

A meeting of the Beaufort Redevelopment Commission was held on January 8, 2009 at 4:00 p.m. in the City Hall Conference Room at 302 Carteret Street. In attendance were Commissioners Bob Pinkerton, Martin Goodman, Donnie Ann Beer, Mike Sutton, Mike McFee, Billy Keyserling, James Bellew, Gene Rugala and City Manager Scott Dadson. Commissioner Gary Fordham, was absent. In accordance with South Carolina Code of Laws, 1976, Section 30-4-80(d), as amended, all local media were duly notified of the time, date, place and agenda of this meeting.

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 4:00 p.m. by Chairman Bob Pinkerton.

MINUTES

Commissioner Goodman moved to approve the minutes of the December 16, 2008 meeting. Commissioner Beer seconded the motion. The minutes were approved unanimously.

WORK SESSION/RETREAT

At the last meeting, the Commission discussed holding a retreat. After consideration of various dates, the work session was scheduled for Monday, January 26th beginning at 9:00 a.m. in the City Hall Conference Room. The City Manager will work with a facilitator to set the agenda.

BID OPENING – FIRE DEPARTMENT

The City Manager informed the Commission that the bid opening for the Fire Department expansion will be on January 22 at 2:00 p.m. at the Fire Station on Ribaut Road. He and the architect suggested the Redevelopment Commission attend. At that time, direction on how to move forward will be discussed with the architect. Also, at that time, a master sign plan for City Hall will be provided for discussion.

SOUTHSIDE PARK

Inviting the Southside Park Committee to this meeting to discuss a neighborhood within the Park was suggested at the last meeting.

The City Manager stated the Southside property has not been transferred to the City yet. He met with the Executive Director of B-JWSA and discussed holding off for now because of liability insurance.

Commissioner Sutton stated the discussion was about NSP housing opportunities city-wide. He said he does not see a direct connection to Southside Park with this round of funding. Commissioner Keyserling agreed stating he proposed areas within the City that were opportunities with a portion of Southside Park being one of them. Reviewing the City's budget, he realized committing to building a 34 acre park is not likely right now. If part of this property were set aside for work force housing, using the model of the nearby Broad Street development, there may be a developer who might build the park on part of the property in exchange for building single family homes on the other part using a financing mechanism to keep the homes affordable. Possibly, there could be an agreement to have the police, fire, hospital, and school system, which are the true work force, be involved in the marketing. This would not change the neighborhood and would solve the problem of work force housing.

Brian Coffman, chairman of the Southside Park Committee, said the Committee had concerns about the conceptual plan that was presented, stating it was not the best use of the space. This will be discussed further at their meeting on Monday. Mr. Keyserling said the property could be designed so that jogging paths can be used throughout the area. Mr. Coffman noted that the Committee held several community meetings to receive input from the neighborhood and the plan presented to Council a couple of years ago was approved. He also noted that when the large cement tanks were removed from the property recently, only about 3 feet of concrete was removed. One of the things the Committee didn't like about the recent plan and discussed with the Mayor was the loop drive. Councilman Sutton said there is probably an opportunity for a developer to make a land swap and to decide how many units would be acceptable in the Park based on size and design.

The City Manager mentioned other large parks in communities that serve as the residents' yard. He challenged the Commission to consider alternatives. The Mayor said, in his opinion, the best way to present the plan to a neighborhood is to provide them with pictures or an idea of how it will look. Include the entities that are the marketing arm to assure them it is basically for the people who live there, then see if they are interested in a trade-off.

Mr. Coffman said the Committee has been challenging themselves to spend the money that is budgeted wisely so that the Park can begin to be used. Their goal is to get grass, walking trails, and the bathrooms upgraded. Also, they would like to construct part of the playground with the funds available to get people interested. Additionally, the Rotary Club is trying to get the gazebo funded, The Friends of the Humane Society are interested in the dog park and B-JWSA has agreed to clean the property.

Certain aspects of the Park will be done, according to the City Manager, such as tree clearing, installation of a grey-water source for irrigation, and there is to be a road built that will connect to Waddell Road that will provide interconnectivity.

A brief discussion regarding where work should begin ensued. Mr. Coffman stated the Committee's main focus is to open the back far corner and get a walking trail over to the tennis courts. Also, with the gazebo in the center, small organized events could be held there.

The consensus among the group was to explore alternatives.

NEIGHBORHOOD STABILIZATION PROGRAM

The City Manager commented that he e-mailed the latest draft and maps of the properties in foreclosure to the Commission members.

