

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING
BOCA RATON COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY
MONDAY, APRIL 9, 2007
*1:30 P.M.

*The Regular Meeting of the Boca Raton Community Redevelopment Agency was called to order by Chairman Baronoff at approximately 2:43 p.m.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAG:

ROLL CALL:

Chairman Peter R. Baronoff
Vice Chairman M.J. Mike Arts
Commissioner Steven L. Abrams
Commissioner Bill Hager
Commissioner Susan Whelchel

Also attending the meeting were:

Boca Raton City Manager/CRA Executive Director Leif J. Ahnell
Boca Raton City Attorney Diana Grub Frieser, Attorney to the Agency

AMENDMENTS TO THE AGENDA:

MINUTES:

Minutes of the Regular Meeting of March 26, 2007

Motion was made by Vice Chairman Arts, seconded by Commissioner Hager, to approve the minutes as presented. Motion carried unanimously on a voice vote; Chairman Baronoff, Vice Chairman Arts, Commissioners Abrams, Hager and Whelchel voting yes.

REGULAR BUSINESS - PART I - QUASI-JUDICIAL & RELATED PUBLIC HEARINGS:

There were no items for consideration.

PUBLIC REQUESTS:

No one came forward to speak.

REGULAR BUSINESS - PART II – RESOLUTIONS AND REGULAR PUBLIC HEARINGS:

There were no items for consideration.

OTHER BUSINESS:

Chairman Baronoff noted that he and Vice Chairman Arts had been selected again by fellow members to serve as Chairman and Vice Chairman, respectively, for another year.

The Chairman then reviewed the accomplishments of the past year that have moved the agency along in their stated objective, which is "to maintain the economic viability of an urban downtown that is pedestrian friendly and create a downtown that becomes a focal point for residents." Of note were progress made regarding the spine / pedestrian linkage, formation of a new downtown committee, retention of a consultant to look at the downtown, examination of ways to push economic opportunities for downtown merchants, and major success of the signature event -- the first annual Boca Festival of the Arts.

He added that the push to sustain an economically vibrant downtown would continue this year, specifying that goals and objectives would include moving forward with the pedestrian linkage and continuation of downtown events including the second annual Festival of the Arts. He expressed the need for the Agency to make a definitive statement as soon as practicable in regard to the pedestrian linkage area, in order to avoid a "hodge podge" environment as development proposals come forward. He stated he is requesting that a meeting be arranged with Tom Crocker (a property owner / developer in the pedestrian linkage area, who is bringing forward an IDA application), Development Services Director Jorge Camejo, City Manager Leif Ahnell and himself. He also wishes to obtain input from other urban developers. Commissioner Hager asked that fellow members be kept apprised of meeting times and outcomes. Mr. Baronoff then concluded his report.

The City Manager advised members that the contract for construction of the cartoon museum building had been awarded.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

1. Presentation Regarding Structure of Downtown Development Authorities and Community Redevelopment Agencies

Development Services Director Jorge Camejo explained the differences in the funding structures of Downtown Development Authorities (DDAs) and Community Redevelopment Agencies (CRAs). He explained that CRAs do not contemplate any additional tax levy; it is basically a redistribution of the dollars already collected based on the millage rates of individual taxing entities. There is no additional tax burden. DDAs are created by a special act of the Florida Legislature and one could not be formed without a 51% buy-in of downtown property owners. Mr. Camejo advised that another funding option for marketing of the downtown could be a special assessment district where taxes would primarily be levied on commercial property owners. Commissioner Hager asked that a memorandum be provided summarizing the information just provided.

2. Marketing and Advertising Update

a. Chamber of Commerce

Ruby Childers, the Manager of Administrative Services for the Development Services Department reported that the Chamber of Commerce is planning a block party in May in order to generate evening traffic for downtown restaurants. The City will work with the Chamber in terms of street closure, public safety during the event, and compliance with the special permit process.

b. Downtown Merchants Association

Ms. Childers advised that the City is committed to fostering collaboration of the downtown merchants in order to ensure a viable downtown. A database of downtown property owners is being created so that property owners and merchants can be surveyed in order to identify issues and determine their interest in becoming an organized group. The City Manager stated that it is necessary to ascertain if there is sufficient interest among the property owners and merchants in regard to organizing, adding that a certain amount of involvement on their part is needed.

c. Investments Ltd.

Ms. Childers reported on the marketing efforts by Investments Ltd. Their marketing strategies have been successful, drawing mixed crowds and repeat attendees through special events such as music nights in Royal Palm Plaza and events with a theme. A family fun day and an arts and crafts festival are two of the monthly events being planned.

3. Downtown Planning Update

Development Services Director Jorge Camejo reported on the outcome of the interviews that the consultant for the downtown had with the Agency members and various focus groups. The approximately

120 persons interviewed were asked to identify what they like most and least about the downtown and were also asked where they thought positive change could be created.

Mizner Park, the green area of Mizner Park, Sanborn Square and Royal Palm Place were identified as positives. The segregation of public facilities from the downtown was identified as a negative. Therefore, the importance of NE Second Street as a connector between the core of the downtown and public facilities (City Hall, the Library, the Community Center and the Police Station) was expressed. Connectivity and the creation of a more pedestrian-friendly environment along Palmetto Park Road were recurring themes. He noted the next phase of the process is the downtown charrette; public meetings will be held on May 1st and May 3rd.

Mr. Camejo also advised that the second meeting of the Downtown Committee has been held. They supported the staff recommendation that the idea of pursuing the transportation for livable communities process through the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) should be made a priority and agreed to assist staff in moving it forward. This process provides the opportunity to establish a different design concept for the downtown, making it more pedestrian friendly. It is an opportunity that may be short-lived if the FDOT gets more restrictive regarding transportation corridors, hence the urgency to act.

Mr. Camejo then provided a brief update on the MPCA (Mizner Park Cultural Arts Association) project. The demolition of the western face of the building that will enable the expansion into the western area of the site is scheduled to begin soon.

ATTORNEY'S REPORT:

The City Attorney had nothing to report at this time.

COMMISSIONERS' REPORTS:

Commissioner Whelchel commented on the entertainment offered last Thursday night in the downtown, noting that concerts were being held simultaneously in Mizner Park and Sanborn Square and there was also entertainment in Royal Palm Place. She questioned whether or not it made sense to have so many events on the same night. Mr. Ahnell stated that staff is looking at the issue and he will report back.

Ms. Whelchel noted the recent doggie parade held in Delray Beach. Chairman Baronoff stated that a "major league" dog extravaganza is planned for the fall at the City's dog park, Mizner Bark.

As a final report, Commissioner Whelchel commented favorably on her meeting with the downtown consultant. She revealed that one of her preferences is incorporating the waterfront area into the downtown and also stated that she felt it was not too late to reconsider locating the downtown library at Sanborn Square as she had proposed in the past.

Commissioner Hager also complimented the City Manager on the selection of the downtown consultant. He noted that one of his suggestions was for a pedestrian flyover that would unite the new downtown library with Mizner Park; this connection would allow for cross utilization of parking facilities.

ADJOURNMENT:

Motion was made by Commissioner Hager, seconded by Commissioner Whelchel, to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried unanimously on a voice vote; Chairman Baronoff, Vice Chairman Arts, Commissioners Abrams, Hager and Whelchel voting yes.

The regular meeting of the Boca Raton Community Redevelopment Agency adjourned at approximately 3:28 p.m., Monday, April 9, 2007.

Peter R. Baronoff, Chairman

ATTEST:

Sharma Carannante, City Clerk