CITY COMMISSION/CRA WORKSHOP MEETING **APRIL 4, 2022** 4:30 P.M.

This Commission Meeting was conducted utilizing Communications Media Technology. Some Staff members were present in the Commission Chambers while others were present via the Zoom application to respect the social distancing guidelines.

ELECTED OFFICIALS PRESENT IN CHAMBERS:

Shirley Groover Bryant, Mayor (Not present) Tambra Varnadore, Vice Mayor, Commissioner, Ward 2 Harold Smith, Commissioner, Ward 1 Brian Williams, Vice Mayor, Commissioner, Ward 3 Sheldon Jones, Commissioner-at-Large 1 Tamara Cornwell, Commissioner-at-Large 2 (Joined the meeting @ 4:32 p.m.)

STAFF PRESENT IN CHAMBERS:

Mark Barnebey, City Attorney Mohammed Rayan, Public Works Director Lorenzo Waiters, Captain-Police Department Jim Freeman, City Clerk Cheryl Miller, Finance Director Xavier Colon, Assistant CRA Director Penny Johnston, Executive Assistant Cassi Bailey, Assistant City Clerk

STAFF PRESENT ELECTRONICALLY:

Todd Williams, Information Technology (IT) Consultant



Vice Mayor Varnadore opened the meeting at 4:30 p.m.

Jim Freeman gave background information and introduced the MSA Bond Refunding project.

1. Manatee School for the Arts (MSA) Bond Refunding

Ritesh Patel, Bond Council for MSA, spoke on the application for conduit financing that is being proposed to the board. The purpose of this document is to refund their bonds from 2019 and add approximately 10 million dollars in additional debt. The debt being proposed will fund their new elementary school. The reason for the workshop meeting is to answer any questions that the board may have. They will be back in 2 weeks for the City Commission Meeting. There will be two items on the agenda: the TEFRA hearing, and the Resolution from the City approving the financing. This will give people of the public an opportunity to speak on this project. Dr. Bill Jones and Tim McMurray spoke on the project. Dr. Bill Jones, Principal of MSA, gave a background of the school. They opened their school in 1998. After 24 years they have a plan to build the elementary school after much interest from the community. The elementary school will be a dual language and art infused program. This will be not only a bilingual program but a bi-literate program. There will be dance, theater, music, traditional art, and computerbased art in grades PK-5. The old motel property will be the new site for the elementary school. The opening date is expected to be August 2023.

Commission Williams asked about the bus issue from 2-3 years ago. They asked where the buses are now. Dr. Jones answered they have their own buses now. They no longer use a 3rd party company. They keep the buses in the front of the school.

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Commissioner Smith questioned what they're trying to do. Dr. Jones explained that they're going to refinance their existing debt and bundle it together with their new debt of 10 million dollars. Commissioner Smith asked what their current debt is. Dr. Jones responded that their current debt is around 16 million dollars. Mr. Patel clarified their debt circumstance. He re-iterated that they want to refinance their previous debt and add 10 million dollars in new debt. It will total around 28 million in debt. The resolution that will come before the commission will be under 29 million. Commissioner Smith asked if they're currently in debt with the City. Mr. Patel clarified there is a loan agreement in place, but they don't technically owe the City any money. Attorney Barnebey explained that the City's purpose is to be the conduit for financing. Commissioner Smith asked if this could come back on the City. Attorney Barnebey answered that it cannot. He also stated that they will have to go through the permit process for the location of the new elementary school. Commissioner Smith questioned if this can be done for other schools. Attorney Barnebey replied that it can. Commissioner Smith expressed that he wishes that this could have been done for Lincoln. He is concerned with MSA's amount of debt. Dr. Jones explained that their property value is well over what they owe in debt.

Commissioner Cornwell explained that they won't receive their Full-Time Equivalent Funding (FTE) until their new school is populated. She continued to explain that they have and will continue to pay off their debt based on the FTE that they receive once children are attending their school. They have shown this to be true with their history of repaying their debts in this manner. Schools don't operate in the same way that a typical business would. She also mentioned that the City didn't seek them out in regards to the bond. It is their job to research this opportunity. She stated she has no hesitation on this proposal.

Commissioner Williams asked what other entities can use this system for bonds. Mr. Patel explained which corporations could partake in this opportunity. He stated that you must have collateral to do this. Commissioner Williams expressed that Lincoln couldn't have done this because they didn't own their property.

Commissioner Smith expressed that he has nothing against MSA. He just wishes something could've been done to help Lincoln.

