



MEETING MINUTES

Lealman Community Redevelopment Area Advisory Committee Meeting

Wednesday, March 27, 2024, 6 PM

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

Committee Members Absent: All members Present.

Pinellas County Staff Present: Amy Davis, Tom Almonte, Felix Nunez, Bruce Bussey, Scott Swaengen, Jason Ester, Jude Reazin, Shana Patrick, Greg Milam,

I. Call to Order:

The meeting was called to order at 6:01 PM by Chair Steve Cleveland

II. Introductions

The Chair introduced Amy Davis, the new Assistant County Administrator. Each Committee member and County Staff member present made an introduction.

III. Approval of Minutes

Kim Blessinger requested that the minutes be amended from not open to the public due to security issues to reflect that the Basketball courts are indeed open to the public, not through the park but through the exchange entrance during Open Gym hours. Steve Cleveland asked for that correction to be made. Before the motion could be made, committee member Jeremy Heath wanted to read some prepared comments.

Jeremy Heath – “In my prior committee member comments, I was careful to point out the good work that the FLDC for the Dream Center has done and I stand by those comments. I also pointed out that I did not want to imply any wrongdoing whatsoever. My hope was that in sharing my frustrations with the community, yet again being left in the dark, we are experiencing the lack of trust that is continuously been eroded due to the community not having ample time to research and form an opinion. Nearly every single point that I make this evening, I have emailed documentation with me this evening is a personal first-hand account or is available via recorded meeting. I am highly confident in their validity. Anything that is conjecture or speculation, I have noted. Number one, our current chairman was serving on the committee during the Oasis Acres scandal and, like all members, was outraged for all of the same reasons. Number one conflict of interest. Number two, profiting from personal relationships, three poorly designed projects without ample amenities or space that would be found acceptable in any other community within Pinellas County, and four, a rent model versus ownership, and finally, five temporary structures in mobile homes.



When the triangle property, Oasis Acres, went out to bid again last year, our Chairman's construction company was one of the bidders. The Selection Committee, on which I was on failed to proceed with the joint proposal due to quite literally all five of the aforementioned issues existing with the new proposal, and this was acknowledged by the Committee in a universal vote. In January this past January when Boley's proposal was accepted and presented before BCC Commissioner Eggers lamented that there was not, quote more or perhaps stronger proposals than the two that were received. It has been continuously acknowledged the difficulty in developing this parcel. But due to conflicts due to wrongdoing by the County here we are years later, and the community has not benefited. This is not a condemnation of Boley's proposal merely an observation.

The Chairman has seen his organization receive financial compensation from CRA funding while serving as a member and Chairman of the CRA via the Christmas tree lighting, Honey and Arts Festival, Alleyway cleaning and is now inquiring about lien properties through the facade improvement program. All of these programs did not waive conflict with the exception of the alleyway cleaning. It is worth noting that the purchase of the Florida Dream Center was not used with CRA funds. However, a special exception was given regarding how those funds were provided. Multiple members of Pinellas County staff raised concerns, including Chris Moore, over the lack of evidence that was provided by the Florida Dream Center of actually completing alleyway cleanups. Some of the concerns included that pictures that were being provided was just Island Ways work. Additionally, there were questions on the invoicing being submitted and the ease in which FLDC was allowed to not follow county guidelines for invoicing. Three days after Mr. Moore raised these concerns and after a meeting with county attorneys and the Department of Administrative Services, he was fired.

This is not a condemnation of Miss Davis, who I am greatly looking forward to on our future partnership. However, the fact remains that our new assistant to the County Administrator is serving in two districts beyond just Lealman Ridge Crest and Tierra Verde. Unfortunately, through this incident services and coverage to our community have been lost.

Here's the big one. There was an inspector general report filed alleging two complaints last year that was not shared with us. Number one, that the county admitted the Assistant to the County Administrator guided FLDC through the purchase. If I understand it correctly, this is my personal note. It was implied that it was for personal gain, and directed the transaction number two, that the assistant county administrator and our Chairman have a personal relationship that is inappropriate as it relates to their respective roles. It is important to note that both of these allegations were deemed to be unfounded. Although the allegations were considered unfounded. We continued to guide the transaction and did not recuse ourselves and continued to move the project along to be clear, although it is not required, after the Oasis acres debacle, Barry Burton sent out administrative directive 15-1 to recuse all appearances of conflict of interest. Mr. Burton is also ICMA registered and tennet three says



that public confidence can be eroded without conducting all avoidance of perception of conflict of interest. Outside of the unfounded allegations there were multiple other concerns addressed. FLDC was dishonest both on their application for ARPA funding, as well as before BCC stating that they would be kicked out of their resident location. DAS and the county has stated that this was not true and that they would be allowed to continue in perpetuity and I have emails for that. Commissioner Justice even formed a real estate team to evaluate other potential properties. FLDC is being funded not with ARPA dollars, but from the general fund. This is by staff's own words one unprecedented and two due to a potential Federal Audit for transactions exceeding \$600,000.

