

Minutes of the Community Redevelopment Agency of the City of Auburndale held September 15, 2020 at 7:42 p.m. in the Commission Room of City Hall, after having been properly advertised, with the following members present: Chair Cindy Price, Vice Chair Ellie Harper (via phone), Dorothea Taylor Bogert, Keith Cowie, Richard Hamann, Jack Myers, and Tim Pospichal. Also present were: Assistant City Manager Jeff Tillman and Finance Director/City Clerk Shirley Lowrance.

Motion by Keith Cowie, seconded by Jack Myers, to approve the Community Redevelopment Agency Minutes of the May 18, 2020 Meeting. Upon vote, all ayes.

Assistant City Manager Jeff Tillman said in October, we typically do not have a meeting because we are at the FRA Conference. This year they will not be having a FRA Conference and there will be a series of virtual speakers. We will get this information to the Board, as it becomes available.

Chair Cindy Price asked for public comment. There was no public comment.

1. FINANCE REPORT

Finance Director/City Clerk Shirley Lowrance went over the July 2020 CRA Expense and Revenue Report and said we are doing well. The report represents ten months into the Fiscal Year. The City received the Tax Increment Funds from the County and City in December, per State law. She said the revenues received are \$1,508,025.22 and expenses year-to-date were \$226,307.04. Some of the larger year-to-date expenses were: \$12,127 City Utility Billing, \$19,491 Agricultural Horticultural Supplies, \$38,730 Incentive/Loan Program, \$24,000 Sidewalk-Repairs New, and \$112,951 Update Streetscape. She said we have a large budget amount to carry forward to finish the project proposed this fiscal year. The CRA Pooled Cash total was \$1,852,839.92, Incentive Loan Program \$388,975.67, and the Adjusted Pooled Cash of \$1,463,865.25. She said at year-end we will do a Budget Amendment for any line-item that has a deviation of \$25,000 plus or minus, when compared to the original Budget.

Jack Myers asked about the Incentive Loan Program. He said it was called a Loan Program. He asked if there was a stipulation on how long someone would have to own occupy property.

Assistant City Manager Jeff Tillman said it was a Grant program, with no intention for repayment. He said there is no requirement in our Grant program of length of time for the owner to occupy.

Chair Cindy Price asked about the Update Streetscape line-item. Was the line-item expense outside something that was budgeted.

Finance Director/City Clerk Shirley Lowrance said it would be outside of something that was budgeted.

Assistant City Manager Jeff Tillman said when he gets into the CRA Project Updates, he will touch on this line-item.

2. CRA PROJECT UPDATE

Assistant City Manager Jeff Tillman said we want to show what we have done during the fiscal year 2019-2020. The big project this year was the Street Resurfacing Main Street in partnership with the City. We were going to resurface from the triangle at Lake Ariana Blvd. down to Recker Hwy. The portion the CRA would help with was from Sesquachita at Stambaugh Middle School down to Recker Hwy. The street jurisdictional transfer has occurred and is under City jurisdiction. We are waiting for the trucks to start taking the Hwy 559A Berkley Road route before we pull the plug on resurfacing the street. They have started some of the

signage improvements, but not necessarily directional signage. The signage just says, "truck route 559A". Public Works Director John Dickson has been working with DOT to get some of that overhead signage that would start to turn that traffic. This will probably not occur until after the first of the year. Funding from 2019-2020 will be moved to 2020-2021 budget and allow us to do the street resurfacing in the CRA and make additional improvements for pedestrian crossing and improvements along Main Street. This will compliment the project. We also have CDBG funding for sidewalks near Dunkin Donuts.

Dorothea Taylor Bogert asked when we passed the Ordinance, did we notify all the businesses who have the truck traffic. She said it seemed like it should already be dwindling down.

Public Works Director John Dickson said we have told them about the truck route. However, until all the signage is up it is not enforceable. Once the signs are up, we will give them an official notice.

Chair Cindy Price said as a resident of Berkley Road, she thought she sees more truck traffic on Berkley Road.

