



## MEETING MINUTES

Lealman Community Redevelopment Area Advisory Committee Meeting

Wednesday, February 22, 2023, 6 PM

**Committee Members Present In-person:** Jeremy Heath, Jennifer Post, Kim Blessinger, Charles Flynt, Steve Cleveland

**Committee Members Absent:** Rick Orr, Oscar Seguban, Marsha McCoy, Dominic Howarth

**Pinellas County Staff Present:** Chris Moore, Felix Nunez, Tanya Kurtin, Evan Johnson, Scott Swearingen, Amanda Coffey (Virtual)

**I. Call to Order:**

The meeting was called to order at 6:02PM

**II. Introductions**

Introductions were made by each Committee member and County Staff member present. New Committee Members Jennifer Post and Kim Blessinger were introduced and welcomed.

**III. Citizens Input**

There was no citizen input.

**IV. Approval of Minutes**

Board Chair Jeremy Heath requested staff amend the minutes to include more detail and specificity regarding member's comments, as they provide a unique opportunity for the community to communicate directly to the Board of County Commissioners regarding their position on issues in Lealman. He made a motion proposing to have the minutes amended accordingly and it was seconded and approved unanimously. Staff will bring a revised copy to the next meeting for consideration.

**V. Revised 2023 Committee Meeting Schedule**

An updated 2023 meeting schedule was presented to the Committee to reflect January's cancellation and a continuation of the every-other-month meeting schedule. It was approved unanimously.

**VI. Annual Officer Elections (Chair and Vice Chair)**

Before the elections discussion began Jeremy Heath shared an update since the last meeting regarding community policing activities. He shared an apology on behalf of Sheriff Gualtieri, who updated Mr. Heath since the last meeting, as the Sheriff had thought the homeless camps along the CSX rail line were not as severe as they were. He also indicated two special operations had been conducted in various areas of the CRA involving the tracks and the motels on 34<sup>th</sup> St. and that numerous arrests involving confiscating drugs and weapons, and that a third was



planned for February.

Jeremy Heath then opened the floor for nominations. Steve Cleveland spoke on his own behalf as a candidate for Chair. Charles Flynt nominated Steve Cleveland for Chair; Kim Blessinger seconded. All agreed. Jeremy Heath nominated Charles Flynt for Vice Chair, Jennifer Post seconded, all agreed. Steve Cleveland is the new Committee Chair and Charles Flynt is the new Committee Vice Chair.

## **VII. Housing and Community Development Update**

- Lealman CRA Form Based Code

Evan Johnson indicated that an updated draft to the Committee along with all the comments they have received so far and a summary on how they are being addressed was provided to the Committee three and a half weeks ago and that they were here tonight to answer any additional questions or comments on the draft.

Chairman Cleveland asked questions about 28<sup>th</sup> St. and 54<sup>th</sup> Ave. and how they are impacted by the code. Staff responded that portions of both corridors are included and summarized how they are impacted. Mr. Cleveland also asked about why the industrial area was not included as the Committee has long desired. Chris Moore reminded the committee that Joe's Creek has been slated for Phase 2 of the code awaiting the completion of Forward Pinellas' TEILS study and recommended changes to the countywide land use rules. Staff has begun scoping a master plan to take advantage of the proposed land use changes recommendations that would make it a Target Employment Center – Local district akin to a warehouse arts district. If the land use changes are approved by the Board of County Commissioners later this year, staff would be positioned to begin the master plan that will in part inform how the code would be structured for this area by conducting a market study to understand the uses the area might attract, what the appropriate design standards would be for those uses, as well as provide cost estimates for various infrastructure projects are needed for the area, and what the cost and benefits would be of those improvements.

Chairman Cleveland brought up Jacobs Engineering and the study they are conducting in Joe's Creek and how that was related to the form-based code. Staff indicated that is a separate study for a project to improve water quality and provide flood mitigation and construct a multi-modal trail along the creek.

As an aside, Mr. Cleveland reminded all present to please remember to start using the name Lealman as opposed to St. Petersburg when addressing mail.

Ms. Post asked questions about the form-based code and what its goal is. Scott Swearngen stated that the goal is to allow it to be flexible but at the same time compatible with the neighbors. It attempts to give the community a cohesive design to improve the overall aesthetics. It also incentivizes economic development by allowing more mixed-use developments and expanding on housing options such as Missing Middle Housing.



Ms. Post's biggest concern centered around the Neighborhood Park District and how would we planned to make a major evacuation route (54<sup>th</sup> Avenue) a walkable district. Mr. Johnson explained that it would change the distance of the buildings to the sidewalks and using other design approaches including landscaping and changes to where parking is located, but it would not affect the actual roadway itself, so the evacuation route would not be impacted. She also raised concerns about on street parking references on 54<sup>th</sup> Ave., and how the code could unintentionally burden residential property owners on these corridors by mandating burdensome design standards.

Mr. Johnson stated that at the end of March they would be submitting the code into the County's interdepartmental approval process, so all Committee feedback is desired now before that process begins.

#### **VIII. Lealman CRA Updates**

- Mr. Moore stated the Honey and Arts Festival was a successful event for the community and people were very happy with it. Common feedback was that attendees, even those who lived in Lealman, didn't know this park was here. People spoke very positively on the bands, the food trucks and the art and honey vendors.
- Community policing update was discussed earlier in the meeting.
- Habitat held an event for elected officials at one of their homes under construction in Lealman, which generated good new coverage. They have closed on two homes so far and 12 more are projected by June 2023, all of which are funded in part through the CRA's new Home Investment Program. Chairman Cleveland added that the Florida Dream Center also has funding from HUD to provide safety improvements to seniors.
- Two new murals are complete, one at Lealman Innovation Academy and one on 54<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Haines Road. There are now three murals on 28<sup>th</sup> street and two on Haines Road. The third one coming is also on Haines Road, so the area is becoming a focal point for the arts community, as one of the murals on Haines went on an artisan entrepreneur who will be opening a pottery studio and offering classes to the public.
- The playground at Neri Park on 46<sup>th</sup> Avenue is now open to the public though some landscaping and benches remain to be installed.
- Update on implementation of the strategic plan for the Lealman Exchange: the St Petersburg Foundation has created the Lealman Voice, a bi-weekly community newsletter. The Foundation is affiliated with the St. Pete Catalyst, an established community news platform, and the vision for The Voice is essentially to be a spin off of the Catalyst, with content driven by the community itself.

#### **IX. Advisory Committee Member Comments**

Jeremy Heath voiced concerned about the form-based code deadline based on the discussion the Committee had earlier in the meeting. He provided a historical synopsis of how the draft code has come to be what it is currently, which included a desire to provide connectivity throughout the CRA to its green spaces and running the trail through the industrial park to attract a broader mix of uses such as a brewery; a desire to see artisan establishments in the Haines Rd.



area, and high-density development along 34<sup>th</sup> St.

After a discussion, the Committee decided that in order to provide a sound recommendation to the Commissioners, additional time to review the code was needed in part due to this being the first meeting for two new members, and that not all members being present at this meeting and community representation was also for this meeting. As such, a special meeting was scheduled for March 22<sup>nd</sup> so that the Committee could convene again and make a recommendation on the code. Mr. Moore will seek comments individually from members and it was determined Members would have until March 8<sup>th</sup> to provide those comments.

**X. Adjourn**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:50 PM