And finally, the building not fitting within its variance type two variance. This would have made the building ineligible for sale. It is important to make this distinction as the county has and will argue that all procedures were followed. However, in the very report that was submitted to us as committee members prior to this meeting, it is acknowledged and pointed out that funding did not come from ARPA but instead the general fund emergency services. So all language of following procedure of ARPA grant process is null and void this is now a county decision. Finally, yet again, concerns were raised about FL DC not putting the \$600,000 in improvements out to competitive bid, but instead the chairman's general contractor company to complete the repairs. This was rectified. Additionally, concerns were raised with the amount of money being received by a nonprofit was nearly twice it's operating budget, aka the money changing hands is highly unorthodox for a nonprofit of this size. Florida Statute 163-380 versus Florida Statute 125-38. I also have emails where three times, including one time where it was highlighted in yellow. The county staff was advised under strong terms to put this piece of property out to a competitive bid. This is required by Florida State law that it is put out for a 30 day competitive bid. This was not followed. Why are the double standards existing for a nonprofit for a member of our committee versus say the Laotian Center who has gone through six months of DRS review Hell to quote, do things by the book. There are recent precedents for advisory members to resign over the even appeared conflict of interest, Gypsy Gallardo with the South St. Pete CRA. In this case, no financials whatsoever were even discussed. So, unfortunately, based on all the evidence that I have so far been able to gather, I must object to our chairman continuing to serve on our advisory committee. I know that was long-winded, but that's all I have to say about that. Thank you."

The Chairman opened the floor for comments from the committee:

Chuck Flynt: I looked online today at the Inspector General's report because of our hearing last two months ago. And we all were concerned at our last meeting about you know, it wasn't mentioned to the board prior to the sale. We weren't aware of it. But when I read the Inspector General's report, they're there multiple options bounded, unfounded, and unsubstantiated. On both items, Inspector General's report came back as unfounded, which means barely that there's no evidence to some illegal dealings.



So from a legal standpoint, it has been vetted by the Inspector General. But we do have some concerns. I personally would have some concerns because nothing really with Mr. Cleveland does an excellent job with the Florida Dream Center. But I do agree. It may, it potentially brings up the potential smell the whiff of conflict. Quite a bit of money is funneled through Florida Dream Center for the alleys. I don't know anything about the evidence of the Alley's bidding being cleared. But we should eliminate the potential for questions. This is the first I've heard about potential move to have Mr. Cleveland, no longer member of the board. I don't have an opinion either way at this point. But these are some allegations developed. If anybody has any comments, this is the appropriate time to discuss it. In an open Sunshine hearing.

Steve Cleveland: The Florida Dream Center does not have the alley contracts anymore. And we still continue to help people in the community. And we applied for a grant. We got the grant. And it was a grant process with other people. And we won the grant. And we got the building. And now we're remodeling the building. And we're doing a capital campaign to move on to move forward. So that's what we got.

Dominic Howarth: I think a phrase that attracted us last meeting was the whiff of impropriety. And as Jeremy just mentioned, this idea of a perception is all that's needed in order to possibly rock a foundation. And again, this is not a vote. This is not anything but a discussion to be had. I'm still very new to this entire process. But having lived in Lealman all my life and understanding that this CRA board is kind of one of the few things that can enact change, that people see something that can be enough. And talking about gypsy stepping down from the South St. Pete CRA, and there was no money changing hands. It's just something interesting to note. And I think should probably be a conversation that is had or would make me feel better to have this conversation.

Jen Post: One person's perception can be completely different than another person's perception. So, myself, I don't feel comfortable utilizing the word perception, If I could say it's a beautiful day out there. That's my perception, your perception it's raining. Same type of thing. One person could get a perception that there was wrongdoing, another person might not. Is it my understanding that everything has been cleared and reviewed? No wrongdoing has been found. Correct?

Jeremy Heath: Incorrect, Incorrect.

Jen Post: What is the wrongdoing that was found?

