

**MINUTES**  
**CITY COMMISSION/CRA WORKSHOP MEETING**  
**AUGUST 16, 2023**  
**5:30 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.

**ELECTED OFFICIALS PRESENT IN CHAMBERS:**

Shirley Groover Bryant, Mayor  
Sheldon Jones, Vice-Mayor, Commissioner-at-Large 1  
Tamara Cornwell, Commissioner-at-Large 2  
Sunshine Mathews, Commissioner, Ward 2  
Harold Smith, Commissioner, Ward 1  
Brian Williams, Commissioner, Ward 3 (Present via Zoom)

**STAFF PRESENT IN CHAMBERS:**

Marisa Powers, City Attorney  
Jim Freeman, City Clerk  
Edward Johnson, Interim CRA Director  
Mohammed Rayan, Public Works Director  
Scott Tyler, Chief of Police  
Cassi Bailey, Assistant City Clerk  
Penny Johnston, Executive Assistant  
Cheryl Miller, Finance Director  
Matt Misco, Finance Manager

**STAFF PRESENT ELECTRONICALLY:**

Todd Williams, Information Technology (IT) Consultant

Mayor Bryant opened the meeting at 5:30 pm.

1. **BUDGET DISCUSSION (J.FREEMAN/C.MILLER)**

Mr. Freeman explained Version 2 of the budget, which was included in the Agenda. He highlighted the changes made between version 1 and version 2. The comparison between budgets was included as part of the Version 2 packet. Mr. Freeman asked for direction from the Commission as to how they would like to proceed with funding the fairs and festivals. It was historically funded by the CRA, but based on legislation, the CRA cannot continue to fund these events. Mr. Johnson has budgeted monies to help with a sponsorship for these events. Mr. Freeman gave a couple of possible options, which were discussed. It was up to Commission to decide the direction they wanted to go.

Mr. Johnson echoed the same opinion and asked for direction from the Commission for funding the fairs and festivals.

Commissioner Jones asked what level of input the Commission would have if the Mainstreet program took over organizing these events. Mr. Johnson responded that the Mainstreet program is open to anyone joining and participating. It is a statewide program and they have their own Board. Their organization would make the

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determination on who would coordinate the events. They would have to have their own personnel. The CRA staff can help guide them. Commissioner Jones questioned if they have been in contact with the previous multi-cultural promotor. Mr. Johnson mentioned a member of the Mainstreet Board that might be willing to spearhead these events.

Commissioner Smith questioned who was on the Mainstreet Board right now. Mr. Johnson responded that Jordan Chancey, a local realtor, is the Chair. The Board consists of 7 members. Commissioner Smith asked for Mr. Johnson to explain what the Mainstreet Program's purpose is. Mr. Johnson explained that their goal is to develop 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue from Riverside Drive North to 17<sup>th</sup> Street West as Palmetto's historic downtown strip. The intent is to draw new business to that area and work on community projects that are important for the Mainstreet program to operate. Mr. Johnson has attended several of their Board meetings. The next meeting will be on August 23<sup>rd</sup> in the CRA office at 5:30 pm. Commissioner Jones explained that when he went to the FRA conferences, they had to establish a Board to receive some of the funding from the State. The City has also allocated \$100,000 in previous budgets to help them. It will be up to the Board to decide if they want to run the multi-cultural event and 4<sup>th</sup> of July event. Commissioner Smith questioned why they are changing this procedure if it has worked in the past years. Mr. Johnson reiterated that the legislature has changed, limiting their ability to fund fairs and festivals. Commissioner Smith opined that they should leave things as they are.

Attorney Powers explained that the statute was changed in 2019. The FRA's Attorney released a memo a couple months ago, advising against CRA's continuing to fund these types of events. This is what prompted these discussions. She further explained their legal opinion. Commissioner Smith questioned if it would be the same thing to allocate money to the Mainstreet Program to oversee the fairs and festivals, as it would be if they were continuing to run these as they have in the past. He thinks they should get someone that knows what they're doing. He doesn't think the Mainstreet Board is ready to take this over. He continued to opine that it needs to be done right.

Commissioner Mathews thought that it would be wisest to take their legal council's advice. She appreciated the options that were presented.

Commissioner Williams spoke via zoom. He expressed concerns over sponsoring the Mainstreet committee to run these events. He brought up concerns with not knowing who the committee was and the possibility of entering into a contract with them. He would like to know who the Board is. He stated that the Commission can't be as involved in the decision making for these events once they give away their operating power. He agreed that the new legislative statute says they must. Attorney Powers spoke about giving money to a committee and the need to enter into a contract. They could have terms in the contract regarding major issues. The Mainstreet Board won't change or be looked at differently. They have their own parameters that they must work under their state guidelines. Commissioner Williams asked what the difference was between sponsoring it and spending the money to run it themselves. Sponsorships and funding between the City and CRA continued to be discussed.

