

MINUTES
CITY COMMISSION/CRA WORKSHOP MEETING
SEPTEMBER 25, 2023
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.

ELECTED OFFICIALS PRESENT IN CHAMBERS:

Shirley Groover Bryant, Mayor
Sheldon Jones, Vice-Mayor, Commissioner-at-Large 1
Tamara Cornwell, Commissioner-at-Large 2 (Joined the meeting at 4:35 pm)
Sunshine Mathews, Commissioner, Ward 2
Harold Smith, Commissioner, Ward 1
Brian Williams, Commissioner, Ward 3 (Joined the meeting at 4:34 pm)

STAFF PRESENT IN CHAMBERS:

Mark Barnebey, 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
Jenny Silverio, CRA Administrative/Compliance Coordinator

STAFF PRESENT ELECTRONICALLY:

Todd Williams, Information Technology (IT) Consultant

Mayor Bryant opened the meeting at 4:30 pm.

1. MASONIC LODGE FORECLOSURE DISCUSSION (E.JOHNSON)

Mr. Johnson explained that this item will be on the Consent Agenda for the CRA Board on October 9th. The CRA Advisory Board voted to recommend this property be foreclosed on, due to outstanding liens. Mr. Johnson recapped the history of this property. This property has been accruing liens since 2018. He referenced the packet detailing this property, which was included in the Agenda. He shared that they have made numerous attempts to reach out to the Masonic Lodge Headquarters, to no avail.

Commissioner Smith asked when the CRA Board/City was notified about this. The Code Enforcement Board has been dealing with this since 2018. Commissioner Smith didn't believe they'd ever been told. Mr. Johnson believed there had been previous discussions. Mr. Freeman explained that Mr. Colon brought this forward to the Board before. Mr. Barnebey stated that they normally bring these issues to the Board after the property owners have been notified multiple times. In this particular case, he spoke with the Masonic Lodge Attorney a year ago, and nothing happened. It's the Board's decision whether to move forward. Commissioner Smith asked Mr. Freeman where the approximately \$193,000 in fines came from. Mr. Freeman explained the three components, which were included in the Agenda packet. The majority was daily fines accrued until the property came into compliance with the City Ordinance as stated in the Order Imposing Fines by the Special Magistrate.

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Commissioner Smith wanted the pictures from 2018-2019 showing the damage. Discussions continued regarding the history of this property. Commissioner Smith didn't believe this was handled correctly. Mr. Barnebey explained the process with the Special Magistrate.

Commissioner Jones believed the fines were astronomical. He questioned if anyone had looked into the deed of the property. Mr. Barnebey believed that the Masonic Lodge was the owner, but he could further investigate. Commissioner Jones did not believe that the Masonic Lodge owned the property. He believed one of the owners was Mr. Green, who has since passed away. He believed his heirs would now be partial owners. He reiterated that they need more information before moving forward. Mr. Freeman stated that according to the Property Appraiser website, the property was owned by the Masonic Lodge. He also explained the tax bills over the last several years. According to the records JPL Investments bought the tax certificate in 2022. He believed after three years; they would be able to foreclose on the property themselves.

Commissioner Williams agreed that more research needed to be done before moving forward.

Mr. Johnson explained the history of this discussion with the CRA Advisory Board. CRA staff had been reaching out to the Masonic Lodge in Jacksonville, and the communication ended in July. They were told that they had representatives coming to the area, but then they cancelled. Mr. Johnson explained the current assessment of the property. There is a current gaping hole in the roof. He noted that it has been locked and secured. The Building Official and Code Enforcement went there last Friday. Commissioner Williams questioned the assessed value of property. Mr. Freeman answered \$ 145,000 according to the Property Appraiser website and the market value was listed at \$160,000. Mr. Johnson noted that it is a two-story structure. The structure itself is pretty solid, but the interior is destroyed.

Commissioner Cornwell asked if it was posted as unsafe. Mr. Johnson answered that there were no postings. Commissioner Cornwell wanted there to be a sign indicating not to enter so no one would be hurt. They can do that once it is determined as an unsafe structure by the Building Official.

Commissioner Smith didn't think anyone could get in the building. Discussions continued regarding the property owner. Mr. Barnebey recommended doing a title search.

Commissioner Jones stated that they've been tax exempt since 2020. He also believed Mr. Green was the previous owner.

Mayor Bryant shared that an item 4c. was being added to the Consent Agenda at the 7:00 pm. Meeting. This was for the amendment to the PBA agreement for the Police Officers. This was already reflected in the budget. Chief Tyler noted that the impact has already been budgeted.

Commissioner Williams also stated that he would like to provide an update to the Commissioners at the 7:00 pm. meeting from the Florida League of Cities meeting.

Mayor Bryant adjourned the meeting at 5:19 pm.

MINUTES APPROVED: OCTOBER 9, 2023

JAMES R. FREEMAN

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CITY CLERK