

**MINUTES**  
**CITY COMMISSION/CRA WORKSHOP MEETING**  
**JUNE 27, 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  
Tambra Varnadore, Vice Mayor, Commissioner, Ward 2  
Tamara Cornwell, Commissioner-at-Large 2 – joined on ZOOM application 4:52 p.m.  
Sheldon Jones, Commissioner-at-Large 1  
Harold Smith, Commissioner, Ward 1  
Brian Williams, Commissioner, Ward 3

**STAFF PRESENT IN CHAMBERS:**

Scott Rudacille, City Attorney  
Xavier Colon, Interim CRA Director  
Jim Freeman, City Clerk- ZOOM application  
Mohammed Rayan, Public Works Director  
Scott Tyler, Chief of Police  
Cassi Bailey, Assistant City Clerk- absent  
Penny Johnston, Executive Assistant

**STAFF PRESENT ELECTRONICALLY:**

Todd Williams, Information Technology (IT) Consultant

Mayor Bryant opened the meeting at 4:31 p.m. and started by announcing the Employee of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter.

1. Employee of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter

Emily Dickson, Accountant 1, was selected as the Employee of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter but was unable to be in the Chambers, as she was attending a FGFOA Finance Conference. Other employees nominated for the honor were Lupe Cantu, Kim Cooper, and Robert Simpson for their excellent work with the City.

2. City of Palmetto General Employees' Retirement System – Proposed Ordinance 2022-08

Jim Freeman joined the meeting via ZOOM application. This ordinance was discussed and is being recommended by the General Employee Pension Board. Mr. Freeman explained that this proposal would provide that all active general employees who retired prior to October 1, 2021 would receive a one-time Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) of 2% for every year that the employee was retired prior to October 1, 2016 up to a maximum of 10%. The last time the retired general employees received a COLA was 26 years ago. This Ordinance also

requires the Pension Board to at least consider a COLA for retirees every five (5) years. The Actuary provided a letter with choices in terms of cost, and the Pension Board selected Option C, which would have a financial impact on the City of approximately \$59,000 for this change. The City payroll matching contribution would go from 15.03% to 8.67%.

Commissioner Jones did not feel the increase was necessary. He did not feel our private pension plan was a good system. He was in favor of a 1.5% increase. He thinks Florida Retirement System is better than the City's private plan. He questioned dropping from 15% to 8% for current employees. He just wants to see a better system.

Mayor said transitioning from system to system is very expensive. She restated the pension attorney and actuarial recommended this change.

Commissioner Smith asked the difference between FRS and the City's private plan. Mr. Freeman said each system has benefits, such as a multiplier for every year of service and vesting. Mr. Freeman opined the City's private pension plan is very competitive if not better than FRS. The City does not have a COLA in the plan, so this ordinance is intended to correct that inequity. Commissioner Smith opined the Pension Board should consider changing systems. Commissioner Smith asked to learn more about the details and differences of each plan.

Commissioner Williams agreed we should examine the two plans but agreed we should move forward with advertising the Ordinance.

*Commissioner Cornwell joined the meeting using ZOOM application at 4:52 p.m.*

### 3. Riverside discussion with Hatfield and Civix

Mr. Colon restated that on April 18, 2022, the Commission voted to reject both proposals from Hatfield and Civix regarding development on the Riverside property. May 2, 2022, Commission voted to reconsider the motion, and to reopen the Riverside discussion and move forward with negotiations with one of the two developers.

Commissioner Jones wanted to hear the new proposal from Civix. Commissioner Varnadore said if we hear from one we have to hear from both.

Commissioner Smith asked if we opened in good faith. Mr. Scott Rudacille stated Blalock Walters is not representing either of the applicants. They do represent one of the possible contractors but there is no contract. If necessary, Blalock Walters would bring in conflict council to negotiate. There is no technical conflict.

Commissioner Williams said we can go forward.

Mayor clarified that if we listen to one, we need to listen to both.