Jeremy Heath: There is a perceived conflict of interest when we do not vote. There is money coming out of our budget that is benefiting a member of our committee financially. Maybe not him personally, but his nonprofit. That right there is immediate conflict and needs to be



acknowledged. The only time we have ever acknowledged conflict, and it was waived, for whatever reason, BCC said there's not a conflict, there is a conflict, but we were waiving it, was the Alleyway, but the funding that was approved for the honey and Arts Festival, for the Christmas tree lighting for what apparently appears to be looking for potential funding for the facade improvement on linked properties. That hasn't happened yet. None of that has come before us. We haven't discussed it. But the money has gone out nonetheless. And there has been no conversation or both. That is a conflict that is wrongdoing, it's cut and dry. It's not a perception that it's Florida law.

Jason Ester: if I can comment on that, that is not a conflict. It would be a conflict had Mr. Cleveland directly had the vote to enrich himself. Mr. Cleveland did not have to vote to issue those funds. Therefore, under Florida law, that is not a conflict of interest.

Steve Cleveland: That's correct; I did not vote over anything. And those were ARPA funds.

Alley cleanup was not ARPA funds. We bid on the alley cleanup; we got part of it. We don't have it anymore someone underbid us.

Jeremy Heath: The purchase of the Florida Dream Center was not the ARPA process, and it is not ARPA funds.

Steve Cleveland: It was originally ARPA funds, if you reach and go back and do your homework, it was originally ARPA funds. Then they wanted to make sure that because it was ARPA funds, County money going to a County building going back to the County, they wanted to put it in the county budget. The remodeling money, the 600,000 to do the facade and modifications, was through ARPA funds and also through CDBG funds that we got. We applied for that, and we were awarded that. It was not just that Steve or the Florida Dream Center said we had to apply, and we got awarded that; it was a competitive bid.

Jeremy Heath: But it wasn't because nobody else bid to purchase your property. And that is a violation of Florida statute. And there's precedent, there is legal precedent, Ulele in Tampa. Ulele in Tampa, the restaurant, was within the district of Tampa CRA. A law firm purchased that property. Because it was not put out to a competitive bid, there was a lawsuit, and the property was forced to be given back. And it's now Ulele. So there is legal precedent, where if somebody were to sue the Dream Center for not following Florida State statute, you guys are gonna have to give the property back to the county because we didn't do things aboveboard. And that's my whole point is we didn't do things aboveboard. And because of that, we're going to have consequences from it. Unfortunately.

Chuck Flynt: Does anybody from the staff or the county attorney have any information on whether there was a competitive bid, or is everything accurate to your knowledge?



Jason Ester: Are you saying The 163, which was the 125, because they didn't follow 125?

Jeremy Heath: "So this is from Maria white, the assistant county attorney. 'Alternatively, given that the buyer is a not for profit, who intends to use the property for community purposes, the county could opt to do a direct sale with no competitive process, despite the property being in a CRA. The fact that the buyer is a not for profit, who will use the property not for redevelopment, but for community purposes may be enough to defend the direct non-notice sale, if a challenge to that action is brought a potential challenge. In Parentheses, this route appears far riskier from a legal perspective, given recent case law mentioned above and is not the recommended course of action.'"

Jason Ester: That does not say that it's illegal. It says that it's less (*inaudible*). It's not facially (*inaudible*). That is the opinion from our office.

Jeremy Heath: And when the lawsuit happens, you'll lose.

Jason Ester: That was the opinion from our office, either courses.

Jeremy Heath: That's not true. Be careful. That's not true. Because Diana, and Maria, say earlier on, say that that is not the case.

Jason Ester: She didn't say illegal, she said risky. Okay. patently illegal and risky are two different things.

Jeremy Heath: I will agree with you on that. To be very clear, as committee members, we do not have the power to vote to remove a member. Frankly, I'm not even comfortable calling for a vote, even if we had that.

Steve Cleveland: Well, you really can't because we were appointed by commissioners, correct?

Jen Post: Jeremy, could you...I'm not grasping around...I know there's some gray area. I'm not grasping where, you know, you're calling for, you know, to vote Steve down. I'm, I'm not grasping that. You know, it was just you just read the email from County attorney that stated it's a risky way to go. But it's not technically wrong, so to speak. The general funds were not part of our CRA that was the county general funds. So the purchase with those funds has nothing to do with the CRA, technically speaking.

Jeremy Heath: Because it's a county-owned property within a CRA and Florida State statute is obligated to put it out to a 30-day competitive bid. That's it that they're obligated to do that.