Assistant City Manager Jeff Tillman said for the Streetscape Update, we made improvements on Ariana Avenue. He displayed pictures of the new pavers, historic lights on Ariana Avenue and planter pots. We have heard great compliments on the project. This is part of the increased cost for this line-item with cost of close to \$50,000. He said they installed new trees around Lake Stella. We placed oak trees, cypress trees, and sabal palms. We have heard some good compliments on the project. We consider this a Gateway into the CRA and wanted to make it look nice. Also, the replaced medjool palm trees come from this line-item and we have replaced quite a few this year.

He went over the five CRA Grants that were outstanding.

- 110 E. Park Street, Bestway Mortgage Corp - \$55,203.13. Plan to renovate first story into a mortgage office and two apartments above.
- 215 Orange Street, HOS Properties (Palm City Center 2) - \$57,699.13. Office space for possibly four medical offices. They will have shared parking between the current facility and new facility and parking along Orange Street would also be available.
- 231 E. Lake Avenue, Auburndale Family Partners LLC (Former VFW) - \$50,000. They are working on the interior now. It will be a BBQ Restaurant.
- 227 E. Lake Avenue, Maria Franco (Maria Petit Food Boutique) - \$55,514.20. It will be a Brazilian bakery, with seating. There will be a brick paver parking lot. We are looking forward to the restaurant trend along Lake Street.
- 221 Palmetto Street, Sadler Homes - \$50,000. Vacant lot next to Ms. Heather's Nursery. A local home builder, Danny Saddler Jr., is looking to bring his office to the downtown area to show the customer their plans. It will have brick pavers and keep the quaintness of Downtown Auburndale. Looking forward to seeing redevelopment on Palmetto.

Cindy Price asked about the second-floor apartment being included in the Grant.

Assistant City Manager Jeff Tillman said yes, it was in the scope of work.

Dorothea Taylor Bogert asked about the timeline for the Grants and possible extensions.

Assistant City Manager Jeff Tillman said yes, we have had some requests to extend. Staff has the ability to extend for six months and have extended three of them.

3. DISCUSS REDEVELOPMENT & IMPACT FEE GRANTS

Assistant City Manager Jeff Tillman said the Grants have been successful and we are looking forward to some of the restaurants and other businesses in our Grant program. To get into some of the history of the redevelopment and impact fee grants, he displayed the target area of the Grants. The colored property was the Grant eligible area in the downtown business core. The map identified five zoning categories eligible for the Grant funding. We wanted to keep it from Lake Stella to Bridgers Avenue and focus on the downtown core. To further define it, we only wanted specific types of business: restaurants, coffee shops, multi family, and manufacturing facilities. We have not had the manufacturing facility request yet, but that was something the Board said they wanted to attract. The zoning categories specific to downtown area were the Residential, Institutional Office (RIO), Neighborhood Commercial (NC), General Commercial (GC), General Commercial-1 (GC1) and Central Business District. Throughout the CRA area we have had residents ask are there grants to help fix up their home and put a new roof on. As staff, we explain what the Grants are for. We have had other businesses come in and ask about the Grants and are they eligible. They may be in one of those zoning districts, but the use did not meet the criteria. We had to tell them that was not a target business we were trying to bring into the downtown area. Recently, we have had a number of requests on US Hwy. 92 and the Havendale Blvd. corridors. We have had some good Grant applications come forward. As far as staff feeling, we needed to bring the discussion to see if the CRA Board wanted to consider funding out on the Hwy 92/Havendale Blvd. commercial corridor. He said the Board was copied to a map of the suggested area from the overpass down to the CRA boundaries. There are two questions tonight. Do you want to target a different area by adding an additional area on the US 92/Havendale corridor and open the Grant opportunities up and the funding questions? Do you want to open it up to the corridor? In Staff discussion, you may want to limit the Grant to properties that have frontage on that commercial corridor, not a side road. He said he thought that some of the Hwy. 92 areas are limited due to depth of their lots and it may be a challenge to redevelop. Do we want to incentivize them to possibly purchase some additional homes to redevelop? When Staff discussed funding in May, we had \$226,000 available and no applications in review. We felt the \$226,000 was comfortable moving to the FY 2020-2021 budget and did not add any funding to it. To-date we have invested \$600,000 to the Redevelopment Grant and Impact Fee Assistance Program. We have only paid out \$211,000 of the money. We have an unexpended amount of \$388,975 for commitment. When we meet as a Committee, we commit the funds. With the new projects, we have a total commitment of \$268,000 out of \$388,000 or \$120,558.21 available. There are additional applications out there that have not gone to the Committee. Before they go to the Committee, we try to make sure they have a complete Grant. We have two applications, with the potential to take it to \$20,000. We do not have a lot of money. We did not put any additional money into the Grant pot this year. We typically put \$100,000 into the program. He said he could work with Mrs. Lowrance on the CRA Budget and bring that back to the Board. He said you also have to consider how much you want to open it up, if you expand the target areas. At the staff level, we are getting applications from outside the qualified district and not meeting the zoning. He said if the Board were to expand the area, Staff recommendation was to limit the expanded area to frontage along Hwy. 92 and Havendale and exempt shopping centers. He asked how does the Board want to handle the funding. He suggested bringing it back at the next meeting depending upon the discussion of expanding the area.

