated this is a joint CRA/County project. The plan is to divide the two trailer ramps into three and use Low Impact Development (LID) to handle storm water. The Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) has issued the grant permit, and he is hopeful the dredging permit will be issued in a week or so. The Army Corps of Engineers permit will probably come in January. Mr. Burton is working on a funding agreement with SWFWMD, and when that is complete the project will go out for bid. Plans and permits will be in place prior to the agreement.

The Allison Gause monthly updates are attached to and made a part of these minutes.

Mayor Bryant asked about the bait shop. Mr. Burton said it has been put out to bid and a contractor has been chosen. Now it is just a matter of pulling permits. He will send an update to Commission.

Mrs. Varnadore asked about the vending machines at the bait shop. She asked if they would be moved to the pavilion, as walkers and others depend on the vending machines. Mr. Burton said the vendor would have to come to the City to get permission to place machines at the pavilion.

Commissioner Smith thanked Mr. Gause for his hard work on the MLK Park.

4A. Relocation of CRA Office.

Mr. Burton informed the CRA Board that the lease on the CRA office expires on December 16, 2014. The CRA does not plan to stay in the building. The CRA plans to use its rent dollars, approximately \$32,000 per year, to increase the tax base. City policy directs CRA to be in the current downtown, look for an infill lot and a public/private partnership. One idea is to work with property owners to build a building to add to the tax base. There are two owners willing to talk to the CRA about building a building in which the CRA would be a tenant.

Commissioner Cornwell said the City is considering a new facility for Public Works and the Police Department. It would be appropriate to look at the CRA funding to assist the City with any new facility. She asked why the CRA would do a twenty-year lease when within that time period the City will have a facility for Public Works or the Police Department.

Mr. Barnebey opined that whoever builds the commercial building and leases to the CRA may be looking for a commitment for a longer period. Mrs. Cornwell said twenty years is too long. CRA financing could greatly assist the City in its endeavors and remove blight.

Commissioner Smith said the City will have to look at the length of the lease in case we move in the direction of a City Center.

Commissioner Williams stated the CRA could give incentives to owners to build the buildings and the CRA could be a **potential** renter with a lease not in excess of ten years. It might take six-seven years for the City to get the funding for a City Center. First, the City needs to look at which property it wants to incentivize.

Mr. Burton opined that a good commercial lease is fifteen years, and he believes that is the minimum the property owners would want. Mayor Bryant concurred.

Attorney Barnebey suggested that the Mayor be allowed to discuss this with the property owners. They might say a ten-year lease is fine.

MOTION: Commissioner Davis moved, Commissioner Cornwell seconded, and the motion carried unanimously to allow Mayor Bryant to investigate opportunities on two parcels: the Olympia site at the northeast corner of Fifth Street and 10th Avenue, and the Electra site at 336 10th Avenue West.

6. CRA DIRECTOR'S COMMENTS

None

7. PRESIDING OFFICER'S COMMENTS

None

8. CRA BOARD MEMBERS' COMMENTS

In regard to Martin Luther King, Commissioner Varnadore said her concern was with the numbers and not the project. The City needs to be a good steward of taxpayers' money. There was only a single bidder and an increase of \$400,000 in the project over the engineer's estimate. She is all for the project, and she is glad the Mayor is going to negotiate with Stellar.

Commissioner Cornwell complimented Mr. Burton on Sutton Park.

9. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 8:15 p.m. and the City Commission meeting was reconvened.

Minutes approved: January 6, 2014

James R. Freeman

James R. Freeman, City Clerk