Commissioner Sutton said the maps show what was suspected, that the City doesn't have the foreclosures as Bluffton does, and those are mostly in new developments. Commissioner McFee explained the difference in addressed and unaddressed properties stating addressed properties are already in foreclosure and unaddressed properties have not gone to foreclosure; therefore, they do not qualify for the NSP list.

Mr. Sutton, referring to the draft Memorandum of Agreement between the Beaufort Housing Authority, Beaufort County, City of Beaufort, Town of Port Royal, Town of Hilton Head, Town of

Bluffton, and the Lowcountry Council of Governments, stated initially the Redevelopment Commission did not have a focused role until the meeting with Tom Wilson when they reviewed what the role could be and the need for a land bank because there is no entity in the organizational structure that can purchase and hold houses other than the Redevelopment Commission. There are three sub-recipients; the Black Chamber of Commerce and the two Habitats for Humanity. Each municipality is a sub-recipient under the primary applicant, the Beaufort Housing Authority. He suggested the Commissioners read the section in the MOA pertaining to the Redevelopment Commission to be sure that is the way it should be worded. Currently, no applications have been turned into Mr. Wilson. He is preparing the design of the project and today, the deadline was extended into next month.

Mr. Sutton stated the City of Charleston is holding an open forum Monday morning to explain how the NSP works and to distribute the forms. If the MOA is approved, the next step would be to get the Request for Applications. He mentioned the unfinished housing complex near Wal-Mart as a potential project but the status is not known at this time. He suggested pursuing that because it is the only large cluster development in the City under construction within the last twelve months that has not been given a Certificate of Occupancy. Commissioner Keyserling stated it would have been a wonderful mixed use development. Larry Holman, Black Chamber of Commerce, was asked to attend the meeting today to share information on a project he and Mr. Sutton discussed. Mr. Holman said he was unable to find any information about that development or the property at 711 Bladen Street.

Mr. Holman said he is affiliated with the Community Development Housing Organization. That organization participates in renovations within the community. The person applies to LCOG to receive a 50% matching grant for renovations. Mr. Sutton said that agency is certified through State Housing Finance and can apply for grants. He added that his original goal was to develop five homes through NSP into work force housing but unless there is an agency willing to do that, it won't happen. Mr. Sutton pointed out that Mr. Wilson is writing a request in the NSP application to go after blighted areas under the same criteria. He will try to obtain funding in the Block by Block area. Two million dollars has been invested in the Northwest Quadrant in the last 18 months and in past years millions have been invested in infrastructure.

The City Manager reminded the Commission their basic charge is to clean up blight and redevelop the area. He recommended the Commission agree in principle with the MOA so a letter can be sent to Mr. Wilson stating that. He will suggest to Mr. Wilson, if the Housing Authority is going to administer the NSP, that using their letterhead, to send a letter so the project goes to the data bank. Then this Commission could consider those things that would allow them to set up a land bank.

On motion by Commissioner Rugala, second by Commissioner Beer, the Memorandum of Agreement was adopted in concept.

The Commission requested the City Attorney review the MOA.

The City Manager stated he has asked the finance staff to review TIF's , other funding sources, and the CIP to provide a plan.

The City Manager suggested inviting the Beaufort Housing Authority to the February meeting to discuss things together including governance issues and merging opportunities. Mrs. Beer volunteered to attend their meetings if that is the desire of the Commission.

Richard Seymour, Vice-chairman of the County's Affordable Governmental Housing Consortium, asked Council, if possible, to convince County Council to fill the Housing Director's position. Commissioner Keyserling suggested having them pay a director under the Housing Authority that could provide services county-wide. The City Manager pointed out that, in his opinion, the County is not interested in housing; therefore, he suggested that position be placed where it is most needed and explain that to the County. When resources are scarce, to be smart about growth housing, commercial opportunities, and job creation should be combined as the Redevelopment Commission does and it can be a win for the entire county. Southside Park works if everything around it is dense but when the surrounding houses have a ¼ acre lot, the park is just a lot of space. Commissioner Keyserling stated 8 cottages can be built on an acre when designed correctly and provide work force housing within that park.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Commission, the meeting was adjourned at 5:40 p.m.

BOB PINKERTON, CHAIRMAN

COMMISSIONER MARTIN GOODMAN

COMMISSIONER DONNIE ANN BEER

COMMISSIONER GARY B. FORDHAM

COMMISSIONER BILLY KEYSERLING

COMMISSIONER MIKE SUTTON

COMMISSIONER JAMES BELLEW

COMMISSIONER EUGENE A. RUGALA

COMMISSIONER MIKE McFEE

ATTEST:

BEVERLY W. GAY, CITY CLERK