Steve Cleveland: It was actually going to be purchased by the development corporation that is building the apartment complex next door, and they couldn't afford it. And so they took it out of their bid, and the county approached us and said to apply for it, and we did.

Jeremy Heath: And we can understand how that would be a perceived conflict of interest.

Steve Cleveland: I don't see that at all.

Jeremy Heath: Again., perceived and with the History...

Steve Cleveland: What do you have against the Florida Dream Center being here in the Community?

Jeremy Heath: None whatsoever

Steve Cleveland: Then what's the problem, or is it just me?

Jeremy Heath: It's not personal whatsoever. It is very much about appearances.

Steve Cleveland: We went through this for three years dealing with this. It went through legal and county budgets and the county voted and we own the building. It's in our name. In the Florida Dream Center's name. It's not in my name. It's in the Florida Dream Center's name, the Board of Director's owns the building so I don't know where we are going with this.

Chuck Flynt: Could I ask a couple of questions? I was reading articles about this where the county commission was discussing it, you know, public hearing about the potential sale. I believe there's a restriction on property ownership. If it does not continue to serve its purpose as essentially a 501C3 charitable organization that provides the services it now provides to the community, this would revert back to the county. Is that a deed restriction on the property? Is there a breakdown of what services they have to continue providing to remain the owner of that building? Do you have any knowledge of that?

Jason Ester: I did not review that document.

Steve Cleveland: I signed the document so I know what it says. it's not a deed restriction, it's a sell restriction. And basically, the Florida Dream Center has to maintain one the food bank, two Adopt-a-block. Other than that, that's all we have to maintain to continue serving the community. But we do much more than that. But that's the two things that were put into the agreement when we signed that the attorneys and everybody signed along with the deed and everything else that we have to maintain Adopt-A-Block, which works in the community to help people in the community and the food bank.



Chuck Flynt: Is this somewhat similar to what we've been hearing and discussing with Habitat for Humanity that they do not actually have the ability to step back in and own the property, but they have the right to repurchase it, should it go up for sale? Is it essentially the same setup they came from before this?

Steve Cleveland: Somewhat, but if we were to sell it to another company if they did the same thing with the food bank and the adopt-a-block there would be no problem. If not then we couldn't sell it and it would revert back to the county.

Chuck Flynt: So this is apparently a way to make sure that it maintains its promises to the community, thereby limiting the sale.

Steve Cleveland: Correct

Kim Blessinger: I believe what Jeremy's point is, is nothing against the Dream Center, or you personally but you as representative of Dream Center, and then also being on the CRA, may be a conflict of interest, is that the gist of your (inaudible).

Steve Cleveland: I was told when they asked me to get on the CRA at the very beginning, by Karen Seel, that as long as I didn't vote for anything, I could be on this committee, because we had that conversation. I had it with Charlie Justice. I've had it with Karen Seel and Janet Long. And I've been on this committee since day one.

Jeremy Heath: And I would argue that this is an example of what is good for other areas of the county is not good for Lealman, because there is precedent where it's simply acknowledging you run a nonprofit in the South St. Pete CRA, and you are going to be involved with conversations as it relates to the redevelopment of the gas plant district. There's no money, none whatsoever. And that member recused themselves due to the perceived conflict of interest, Gypsy Galardo, she resigned in November of last year. And in your case, we're talking millions of dollars that you have received, maybe maybe not by virtue of your presence on this committee. But there have been multiple instances where you have received money from this committee, whether it's voted on or not. And, acknowledging and waiving a conflict one time does not become open season for 3, 4, or 5 other instances where there is no conflict acknowledged or waived. And in my opinion, it's now a perceived conflict. And it does not speak well to what this committee is about or what we're trying to do in the community. And no, I'm not questioning at all your intentions or what the Dream Center does. I, I've lived three blocks from the Dream Center. I walk past it every day when I walk the dog. And I am very familiar with what you guys do, but what happened is not above board. And yes, Charlie Justice and Janet Long are going to say it was done above board. Some of the other Commissioners I know for a fact don't necessarily feel that way. I've had conversations with them as recently as last Friday, perception difference of opinion, and that's fine. I'm just saying my opinion is we could have done better. And this is not an instance of we go back and say in



the future, we're going to do better. The last time we had conversations about conflict of interest, there were 45 people here with pitchforks over Oasis Acres, and I mean this from the bottom of my heart. What happened with Oasis Acres, this is worse, this is worse.

