

**SPECIAL
CRA BOARD MEETING
October 8, 2015
5:30 p.m.**

Board Members Present:

Shirley Groover Bryant, Presiding Officer
Brian Williams, Chair
Tambra Varnadore, Vice Chair
Jonathan Davis
Harold Smith

CRA Board Members Absent:

Tamara Cornwell

Staff Present:

Mark Barnebey, City Attorney
Jeff Burton, CRA Director
Jim Freeman, City Clerk
Deanna Roberts, Administrative Assistant

Mayor Bryant opened the October 8, 2015 CRA Board meeting at 5:30 p.m.

1. CRA BOARD AGENDA APPROVAL

MOTION: Commissioner Williams moved, Commissioner Davis seconded, and the motion carried unanimously to approve the October 8, 2015 CRA Board Agenda.

All persons intending to address the City Commission were duly sworn.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT

None

3. CRA PURCHASE OF 810 6 STREET WEST (J. Burton)

Mr. Burton said the CRA has been in discussion over the past four years with the VFW over the eventual purchase of their property. They have fewer members, and they are concerned about the maintenance of the building. They are looking for a way to stay there and make sure the building is taken care of.

Mr. Burton stated the building is an historic resource for the City. It is on the National Register of Historic Places, and this is the only Works Project Administration (WPA) building in the City of Palmetto.

The CRA has an opportunity to purchase the building for \$100,000. The VFW could use the first floor with a minimal lease for up to ten years. The building has 4,000 sq. ft. upstairs and 4,000 sq. ft. downstairs. The upstairs is currently not usable; it will have to be brought up to code. The CRA would pursue grants to make the space usable. Mr. Burton said when the CRA sunsets, the building would go to the City.

A new roof is an immediate need for the building, as well as termite treatment. A structural engineer has looked at the building, and came back with a good report. An asbestos inspection was done; no report received back yet.

Today he is looking for approval from the Board to move forward.

Mr. Barnebey reported that he has been working on a draft contract, and it should be ready to bring back to the Commission for final approval on October 19.

Mr. Burton informed the Commission that there is money in the budget for this. He suggested it might be better to do a payout in full to the VFW, instead of over the ten years.

Mayor Bryant said she did a search specifically for grants for armories and found a book dedicated to locations that have been successful in preserving their armories. This particular VFW has been very utilized by the community through the years.

Commissioner Williams asked about plans for the downstairs once the VFW leaves. Mr. Burton replied that there is a commercial kitchen and a bar, and it could be leased out to a restaurant. Ultimately, the CRA Board would determine use.

He asked if the VFW could extend its lease. Mr. Burton said we could certainly think about that. He suggested that they (VFW) should come in and talk to the Board.

Commissioner Varnadore asked the total cost of renovation, barring complications. Mr. Burton said to make the upstairs useful it would run about \$200,000. It would include an elevator, a tower on the outside, a new entrance and sprinklers for the upstairs. Since this is an historic building, we would have certain exemptions under the codes. He projected another \$100,000 for the windows and to make the building look the way it needs to look. The CRA will use 1500 sq. ft. and save \$24,000 per year in rent. That would leave space to lease upstairs. Mrs. Varnadore asked if the CRA could become a landlord. Mr. Barnebey answered yes.

Mrs. Varnadore asked about entering the building. Mr. Burton said the VFW will still use the front door, and the City would use the elevator entrance on the east side of the building. Eventually, he would like to put stairs at the front entrance leading up to the second floor.

Mayor Bryant commented that there are federal historic preservation dollars, and the City could apply for the special category through the Florida Historic Preservation, which is matching grants up to \$500,000. The Florida grant has the most potential. She will share the links she found in her research today.

Mrs. Varnadore expressed concern that the project at the Carnegie Library and the VFW would be competing for grant dollars. Mayor Bryant assured her that would not be the case. Mrs. Varnadore said she would like to see Carnegie finished and then move to the other. Mayor Bryant said the Carnegie is a priority.

Mrs. Varnadore requested a tour of the building. Mr. Burton will arrange one. She asked if serving alcohol downstairs from a government office would be a problem. Mr. Barnebey said he will check on that.

Commissioner Smith asked if the building is all fire brick. Bob Marble of the CRA office passed out an article from the 1937 Palmetto News that gives a structural description of the building. The article is attached to and made a part of these minutes.

Commissioner Williams informed the Commission that he has a voting conflict as he is a lifetime member of the VFW. He submitted the required voting conflict form, a copy of which is attached to and made a part of these minutes.

MOTION: Commissioner Davis moved, Commissioner Smith seconded, and the motion carried unanimously to conceptually approve moving forward with preparing a contract for the purchase of the Old Armory/VFW Building under the general terms set forth in the point paper.

A copy of the point paper is attached to and made a part of these minutes.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:03 p.m.

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Minutes approved: November 2, 2015

James R. Freeman

James R. Freeman, City Clerk