Tim Pospichal asked how many applicants do we have for the frontage area along Hwy. 92.

Assistant City Manager Jeff Tillman said one full Grant application but have had many phone calls to inquire. He said we do have a full application and is looking to see what we do tonight.

Chair Cindy Price said basically that application was submitted even though we do not fund that area, as of today.

Assistant City Manager Jeff Tillman said yes, they brought it in and we told them it was not eligible right now. He said it does look to be a great project and they wanted to bring it to the Board to consider. He said this was a conversation with Community Development Director Amy Palmer that we always have that good Grant opportunity, we have the opportunity to bring it to Board to consider. We brought it forward to consider the whole target area of Hwy. 92 and Havendale Blvd., if you want to open it up that way. He said he thought we have that ability to be very flexible or keep it the way we have it. We could open it up and add some additional funding, but it is a policy decision that had to come to the Board.

Dorothea Taylor Bogert said you are saying even though it is not part of it, we could do individuals and open it up. In your mind, you think it is an exception opportunity for Auburndale along the Hwy. 92 corridor and we could as a Board consider that individually, before opening it up.

Assistant City Manager Jeff Tillman said you could do it that way. It is really a decision of the Board. He said once you do one there will be another and you need to be fair and consistent.

Jack Myers said as a realtor and being here in town, he would speak to that commercial corridor. We talk about Gateways to the City and Hwy 92 is a Gateway to the City. We can sit here as a CRA Board with our pockets full of money and not try to do anything out there to improve it. That can be a policy decision. We can still spend with a \$100,000 project in downtown Auburndale give a \$50,000 grant, which is 50% of the project and we are going to get back that tax increment over our lifetime or we can spend that same kind of money on a million dollar project, like where Larry Lay's building is or where Webb's Towing is moving and it is acres. He said he thought the Grant being spoken of is the old college that sits back like an eye sore. He said this is three right off the top of his head that he felt like would really spruce up. He said success breeds success even in real estate and development. He said you see these people, these developers for commercial, and they start seeing the activity and the roof tops. He said so you spend \$50,000 on a \$1 million business for that tax increment. You are getting that money back maybe in five years. He said he thought it was a good investment. It was a Gateway to our City. He said he was all for putting some more funds in there and trying it. We could always come back and say it has not been a good decision for us. He said just like we can change it today, we can change it tomorrow. He said he saw the opportunity, there is a lot of activity out there and there is a lot of improvement that could be made. He said if you incentivize somebody, it could be the difference in going somewhere else or coming here.

Richard Hamann said we see how it has worked in the downtown area. It has worked well and is still working well. If we expand like Jack Myers said, what do we have to lose? It will make the Gateways a lot nicer and get a better return on our money.

Keith Cowie said he certainly understood the Gateways. He asked if that took away from people that might have come downtown, which was our core goal to begin with. Now if that Grant puts us out to Hwy. 92, it is still in our town, but it gets away from the original purpose. He said he did not think we are done with downtown at this point. He said did not know if a \$50,000 Grant makes as big a deal to the \$1 million project, but it sure makes a big deal to the person with a small bakery business trying to open up. He said he would hate to take away from those type of things that would come downtown to give a big corporation a tax break where we could help somebody else that might be more deserving.

