



## MEETING MINUTES

### Lealman Community Redevelopment Area Advisory Committee Meeting

Wednesday, May 22, 2024, 6 PM

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

**Committee Members Absent:** All members Present.

**Pinellas County Staff Present:** Amy Davis, Felix Nunez, Amanda Coffey, Valerie Brookens, Joan Rice, Smita Ambadi

#### I. Call to Order:

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

#### II. Introductions

The Advisory Committee welcomed new member Kenneth Williams. All members and staff introduced themselves.

#### III. Citizens Input

David Lee, a Lealman Resident, Spoke. "I live in the Neri Park neighborhood around the corner in the CRA, and I just first wanted to compliment the staff on their response to 4510 44th Street; we call it the burned-out house. This is kind of the next Mohr Avenue in the making. And staff quickly took care of it and boarded it up, which is what it looks like when we act quickly. And so that, fortunately, is not going to be the next Mohr Avenue. So, thank you for that. That's already demonstrated how much we appreciate that. One other thing I wanted to point out is that I know I've seen this, and this is a car in a ditch. And it's not an uncommon sight around here. And if you go back to the 'findings of necessity' report that led to the CRA, these ditches were featured prominently. We're supposed to eradicate the ditches, which was modernizing our infrastructure to curb and gutter so that we match the surrounding community. This particular car and ditch episode is pretty interesting because Public Works has been fighting to keep that ditch. The CRA board approved a driveway grant for this property owner, and Public Works has been fighting it for two years; you can't fill in that part of the ditch, and what do you know, it's happened. So, this is just a good illustration of one of the core principles that I hope we can get back to

There are just a couple of budget questions. First, with Boley advancing, there's an update coming later. But that's advancing quickly. There's a fence surrounding that property. And I think this area is paying for it, I'm not sure. I hope that now that they have won the concession to develop that property to reshift, the expense of paying for that fence and also paying for



the maintenance of public works, I think, has been doing a good job. But now that they're going to develop the property, let's let them pay for it. Two other items from the CRA budget concern me are two payments of \$11,760. And the other was \$2,940. And this was for Hurricane Ian's cleanup. If you recall, that was a big issue here in this community. All the other communities got picked up. And we got stuck with big piles of trash. And it came up over and over; we're kind of getting shifting stories from the county about how that would be handled. And it didn't make sense because the federal government said, hey, we'll reimburse you. So scrape, you know, Hurricane Irma, we got all kinds of stuff picked up. And so we kind of got the shaft on that. And we got stuck with piles forever. And you notice it immortalized in Google Streetview. If you go on there, you can still see it even on 54th Avenue, sat there for years. These two payments were from our CRA funds for Hurricane Ian's cleanup. And so I'd like to know, first of all, why are we paying for hurricane cleanup from our CRA fund? And second, at a minimum, were we, in fact, reimbursed?

County Administrator Barry Burton Responded to Mr. Lee. He responded:

We did not, as a county, do hurricane clean up. It didn't meet the threshold for calling out our contractors. We have some large contractors who will come in and remove the debris. Hurricane Irma was the only example of that. So individual communities were left to that, or you, as an individual property owner, could contract with a hauler to have rubbish removed. We did not do that for individual properties anywhere in Pinellas County. individual cities did. Okay, and they chose to do that. And they paid for that. And it wasn't eligible for reimbursement from FEMA. But as a county, we did not do that. And so, because it was right here, you'd have an issue, and you'd go, and there'd be an issue somewhere else. We went, did survey damage, and looked at it; it didn't rise to the level of activating our emergency response group. So, we did not do that cleanup. So, as a CRA, I don't know what you did. All right, so she (Amy Davis) can look at that. And if you chose to do that cleanup within the community, that would have been a CRA expense. We can find out if it was an eligible FEMA reimbursement to reimburse the CRA, which is the point at which we can find out. I don't know the answer to that.

#### **IV. Approval of Minutes**

Dominic Howarth Moved to approve the Minutes. Chuck Flynt Seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

#### **V. Lealman CRA Agenda Items**

- **Forward Pinellas and Public Works**

Public Works and Forward Pinellas staff reviewed the 49<sup>th</sup> Street Safety Study.