Steve Cleveland: No, I disagree with that. And I suggest, Jeremy, that if you want me to resign, then you write a letter to your commissioner. Because you can't vote me out. I am appointed by the Commission.

Jeremy Heath: And that's, that's completely fair. That's your prerogative. I just wanted the rest of the committee to be aware of the lack of transparency that the county has had, as it relates to all of these transactions. I don't think anybody was aware of the fact that Chris Moore got fired (**Steve Cleveland – Chris had nothing to do with Florida Dream Center**) it has 110% to do with Florida Dream Center, because Chris Moore was fired because he raised concerns over the invoicing practices of the Florida Dream Center. (**Steve Cleveland - There was no invoicing practices**), correct, because every time you had a problem, you would go to run to Tom and things would clear up.

Steve Cleveland: That's again, that's not true. Okay so I suggest you do what you need to do. But you know, slander is slander and you need to, you know, I suggest you don't do that. Okay, then there'll be something else that we need to talk about. But even that we have a meeting to run here and let's move forward we need to vote on the minutes. Thank you.

Kim Blessinger motioned to approve the minutes with the recommended corrections. Jen Post seconded the motion. It was approved unanimously. Minutes were approved with corrections.

IV. Citizens' Input

Mr. David Lee, Lealman Resident – Mr. Chairman, I'm David Lee I'm a resident, I live here in the CRA. And I would just add to that conversation, it wasn't just Gypsy it was also Tracy Mater of CHAF Properties. So after she was kind of run out of the county, they went to South St. Pete and shortly thereafter, she joined the South St Pete CRA board. And she was properly removed because of the perceived conflict of interest. Also, in that case, there was no money exchanging hands. And in this case, we have lots of money on multiple occasions exchanging hands. For me, it's just the same standard, I want the same standard for us that all the other areas get, just treat us the same way that you have Bardmoor Tierra Verde, it will be good. As a person who actually lives here, this is the Citizens Advisory Committee; I come here to this; this is my only opportunity. I have to wait another two months, for the next one, I come here and I want that you're supposed to represent the citizens view to the county, because counties really far away. And we're not assuming. And so you're supposed to represent our view. And so like when those ditches came up, why is the county building brand new ditches? I couldn't understand why it wasn't, you know, aside from a couple of members, you know, why weren't you sticking up for us? The CRA plan says get rid



of the ditches well, then I find out there's ditch maintenance that's going to be put into the budget. And so like, it makes me think, are you going to be bidding on that? Is that why? for me it's a conflict. I mean, I don't know. Why are we maintaining ditches? And I just want to come here and have our views represented. Also I didn't like how the Dream Center kind of divided the community with this save the Dream Center language. That was something that the Dream Center used repeatedly, even on your application, and also the county repeated that over and over and over again. And that really divided members of the county. It wasn't about saving your center, Your Dream Center could have stayed. We were told repeatedly that you're getting kicked out, that wasn't true. You could have taken the money and bought a building in a more appropriate commercial corridor. We all would have been there for the groundbreaking. You could have done that. It was never save the Dream Center. But you guys went with that. And that really drove a wedge between residents. And that was unfair. And it's also I mean, it's pretty simple. There's money changing hands between the county and a member of the board. You can't be on the board. I mean, it's really not that difficult. And it's all kinds of statutes. I'm surprised to hear you saying, what about 112? If you go to our CRA page, it says this committee is bound by the rules in the state statutes regarding ethics. 112, and it's pretty clear that you're here to represent the public interest in any one of those things, completely crosses the line in major ways. So I think it's prudent. You can come sit over here with me, I come every time, but you don't have to be on the board to participate if that's what you want to do. But it was just, it wasn't about saving the Dream Center or not saving the Dream Center. That was very deceptive. And that was designed to pit people against each other. And any other board in this county this would not be tolerated. It's just because it's here. And it's too bad we're talking about this because I got all this other stuff on ADU's.. We've finally got ditch information and really interesting frequency. Describing to you guys what is in the budget to maintain ditches. So why are we building new ones? And why are we using their CRA to pay for maintenance? Why? I mean, there's all this good stuff. We probably have a good agenda. We probably won't get to talk about it because we're stuck with these conflicts. And it's not personal. It was just a botched thing; we botch a lot of stuff here. So I think it's simple. It's very simple, you just can't be on the board if you get money, pick one, this isn't where you raise money for your nonprofit, you can do that in other places. We don't have other nonprofits doing that. But there's really good stuff on this agenda. It's pretty bad. Particularly Mohr Avenue, which is just such a great way. It's a new direction for the county with code enforcement. And I'm really grateful for that in my neighborhood that we're finally headed in the right direction with that property.