Commissioner Jones asked about the new plans Civix wanted to present to the Commission. After the April 18<sup>th</sup> meeting, Rod Connelly with Civix took time to rethink the project. From that point, they were trying to align themselves with the monetary requests and restrictions from the City and align with the public requests to maintain boat trailer parking.

Mr. Xavier Colon felt that it would be unfair for Mr. Connelly to bring forward a new presentation. Both developers were invited to be available to answer questions. Mr. Colon stated that Mr. Connelly was not just revisiting the April 18<sup>th</sup> presentation as agreed.

Commissioner Varnadore questioned if this presentation should be seen during a regular Commission meeting rather than a workshop. Mr. Rudacille said significant changes in the proposal would be problematic. "Reconsideration" takes the conversation back to the position with the two developers. If Commission rejects both developers again, anyone can bid on the project.

Jim Freeman reminded the Board that Commission Williams intended that they were just reconsidering the two proposals and had intended to ask questions of the developer.

Mayor Bryant felt the Commissioners were going to share their list of priorities for the Riverside property and then select one developer to begin negotiations.

Commissioner Jones wanted to hear the new presentation.

Commissioner Varnadore opined we should start over.

Commissioner Williams wanted to provide our list of priorities to the developers. We can do nothing and just make our decision between the two developers at 7:00 p.m.

Tony Veldkamp and Matt Venski with SVN Commercial Advisory Group encouraged the Commission to thoroughly review the packet provided that summarized the 4-year process, starting with a 200-300 unit apartment complex and then COVID hit. Randy Iaboni stated in previous meetings that residential was the highest and best use of the property. Mr. Veldkamp stated residential growth is the best catalyst for spurring private investment in the city. Coastal High Hazard legislation was introduced, density had decreased, therefore the value of the property has decreased. All four were presented to the Commission in May of 2019, Assisted Living was not considered a desired development. Two ideas were presented to the CRA Board in June 2020- however, the Board did not act. Negotiations were delayed due to boat trailer parking, and delayed due to COVID. Mr. Veldkamp said they were scheduled to come to this meeting to learn which contractor won the bid to negotiate.

Commissioner Smith insisted they needed to put signs on the property.

Commissioner Smith wanted to start the process all over.

Commissioner Williams wanted to pick a developer and move forward.

Commissioner Varnadore wanted to start over.

Commissioner Jones wanted to start over.

Ron Allen, potential construction manager said they would not use Blalock Walters if they were selected for this project. For 3 ½ years, they have been coming before this Board and we keep getting stuck in "I don't like this" but they are trying to design this in a vacuum, with no discussion about what is wanted. He opined that this Board needs to pick the group they feel the most comfortable with to get to the desired finished project. Mr. Allen restated that tonight the Commission should decide on the Hatfields, the other team or start over for the best program for this residential property.

Attorney Rudacille said that Commissioners can talk until another Request for Proposals (RFP) goes out, and then we have to make sure all information is shared equally with all bidders.

Mr. Veldkamp said if the Board decides to start over, SVN would re-engage their marketing and after a 3-4 month process, they would put out a call for offers.

Commissioner Cornwell opined the Board had chosen one project over the other and the Board should move forward. The Board keeps delaying for one reason or another.

#### 4. Interlocal Agreement with Manatee County – Lincoln Park

Mayor Bryant directed the CRA Board to review the first draft which they all were given, make modifications if needed, and bring them to Attorney Barnebey to share with the County.

Commissioner Jones was concerned about the name change. He asked if the County would be maintaining the aquatic center. He wanted the football field to be named the Coach Eddie Shannon Field. He opined the pool should remain Lincoln Park.

Commissioner Smith agreed with Commissioner Jones.

Commissioner Varnadore added that the County may have their own opinions.

Commissioner Jones asked if the County chairman could come to Palmetto to hear our thoughts. Mayor Bryant suggested maybe this should go before Council of Governments.

Mayor Bryant adjourned the meeting at 5:55 p.m.

MINUTES APPROVED: JULY 25, 2022

***JAMES R. FREEMAN***

JAMES R. FREEMAN  
CITY CLERK