Chairman Cleveland had a question about 58<sup>th</sup> Avenue and 49<sup>th</sup> Street. He explained that it is a bad intersection and that people try to use a back road to cut through it, causing more



dangerous traffic. He also addressed the crossing lights on 54<sup>th</sup> Avenue in front of Lealman Park and 34<sup>th</sup> St and stated that it is also a bad intersection with many accidents. He asked if the signal could be moved to make a safer situation. Joan Rice said she follow up with information on if the location of the lighted crosswalks are part of the project.

Jeremy Heath asked about widening roads and whether the data from the study on 54<sup>th</sup> and 62<sup>nd</sup> Avenue was reviewed. Staff advised that they could ask for those studies and review them as part of their study for 49<sup>th</sup> Street.

Chuck Flynt mentioned that flashing red beacons are counterproductive to yellow ones for pedestrians. County staff stated there has to be a study on where lights can be installed and wasn't aware of the color locations.

Jen Post mentioned the stretch from 42<sup>nd</sup> Avenue to 46<sup>th</sup> Avenue on 49<sup>th</sup> Street and how the business junk bleeds out onto the right of way, leading to the streets and causing a dangerous pedestrian visibility issue. She wasn't sure if this was a code enforcement issue or if it could be addressed by this study. Staff said they would consider it as part of the study.

Kim Blessinger asked about the time between the red and green lights. Staff stated it depends on the volume of traffic and the actual streets. It also depends on the corridors, as some are linked to each other. The lead pedestrian interval allows pedestrians time to enter the crosswalk, be seen by vehicles, and cross.

- **Housing and Community Development Updates**

- **Lealman Heights Development Site Update**

- The committee is currently working on the request for negotiation, and Jennifer Post is the CRA advisory committee representative serving on the committee.

- **Boley project "The Point" Development Update**

- They got approved for the Housing Finance Corporation funding they were waiting for. Now comes the review period, which lasts six to eight months. After that, they can proceed. We want Boley Representatives to come in September to discuss the development project and more of their management process, where advisory committee members can ask questions.

- **Form-Based Code Update**

- Lealman Form based code went into effect on May 7, 2024.

- **Joe's Creek Industrial District – Master Plan Update**

- The RFP process for this is complete. The valuation committee reviewed the proposals, and they met on April 30 to review the proposals that were received. The committee agreed



upon the adoption of the top-ranked firm based on an objective record of scoring criteria. Purchasing is currently in negotiations with the top-ranked firm; the evaluation committee is still in a cone of silence until the contract is awarded. The contract is expected to be ready by the end of May.

- **Land Use/Zoning Changes in the past 60 days**
- **FLU-24-01 (and companion zoning case ZON-24-01)**

We have one land use and two zoning cases, which we have received in the past two months. The first is a land use and a request for a zoning change. FLU 24 01 has a companion zoning case, zoning 24- 01. FLU-24-01 (and companion zoning case ZON-24-01)

The Future Land Use Map (FLUM) changes from Residential Low to Commercial General on 0.15 acres at 2520 55th Ave N. The companion zoning case follows the same process and property and includes a zoning change from R-4, One, two, and Three-Family Residential to C-2, General Commercial, and Services. The applicant desires to convert the home into an office to support his adjacent businesses to the east and south. The Development Review Committee (DRC) and Local Planning Agency (LPA) recommended approval by the Board of County Commissioners (BCC). The BCC public/adoption hearing is scheduled for June 11.

- **ZON-24-02 –**

Zoning Atlas change from LO, Limited Office to R-3, Single-Family Residential on 0.29 acres at 4940 41st Avenue North. The applicant desires to use the property for single-family residential.

The Development Review Committee (DRC) and Local Planning Agency (LPA) recommended approval by the Board of County Commissioners (BCC). The BCC public/adoption hearing is scheduled for June 11.

Charles Flynt asked about the SFH (ZON 24-01 Case) and whether it is in conjunction with the same property to the East. Jeremy Heath asked if it was the same one left out of the Form-Based Code by mistake. Smita said it was the same property owner but it was not this property.

Charles Flynt mentioned that this is a dumpy commercial property and is concerned that it meets the code. He is worried that they received a variance on a property for an undesirable use. They have two cargo containers. He doesn't like to encourage variances in square footage when it may or may not meet county code for existing conditions. He says it's the first thing we see when you enter Lealman off the interstate, and it's an eyesore. Chairman Steve Cleveland asked if they were tearing down or rebuilding the house. Smita



states that they were not planning to tear down the house but instead reuse it.