Mr. Tony Clark, Lealman Resident— My name is Tony Clark. I live at 4580 40th Street North in St. Petersburg. If you look on the map that's right on the corner of 40th Street and 46th Avenue north. So, I'm basically across the street from the Oasis property. Anything that happens there strongly affects me, so I only hope for the best with whatever you guys come up with. Okay. Also, Mohr Avenue is on the west side of Oasis property. And my family and I have lived in the Mohr family farmhouse that was built in 1907. So we've been there since 1978. I've been around for a long time and have a lot of a lot of stake in the community. I have been a part of



many boards in the Lealman area, served under my uncle Ray Neary when he was with the Lealman Community Association, I was the vice president of the LCA at the time, I was responsible for 10 street lighting districts establishing 578 streetlights in our community. Okay. Main reason was safety and security of the community. I'll get away from the history part of it and say that I looked it back in my emails that I had from Brian Brinson. And my emails with him began March 24 of 2021. And that's when I had first applied for a great \$10,000 grant to help my family with a driveway concrete driveway project. So that is about three years ago. It's been a little while since we first started talking about and we've run into one roadblock after another roadblock after another roadblock and the biggest roadblock that we have is the open ditch in front of our property. We can't use the grant money to come across the existing piped section that's allotted for our family to use as a driveway. Because it's inadequate, there's not a wide enough pipe area to use. Now, we were approved for the money but there's been issues with a tree that used to be there is no longer there. We've gone back and forth highway department has been out to the property. We just keep getting one stall after another after another here we are three years later disappointed, discouraged and defeated. So hopefully you guys can help.

CRA advisory committee members asked Mr. Clark additional questions about the specifics of the work that needed to be done. Committee members advised on how to work with the permit department and other agencies. CRA staff has committed to work directly with the resident toward resolution.

Rev. Sharon Barber, Lealman Resident, Pastor Lealman Church of the Nazarene - Hi, good evening, everybody. My name is Sharon. I pastor the Lealman church at 55th Avenue on 35th Way. Sharon Barber, I've come and visited the center here several times. And I'm here tonight because I wanted to be present to see what's going on in the community. I also live here. I live right next to Lealman Elementary School and Tropical Gardens. I moved about 15 months ago because of my calling to pastor the church, the Church of the Nazarene. I have been coming here probably once a week, but I have also tried to reach out to somebody here to get some information about the available grants. I'm just interested in what's available to help our church. So, I know if any of these grants would help us make some improvements. But we also want to contribute to what the CRA and the individual businesses are doing. So, we'd love to collaborate and want to be here to help. I bought my wealth advisor here. This is Eddie. And so, we are here to be supportive and to ask for your help to be involved. So, thank you for letting me speak. Again. I'm Sharon Barber, Lealman Church of the Nazarene pastor at 3589 55th Avenue.



V. Lealman CRA Agenda Items

- **Code Enforcement Presentation – Jude Reazin, Division Manager**

Jude gave a detailed PowerPoint presentation on code enforcement and reviewed the See Click Fix AP on how to file complaints.

Anonymous complaints are not investigated per CS/SB 60

Exceptions to anonymous complaints: The Code Enforcement Officer has reason to believe the alleged violation presents an imminent threat to public health, safety, or welfare or imminent destruction of habitat or sensitive resources.

Imminent threat- A situation where there is reasonable certainty that an immediate danger exists which could be expected to cause loss of life, serious physical harm, or severe property damage. It will not happen in the next hour, next week, or even next month. It is an action that may occur within the next few seconds or at any given moment.

Kim Blessinger asked why it is no longer anonymous. Jude explained it was required by state law and reiterated the above exceptions.

Jeremy Heath asked if any flexibility could be made for residents, as opposed to out-of-state property owners who do not respond to code enforcement citations and don't cooperate until they rack up liens and local residents who need assistance. Jude responded that Code Enforcement works with local service agencies and county resources to assist the residents.

Jen Post asked if a group like the CRA or the Lealman Community Association could make a complaint. Jude said no, it has to be a person. So, a CRA or LCA member can make a call on behalf of someone, but they must give a name and address and be realistic.