Jack Myers said as business owner downtown, he said he does not fear that. We have the park we have spent money on. He said in no way would he want to take away from what we are doing downtown. He said he would like to see more activity downtown with some mixed residential, mixed office combination. He mentioned the Park Street property that they are getting ready to do. He said how much nicer will that look.

Keith Cowie said the projects we have done have all been outstanding and he thought everybody would agree. He said even the garage near the Library was a great project.

Richard Hamann asked why can't we do both for whoever gets the applications in.

Jack Myers said we are carrying over a million dollars.

Dorothea Taylor Bogert said from the real estate side, she sees both sides of it. She said she really does not like how the Hwy. 92 corridor looks from basically the overpass to turning on Havendale Blvd. She said she thought that main corridor would be a great idea to have funds available to incentivize. She said she thought we might see not necessarily the million-dollar corporations. She said what she gets from a lot of the residents is that they want restaurants and it may not be the "mom and pop restaurants". If we could get some restaurants in that corridor and spruce it up, it would look nicer. You drive through a lot of small towns and we come down to our downtown and it is beautiful. She said she would love to see that start sooner than when you hit Bridgers Avenue. She said she thought Richard Hamann hit it on the head, we could do both. Once we move our Civic Center to Lake Ariana that space would be available also. She said she thought anything we could do to improve is great. People who want to be on 92 are looking for the traffic count. Those who want to be downtown, the small businesses, will stay there or they will purposely come to the downtown. She said she thought it was a great idea to do both and expand the funds we have to do both. She said she did not know if there was a way to have certain limits for the Central Business District and certain amount for that. She said she thought this was a good idea and it might bring some larger businesses that are locally owned. If we could bring them into that area, it would be a huge boom economically for us.

Tim Pospichal said he agreed. Our corridor needs a lift. He said would it not be nice to put the money in there and all the grants would be gone. He said what a good thing to have happen, as that means it was a great idea. When you come into Auburndale, our corridor gets nice when you turn down Main Street. If we can afford to do this and move the money and treat it as a first come first served basis for grants, it would be a win-win for our situation. He said we need something on Hwy. 92, we need some help.

Keith Cowie said he certainly agreed with that, but to the point of why businesses come downtown and what can we do to make those Gateways we have done downtown. He said he understood the one property that has built to look great and he is all for that. He asked what we can do with the rest of that road and the corridor to spruce it up. We need money for that and not just the Grant for the businesses on the corridor. He asked how we get money into that if that is really what we want to do. We have to do similar to what we have done downtown out there.

Chair Cindy Price said she saw that as not really Grant related, but more beautification and using our right of way to take out the concrete and put in more green, however that looks. She said that is what would help 92. She said from an analytical standpoint, she would like to see the history since 2014 of the taxpayer dollars used for the Grants and what it has returned to us. She said she has never seen any of that and she has asked for that before. She said that helps her feel better about how she is spending the tax dollars, in

the future. She said it was not unlimited dollars and she felt we have a responsibility to spend those dollars in the best manner. She said 92 to Havendale could be a huge request fund that we might not be able to meet. When it is spent, it is spent until the next year. She said she was a little worried about the opportunity that exists, but free enterprise will take care of that. If there is the numbers and the analytics produce it, they will come. The \$50,000 is not going to slice and dice that deal. She said she would like to see what we have accomplished, what we have spent, and she realizes it takes time to recoup because of the millage rate not going up in last few years. She said it would help us understand what we are spending and getting in return. She said any business person would ask for that.

Jack Myers said he thought that was where he was trying to go on 92. He said he thought it was a no brainer, for the return on your dollar. When you get downtown, we kind of knew from an analytical standpoint we would not see the return greater in the downtown corridor. There was more to it, in bringing more foot traffic, bring families out, and the quality of life. He said there were some immeasurable things that went into the decision, if you go back and pull up the minutes and look at the discussion.

Chair Cindy Price said that was why we spent the money on the park.

Jack Myers said he did not want that to be forgotten, as you might be disappointed on the analytics and what we spent.