Mr. Freeman wanted to mention, for the record, that Molly from a Public Resource Advisory Group (RFA) has been participating online. She stated that they've reviewed the documents and the financing is sound. They're comfortable with the transaction.

2. MLK Park Playground (X. COLON)

Mr. Colon gave a presentation on the MLK Park Playground. In a prior meeting, they looked at a map of the park and gave 2 options for the location of the park. The Commission previously concluded that they wanted option 2 for the site, the southern portion of the park. Mr. Colon explained the price difference between the 2 options presented by a consultant. The major reason for the price difference is the wheelchair accessibility that is built into the first option. He wanted to bring to the Commission's attention that the park doesn't have any dedicated parking. The current quote is just for the playground. Other expenses that may come up will be for parking, lighting, cameras, and fencing. He explained that they could go forward with the listed options, or he can go back to the designers to try to get costs down. He also explained some of the other obstacles that may come up with different options within this park.

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Commissioner Jones wants to choose the best option possible for the kids. He likes option 1. He agrees there should be a time limit on the park. He stated that when the park was built, it was designed so that people could park at the Palmetto Youth Center. He wants to give kids the option to play in this park.

Commissioner Cornwell asks about the handicap swing design. She then questioned what age group would this park most facilitate? Commissioner Cornwell expressed her concern with a lack of water fountains and nearby bathrooms. Mr. Rayan responded that there are water fountains on the trail. He said it'll be in the vicinity of the park. Commissioner Cornwell is worried that the little kids won't be able to make it to the bathroom if the restrooms are far away. Mr. Rayan said that option can be discussed. She asked for clarification on the age group of the playset. Mr. Colon explained that they are for all age groups. Commissioner Cornwell questioned which age kids are at the Palmetto Youth Center. Commissioners Smith and Jones stated there are only about 7-12 kids there. The discussion of benches for parents was also brought forward. Xavier explained there are a lot of things that still need to be put into consideration. He stated this model is just for the actual playground. He asked for there to be collaboration between the CRA and the City. He stated there are going to be a lot of moving parts in this plan before there will be building plans. Commissioner Cornwell said she would choose option 1, and she would like to add more handicap play options.

Commissioner Smith expressed that he likes option 1. He stated that he doesn't want it to be too small. Xavier explained that right now it's a passive park. He said when you add a playground it becomes an active park. He stated it makes a difference with the hours, bathrooms, patrols, etc. He expressed that they would need water fountains, and bathrooms. He questioned the need for fencing and the placement of the bathrooms. Xavier explained the possible concerns with handicap parking, accessibility, and the potential for an inter-local agreement with the youth center for parking. Commissioner Smith asked who nixed the plans for the bridge. Commissioner Varnadore stated that was done in a previous meeting because it was too expensive. Commissioner Smith also questioned why Xavier wants there to be a City and CRA partnership. Xavier explained that it benefits both parties involved, and it would be financially beneficial.

Commissioner Varnadore likes the first option. She expressed that they need to work out the parking issues and everything that would be involved before they can move forward. She supports number 1 but wants to have a workshop in the future to discuss the site plan and the parking options. She also wants to know what the youth center's plan is and how that may tie in. She inquired who the director of the youth center is. Xavier answered that it is Reggie Bellamy. She also suggested having discussions with the County regarding their plans with the youth center.

Commissioner Williams likes number 1. But he wants a better view of the park equipment. He also wanted to suggest putting the playground on the East side, near the new pool in Lincoln Park. He thinks this would solve the issues with parking, restrooms, etc. and would be a great place for kids to come and have many options to play. Xavier responded that MLK would serve a different neighborhood than Lincoln Park would.

Commissioner Jones stated that he spoke to County Commissioner Bellamy about MLK Park and there wouldn't be an issue collaborating with the youth center. He also stated that there wouldn't be a problem parking at the Palmetto Youth Center. He doesn't think there will be many kids that are going to be playing in the dark.

Commissioner Cornwell states that she wants to see the whole map to understand the area and how far away everything is from one another. She expresses that parking is something that really needs to be considered. Shading and fencing also needs to be thought about when developing the plan.

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Commissioner Smith states there are over 100 kids that are in walking distance of the park and won't need parking. He doesn't want the production of the park to be held up while waiting on parking. He also stated that it must always have lighting.

Commissioner Williams requested the map that Mr. Colon had on the screen.

Xavier explained that he will come before the Board in the future to have a conceptual approved before moving to the next step.

Vice Mayor Varnadore adjourned the meeting at 5:54 P.M.

MINUTES APPROVED: APRIL 18, 2022

JAMES R. FREEMAN

JAMES R. FREEMAN CITY CLERK