Kim Blessinger asked if they have seen a decline in the neighborhood's appearance due to the decline in complaints because you can't call anonymously anymore. Jude says he hasn't been able to determine this. CRA members say there is, but Jude couldn't verify.

Jude stated that 1/3 of the cases are proactive enforcement, not just complaint-generated.

Chuck Flynt reiterated that calls must include a reasonable name and address, not a phone number.

Dominic Howarth suggested that the county put on its website a suggestion that if you fear making a complaint, call a family member and have them call for you or something to that effect.



Jude doesn't think the county would do that, but he will suggest it to the county attorney and get his opinion.

- **Lealman Park Lighting Upgrade – Greg Millam, Parks Department**

Greg gave an update on the Lighting project at Lealman Park.

The goal is to upgrade the existing lighting to LED lighting and add five new lights. They are still waiting on the engineering report. They are updating the system from analog to digital and adding a digital timing system. They will also be adding lighting on the backside of the existing poles to give light to the back area of the basketball court. They also want to add an SOS system. This will turn the lights on automatically. Only for 5 to 10 minutes. The job has been awarded to CI Contracting. The budget is between 85 – 100 thousand dollars. The expected construction date is July, and it will end in August. Still in the preliminary stages.

Steve Cleveland mentioned the Pond cleaning project and the homeless who live in the area. He mentioned they want to be considerate of the neighbors with the lighting and make sure the new lights are not shining down on them. Greg stated that the new lights are downward facing to avoid shining directly into people's homes. They are also lowering the pole sizes to assist with that as well.

Steve also mentioned that the park is very dark at night, that it closes at dusk, and that people sleep in there. Greg states now we can control the lighting to keep it well-lit to reduce that.

Jeremy Heath asked about the Pond and the previous discussion about beautifying it and whether the property owner has been reached. Greg stated that it is his project now, the next project he will be working on, and the cleanup has started.

Greg asked that any committee member submit any comments or suggestions regarding the park plans within the next two weeks so that they can be considered.

- **Housing and Community Development Updates – Bruce Bussey, Housing and Community Development**

- o **Lealman Heights redevelopment update**

Southport was selected three years ago to build an 86-unit property. However, they ran into many challenges. The county has terminated their contract and is looking for a new developer for the site. A new RFP has been issued, Prioritizing Mixed-income and affordable housing projects.

Steve Cleveland mentioned Lealman Elementary and how we had hoped to develop



workforce housing for its teachers. Bruce stated that we expected at least 30% of the housing to be workforce housing.

Steve asked if they would be using the same design and layout. Bruce said that was the developer's design, so we would look at the new proposals.

Jeremy Heath asked how much money Southport received from the County. Bruce confirmed they never received any money, they were quoted 2 million, but it was never given. Bruce confirmed the county only paid for the demolition, and the land was never conveyed to anyone; the land still belongs to the county. No lease was ever executed.

Jeremy Heath asked what the county can do to hold developers accountable after a 7-year delay with no results. Bruce suggested adding more deadlines.

Jeremy is concerned that land costs are increasing exponentially in Lealman and is disappointed that in the future, there won't be affordable housing being built on this land or land available in Lealman.

o Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU) – Amending the Land Development Code

Pinellas County already has permissive rules in place for ADUs. Scott reviewed the ADU guidelines. They can be an accessory to a Single-Family Home and are exempt from density calculations.

They are increasing the size from 750 Ft to 1000 Ft. There will be clarifications on how the size is calculated. There will be adjustments to review, and administrative adjustments are left to staff review. The code has been updated and enhanced liberally. Parameters are being expanded, and the code will be expanded greatly. On March 11, the Development Review Committee had a public meeting and recommended approval. There will be a public hearing held on April 10 to recommend the changes to BCC. On May 21, it will go for approval by BCC.

Kim Blessinger asked about the sewers. Do they have to have their separate sewer lines? Scott said they could utilize the main home's sewer line.

Steve Cleveland asked about converting a garage and setbacks. Scott stated that if you convert the garage structure to an ADU, the structure is nonconforming, and the use is changing, so you don't need to change the setback.

Jen Post asked if you are going to a second level and if that will change. Scott said no, you are not changing the nonconformity by going up.

Jeremy Heath asked if they had to be owner-occupied. Scott will get back to Jeremy with an answer.



o Form-Based Code Update

The previous night, the commissioners had a re-adoption hearing that featured land use components of the form-based code. They did so because we missed a statutory requirement for a submittal deadline, so the State asked us to procedurally go back to the BCC and re-adopt it verbatim. Noticing went out, and the board voted unanimously to re-adopt.

o Joe's Creek Industrial District – Master Plan Update

RFP proposals are due April 2nd. The evaluation committee will review the proposals and use a scoring process to choose a top consulting firm. There is a code of silence (per purchasing requirements), so no more information is available regarding the proposals submitted and what they include.