Chair Cindy Price said she knew it would not be large, but thought it was appropriate to ask that question, before we continue to spend another \$500,000 of taxpayer dollars that we do not know the return. She said we could have an unlimited supply of requests and that would be the great news. But, we do not want it to become a negative because you cannot supply all of that.

Dorothea Taylor Bogert said it would be a first come first served. She said she thought it would be nice to see some numbers on it. She said she was thrilled to see we are actually spending money. She has been on the Commission for a few years, but sat in the audience and listened to the CRA Meetings and there was nothing going on and now there is. She said this was very exciting to her. She said she would like to see us put more funds back into the budget and to at least bring at least another \$100,000, whether we approve this or not. She said she was surprised to see we are down to \$120,000, as it has been high for so long.

Assistant City Manager Tillman said there are lot of projects in the development process that have been committed that he thought will be real nice projects when completed. You will see the actual expenses go up upon completion.

Dorothea Taylor Bogert asked if we needed to table this until the next CRA meeting for more information or were on a timeframe to decide.

Assistant City Manager Jeff Tillman said the application that is out there on 92 is waiting to see what happens tonight. He said the property is located on Havendale, in the old Southern Technical College building. He said it planned to be a french pastry cafe. He said a Vietnamese gentleman has the application and it looks to be a great project. He is looking to move forward on that. He was waiting to see what direction the Board was going to take. He said as far as adding additional funding, we have the \$120,000 to commit today. He said we would be fine with the \$120,000 and be able to bring funding back at the November meeting. He said the decision needs to be made on whether you want to expand the district.

Chair Cindy Price said we have a staff recommendation.

Motion by Jack Myers, seconded by Richard Hamann to amend the Redevelopment and Impact Fee Assistance Grants to include the zoning category of Commercial Highway with frontage on the U.S. Hwy 92/Havendale Blvd. corridor, not including shopping center.

Dorothea Taylor Bogert asked if we get overwhelmed by this, can we back track out of this. She said once we get rolling on this, it is kind of hard to stop.

Assistant City Manager Jeff Tillman said we have to address funding, but there are people out there. He said he felt we had the ability to hit the time out button. If we get overwhelming, we can come up with a process of ranking for the project by Committee. The Grant goes up to \$50,000 based upon one-half of their project.

Jack Myers said his feeling was we have a budget. We can amend it as we see fit. When that money runs out in that budget, it is over until the next budget year.

Tim Pospichal said if we pass this motion, it gives this gentleman who is interested in Southern Tech the option to go after the \$50,000 Grant.

Assistant City Manager Jeff Tillman said yes. It will allow the Grant Committee to discuss the project, the use, does it fall into a targeted area, and it would allow that to move forward.

Richard Hamann said he would like to use the term expand area rather than targeted area.

Keith Cowie said Dorothea Taylor Bogert brought it up about the possibility of having the money in two different areas - Downtown portion and a 92 corridor portion. He asked if this was what we were talking about.

Assistant City Manager Jeff Tillman said we could separate it. For instance, put \$100,000 in the downtown business corridor and \$100,000 in the 92 and Havendale and then one does not compete with one another, that was an option.

Keith Cowie said he thought the businesses that will come downtown are probably not going to have as much financial backing as someone who has bought property on 92. He said he would not want to see them at a disadvantage for various reasons. He said he would like to try to level the playing field for everybody.

Assistant City Manager Jeff Tillman said he will bring the funding back later in November for discussion. For tonight, the Board wants to expand for the Grant area.

Richard Haman said the \$120,000 is only a couple of projects.

Jack Myers said we did not budget any additional funding, as we thought we would have plenty this year.

Assistant City Manager Jeff Tillman said we are at the end of budget year and have the ability to make a budget amendment. Going into next budget year, if you want to add some funds we can and once the funds are gone, we are done.

Upon vote, all ayes. Motion carries.

Assistant City Manager Jeff Tillman said the next Meeting will be on November 16.

Meeting adjourned at 8:37 p.m.

I HEREBY CERTIFY that the foregoing Minutes are true and correct.



Shirley A. Lowrance, Finance Director/City Clerk