

**Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA)
Meeting Minutes August 13, 2019
(APPROVED)**

8/13/2019 - Minutes

1. ROLL CALL

CRA Board Members present: Chair Robin Gibson, Mayor Eugene Fultz, Commissioner Goldstein, Commissioner Howell

Commissioner Curtis Gibson arrived late.

Staff Present: Kenneth Fields, CRA Director; Albert C. Galloway Jr, City Attorney; Jennifer Nanek, City Clerk; Karen Thompson, Assistant Director of the CRA

Chair Robin Gibson called the meeting to order at approximately 5:00 p.m.

2. Minutes - May 14, 2019

Commissioner Howell made a motion to approve the minutes of May 14, 2019. Mayor Fultz seconded the motion.

by voice vote:

Commissioner Howell "YES"

Mayor Fultz "YES"

Commissioner Goldstein "YES"

Chair Robin Gibson "YES"

Motion passed 4-0.

3. AGENDA ITEMS

3.I. Center State Bank Grant Acceptance

Karen Thompson, Assistant CRA Director, said that Main Street and CRA applied for and were awarded two grants from Center State Bank. The funds will go towards the Neighborhood plan for the Core of Lake Wales. The outcome of the plan will create a road map to encourage public and private investment and economic development. There was a picture with the board members, Kristie Reed and Paul Gerrard from Center State Bank with a check for \$30,000 to the CRA. Paul Gerrard, Center State Bank, said they have been in Lake Wales since 2004 and appreciate the relationship with the City of Lake Wales.

3.II. Presentation By Victor Dover – Owner, Dover Kohl And Partners:

Ms. Thompson introduced Ryan Buskirk, President of Lake Wales Main Street, said that their goal for the past 18 months has been a new plan for downtown. This is a draft of the plan. Main Street raised the money to pay for this. He introduced Victor Dover from Dover Kohl and Associates from Coral Gables Florida and shared some of Mr. Dover's background and accomplishments.

Victor Dover, Dover Kohl and Associates, reviewed some of the work they have been doing for Main Street and the Northwest area. He emphasized that this is a draft and they will take input and then they will be back with a revised version hopefully for approval. Mr. Dover reviewed the timeline and where they are in the process. He explained that there are two books for the different areas but they are blended for the presentation. He reviewed some of the original Olmsted Brothers plans for Lake Wales. He said we need more trees in our downtown areas. The beauty of downtown is itself a draw for people. He reviewed the history and goals of the Olmsted Brothers Landscaping firm designing Lake Wales. We need streets that are pleasant to walk on year round. He shared several possible images of Lake Wales with more trees. The plan has a list of things to do to achieve the listed goals. Mr. Dover explained how they got public input for this plan. He said that design needs to move to the top of the priority list. Mr. Dover showed conceptual pictures of downtown streets with wider sidewalks. First Street can be a good link between Downtown and the North west area. The illustrations includes dedicated bike lines. He showed some possible alternate use for alleys. He suggested a possible roundabout at Crystal Avenue and Burns Avenue along Scenic Highway. Mr. Dover showed scenes of improved nightlife downtown. He discussed ways to improve parking downtown including parking structures. He showed some examples of infill buildings that could be added to the downtown. He showed pictures of a revitalized and active Park Avenue. He recommended removing the planter boxes and having professional gardening done with help from Bok Tower. Mr. Dover then showed pictures of revitalized Lincoln Avenue. He then shared ideas for reconstituting the marketplace. Mr. Dover shared ideas on connecting the areas such as through bike lanes and making the roads more pedestrian friendly. Regarding possible reductions in parking downtown Mr. Dover recommended doing it gradually and not doing it overnight.

In the last chapter of the plan Mr. Dover reviewed strategies to increase private development in downtown. This portion includes list of steps to take to begin these improvements.