One member of the Advisory Committee is on the evaluation committee, which comprises county staff. Gary Grooms, a community business owner, is also on the committee.

o Land Use/Zoning Changes

Future land use: 55th Ave N west of the interchange of 54th Ave and 275 small pieces of property existing SFH surrounded by heavy commercial light industrial. They want to convert the home into an office. It's currently residential low, and they want to convert it to commercial general. It already belongs to the business next to it. They also want to change the zoning from 4R to C2 to match the land use change.

3320 70th Avenue North—They want to change lane use to increase density and build townhomes. Staff, the local planning agency, and BCC agree it is a good change. Once they submit the site plan, they will be required to make other improvements. The land use change was approved.

Kim Blessinger agreed that the explanation with the visual, as opposed to what was explained at the last meeting, made it clearer and made more sense now.

• CRA Updates

Amy Davis gave some quick updates on CRA Activities

Mohr Avenue Blue House – If that goes up for sale, they can only build two single family Homes.

New contractor has been awarded for Alleyway project, cleaning, and mowing. They are diversified and started March 8, 2024.



Ray Neri Groundbreaking ceremony—Tentative date May 20, 2024. We will be creating a one-page flyer for distribution to be shared as soon as possible.

Kim Blessinger asked if the playground and bathroom on 46th Avenue would remain open during construction. Amy Davis promised to follow up with Kim with a definite answer.

Jen Post asked if it is possible to get a social media image showing when the park will be closed. Amy Davis explained that is why we are working on an electronic flyer to be able to share that information easily.

Amy discussed pavement projects throughout Lealman that have been completed, are in progress, and are projected to start in this fiscal year and showed the committee all the locations on a map.

Kim Blessinger stated that road work information had not been well disseminated to the community regarding the road projects, and she didn't know when her road was being fixed. She found out when she woke up that her street was under construction. Amy committed to reaching out and asking someone to work on communicating future work with residents better.

Amy discussed the information she shared with the advisory committee regarding the service levels for the ditches provided by Public Works and that the service levels have indeed slipped. Public Works is actively looking to improve its levels of service, and once they do get back to the established level of service at that time, the CRA will look at enhancing the established level of service if needed. They need at least one year to return to the expected service levels.

Jen Post stated that this cleared up her concerns with the budgeted money for ditch maintenance, as she didn't know what that entailed. She now knows that no money will be spent on ditch maintenance until the county meets service levels, but those funds can indeed be applied to alley maintenance and right-of-way maintenance per the terms of the existing contract.

Amy Davis discussed the Laos Cultural Center permits. Once they're in compliance with that, they can apply for a temporary use permit to hold their events there. They are trying their best to go through the permit process for their special event, which is a New Year's Eve event on April 6 and 7.

There was an oil spill in St. Joe's Creek about a month ago. It has been cleaned up. A lot of people were involved, and it was off private property. The state was advised to ensure that all the proper cleanup was done, and there was a follow-up to make sure that it was done. It was a small area that was contained, and then it was cleaned up



from there.

Amy reported that a new application for a new Advisory Committee member had been received from Mr. Ken Williams, a local Lealman business owner. He is a contractor and an excavator, and his application will be going before the BCC for approval at their April 9th meeting.

For our next meeting, we will be having a work plan update as we are in the process of building our budget. We will discuss what we achieved this year and what we plan to work on next year. Felix will provide an update on grant programs and Alley programs.

Jason Ester will be providing Sunshine training for advisor committee members.

VI. Advisory Committee Member Comments

Jeremy Heath suggested moving the CRA meeting schedule to a monthly meeting instead of a bi-monthly one.

Jen Post agreed it was a great meeting. She stated that everyone should declare a conflict of interest before every meeting to maintain transparency and reduce grievances. She feels this would reduce perceptions and make things more transparent.

Jason Ester stated that the conflicts can be easily waived, and they are not deciding on funds. The BCC decides the funds. It can be reviewed further.

Steve Cleveland suggested it be discussed during Sunshine training at the next meeting.

VII. Adjourn

Kim Blessinger Motioned to adjourn the meeting, and Jen Post and Chuck Flynt seconded. The meeting adjourned at 8:20 PM