Commissioner Cornwell noted that the Commission will have to vote if they want to continue to have these two main events. She then questioned how the City of Bradenton was running events in their City. She specified, Get Down Downtown, the Blues Festival, Arts Festival, etc. Attorney Powers shared that she sits on the Board for Realize Bradenton, and the City of Bradenton's CRA will no longer be funding Realize Bradenton. In the City of Bradenton's proposed budget, they are allocating funds for Realize Bradenton. Realize Bradenton is

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a non-profit, that was started under the Night Foundation about 12 years ago, with the goal of promoting the City of Bradenton, specifically their downtown area. Mayor Bryant spoke about other CRA's and Mainstreet Programs. Commissioner Cornwell reiterated that the Commission would have to vote on their desire to continue with these two events and how to do them. She was curious how the City of Bradenton runs other events in their City. Mr. Freeman clarified the questions staff are looking to have answered, A. do they want to continue to have these events? B. who is going to fund these events? C. to what extent are they going to fund these events? Commissioner Cornwell would like to know what funds they have available. 4<sup>th</sup> of July Fireworks were discussed. Mr. Freeman recapped the budget discussion and asked for a consensus.

Commissioner Jones opined that for this year, he doesn't think the Mainstreet Program can handle these events. He wants the City/CRA to handle these events for this year and allocate funds in the budget.

Mr. Rayan stated that it would be approximately \$210,000, plus wages, for these two events. Mr. Freeman clarified that the multi-cultural event cost approximately \$65,000. The 4<sup>th</sup> of July event cost approximately \$111,000. This would total \$176,000 for the two events in 2023. Commissioner Jones thinks that amount can be worked out between the City and CRA.

Mayor questioned who was going to run the event. Commissioner Jones thinks the same staff as last year can operate it for this year. They can figure out something different for the year after.

Commissioner Smith questioned if the City or the CRA sponsors the 4<sup>th</sup> of July Fireworks. Mr. Freeman answered that the City sponsors it, along with the City of Bradenton and Manatee County. Approximately \$50,000 is split three ways. Commissioner Smith expressed his concern with turning these events over to someone else, as he believed the Commission is ultimately responsible if something were to happen at one of those events. He believed that someone from the City or CRA has to oversee these events. He noted that there have been no major issues at past events. Commissioner Smith asked Mr. Johnson the race of the Mainstreet Board members. He then asked Mr. Freeman to detail the costs from last year.

Commissioner Cornwell is not for the CRA handling these events. She asked if it is possible for the City to hire the CRA staff to do these events. Mr. Freeman believed that accounting wise, they could figure that out. There may be some other questions that need answered for that to work. She agreed with Commissioner Smith that the multi-cultural event is right around the corner.

Mayor Bryant extended the meeting to 7:30 pm.

Discussions continued regarding the funding of CRA staff during normal business hours.

Commissioner Williams thought that they need to let the events go for a year and create a better plan for the next year. This will allow them to talk with the Mainstreet Board or explore other options.

Commissioner Smith asked Commissioner Cornwell to repeat her idea of the City contributing funds to the CRA staff to oversee these events. They wouldn't be paid extra; the City would fund the portion of their day that was allocated to working on these events. She gave an example of how the SROs (School Resource Officers) are funded through the school board and the City, depending on the work they're doing. Commissioner Smith agreed with this proposal.

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Mr. Freeman reminded the Commission that if something changes, they can always do a budget amendment after the budget is passed.

Mayor Bryant believed there is no harm in pursuing the Mainstreet program for the 4<sup>th</sup> of July. They can start these discussions with them.

Commissioner Jones thanked Mr. Johnson for adjusting the budget with Lincoln Park and Keep Manatee Beautiful. He then questioned if Mr. Rayan was going to keep the Deputy Director position in the budget or was he going to move it to the next year. Mr. Rayan responded that it is still in the budget. Commissioner Jones opined that he should move that position out to the next year, as he didn't think he should have both a Superintendent position and Deputy Director position. He reiterated that he didn't think there should be three high paying supervisor positions.

Discussions continued between Mayor Bryant, Commissioner Jones and Mr. Rayan regarding the Public Works supervisory positions when there are only 16 current employees.

Commissioner Jones questioned Mr. Freeman on the listed contracts in the budget. He opined that if Blalock Walters is under a contract, they shouldn't get the same increase as the employees do. It was clarified that there is a provision in their contract that they will get an increase if the employees get an increase.

Mr. Rayan shared with Commissioner Jones that the rental costs for the dumpsters for the year to date was \$26,000.

Commissioner Smith believed that if Mr. Barnebey's contract gets an increase then Mr. Johnson's should as well. He also questioned who the current Superintendent is. It was answered that it is Matt Bloome. He then questioned if he would qualify for the Deputy position. It was answered no because he doesn't have the background in engineering. Commissioner Smith reiterated Public Works' need for additional workers.

Mayor Bryant adjourned the meeting at 7:31 pm.

MINUTES APPROVED: SEPTEMBER 25, 2023

***JAMES R. FREEMAN***

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CITY CLERK