Chair Robin Gibson said that the steps to improve Park Avenue are doable and important. He asked Mr. Dover about opportunity zones. Mr. Dover emphasized the importance of focusing on Park Avenue as it is narrow and wouldn't be as disruptive as Central Avenue. If the City can afford it go between Scenic and Wetmore. In Grove Manor he said it would be better to blend mixed incomes into this housing development. He then discussed Opportunity Zones as a new tool to help with development. Hopefully this opportunity will continue and expand. Mr. Fields explained that in regards to Grove Manor money is set aside for the Housing Authority grant to help redevelop those units to mixed income. He then said our downtown is designated as eligible for opportunity zone investments. The Opportunity zones were discussed.

Chair Robin Gibson invited the President of Main Street Rusty Ingley to offer their comments. Rusty Ingley, Main Street, said they have been working with Victor Dover on a daily basis. They feel very satisfied with the work he has presented and the direction he is taking our town. He hopes the CRA board also finds it compelling and will adopt it for our town. He is excited about the big ideas included in the plan. This is the best route for our town.

Chair Robin Gibson decided to open communications and petitions.

4. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Kenneth Fields, Executive Director, reported on the financial status of the CRA. There are some of these things in the budget already. There is still money for the design to redo Park Avenue. It will take a year to get the design done. We will continue to work with Dover Kohl on the design. Some of these items can be addressed in reasonable bites without borrowing. The CRA is in good shape.

Chair Robin Gibson said this effort will increase property values which is the overall goal of the CRA.

5. COMMUNICATIONS AND PETITIONS

David Price, 32 year resident, said he was thrilled at the report. He was suspect about the parking but has realized that many redeveloped downtowns have this type of parking. He would like to see the plan expand to the parks.

Chair Robin Gibson referenced Lakeside Village in Lakeland which has a similar layout which was built from a clean slate and works for them.

Charlene Bennett, resident, said she likes the proposal too and hopes that it is adopted. She is thrilled with it. Two things she likes are the increased connections between downtown and the Northwest area and adding more trees downtown. Some suggestions include adding the importance of trees towards climate change and other benefits. She recommended including a recommendation of hiring an arborist to help with tree planting in the City. The benefits of additional trees were discussed.

Kyra Love, resident, said that her concern was about the parallel parking. Many can't do it. It looks as if the streets will be one way if parallel parking is on both sides of the streets. There will be fewer overall parking spots. Mr. Dover said he understood the concern and as this is designed the numbers could change a bit. He suggested ways that these parking changes be gradual. He also recommended a clinic on parallel parking. Mr. Fields said that some changes are behavioral that people will need to change their habits. Mr. Dover said more cars can parallel park automatically. He also explained why there is parallel parkin on one side of the streets in places.

He commended Victor Dover and his team for coming to Lake Wales and thanked them for their efforts.

Grace Engholm, resident, said we all need more steps. We walk more going into Wal-Mart or Winn-Dixie than downtown. Its just a mindset change that is needed. She would like to see more electric cars and the ability to charge them downtown. She likes where this is going.

Jim Weaver, Business owner downtown, said he needs more parking for his customers. People don't use the lot across Scenic HWY. His clientele don't parallel park. It was hard to get a handicapped spot near his office. There is no monitoring of parking downtown. These changes are exciting and frightening. He likes the roundabouts on Scenic HWY.

Catherine Price, resident, said she and her husband ride all over town on their bikes. There are ways to improve connectivity and connectivity for bikes throughout town. She said the downtown and parks and economic development need to be integrated. We need to improve connectivity all over.

Sara Jones, resident, said she was excited about the plan. She has been working with Karen Thompson and Victor Dover diligently. She is glad for the attention on the northwest area. She likes the continuity as it is good for the whole community.

Rudy Engholm, resident, agreed about the importance about trees.

Diane Armington, non-resident, asked about lighting. She said we need more lighting. She asked about watering plants on the lampposts. Mr. Dover said lighting is included in the plan and an irrigation line can be extended up the lampposts for additional costs. She said there are many lovely small towns with limited parallel parking but are worth the effort to walk through.

Ellis Hunt, non resident, said he agreed with the plan. He commended the energy an positive drive behind this effort among Main Street and throughout the City. This process will take years but worth doing. Citizen input is phenomenal. He said roundabouts are a great way to safely slow down traffic.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:43 p.m.

Chair/Vice-Chair

ATTEST:

City Clerk/Deputy City Clerk