Jeremy Heath addressed County Administrator Barry Burton and thanked him for being at the meeting and stated that “we (Pinellas County) don’t have a strong history of seeing projects through to completion for affordable housing in Lealman, especially when it’s property that the county owns, So I know we’re going through this RFP process, but I’m very, very hopeful that we pick up a developer that’s going to follow through on what they commit to do because we are many millions of dollars in cost overruns if by no other reason to justify the delay. So that’s more for your benefit than anybody else. That’s all I will say. Thank you.”

Kim Blessinger had a question about ADUs and if there is a potential to sell off the portion of a property that has the ADU located on it to make it a separate property. It was discussed that this could be done, but is not very likely since the property would have to meet all of the set back requirements and could not create a non-conforming property.

• **Resident and commercial grant update**

Felix Reviewed the highlights and successes of the residential and commercial grants program over the last year.

Jeremy Heath chimed in with Kudos on the increase in applicants, particularly in the commercial side of the program, which had previously been a challenge.

Charles Flynt was concerned that DF Asset only painted and felt they could have done more. Felix reminded the board that the property owner had paid for their whole project, and the CRA had reimbursed 50 percent; perhaps they could only afford that project.

• **Alley Way Program Update**

Felix Reviewed the highlights of the Alley Clearing program for the last two years, including some photos of the committee to show some examples of the work that had been completed.

Jeremy Heath asked some follow-up questions on the total number of alleys and whether they are traversable or partially traversable. Amy followed up by saying that we would be meeting with our new vendor and having a 90-day check-in with them and propose that two cleared alleys a month be a goal. That may change when getting to the fully obstructed ones, especially when dealing with encroachment issues.

Jeremy questioned why only 8 alleys were cleared by the prior vendor. CRA staff addressed that the contract was structured to clear as needed and that in the first two years a lot of debris was removed, however, going forward with the new vendor staff would be



identifying the alleys we want cleared each month in an effort to get alleys cleared at a faster pace.

Charles Flynt asked more questions about the trees and asked if the contractor needed to receive permits to remove them. Amy stated that we won't be removing trees. We can clear around them, but we won't be removing them unless they are dead or present some other hazard. The alleys will be cleared for pedestrian access but not necessarily vehicular access.

- **Swimming Lessons and Lifeguard Training Initiative**

Amy Cianci provided updates on the proposed Swim Program where busses will take children from LEX to the YMCA Speer Center for swim lessons. There will be 30 children each, 2 lessons a week for 4 weeks. The Community Foundation of Tampa Bay has provided the initial funding. Eventually kids, if they excel in swimming the program will cover expenses to get them certified as lifeguards and in CPR, and this becomes a workforce development program. We are still fundraising to be able to continue the program. So far, we have received \$15,000.00.

Jeremy Heath suggested that, if possible, the CRA should try to commit funds to this program. Jennifer Post wants to put this on the agenda as part of the CRA budget.

Dominic asked if the cost of a pool had ever been considered. Amy explained that it is about 10 million dollars and that a pool was recently closed because it was unaffordable.

- **General Updates from Amy Davis**

Amy Davis updated the committee on a change in the 4th of July celebration. Due to Ray Neri Park closing for construction and therefore a firework show cannot be launched, there will be an Independence Day picnic on July 5th from 5 pm to 8 pm at Lealman Park, where there will a DJ, be hot dogs and hamburgers, water slides, and a bounce house for the children.

Amy updated the committee on the sidewalk pavement schedule maps and completion updates along 28<sup>th</sup> Street.

Amy reminded everyone that we would be notified shortly about whether we would be receiving the NOAA grant funds.

Amy reminded committee that hurricane season begins June 1st directed people to hurricane guides at the front desk and online.



Our Next meeting is June 26 to go over the work plan and the CRA budget.

Amy discussed a business impacting the quality of life along 54th Avenue and discussed a potential proposal to limit parking overnight in the surrounding neighborhood streets to help mitigate the impact on the neighborhood. There will be an effort to find out if this is acceptable to the neighbors through going door to door and talking to the residents in this area.

• **Sunshine and Records Training – County Attorney**

Amanda Coffey – County Attorney provided Sunshine Law training to advisory Committee members.

Jeremy Heath requested Florida Statute 112 be reviewed.

Kim asked if there was a conflict of interest brought to the attorneys, is that then presented to the board.

Amanda Coffey responded that if an actual conflict is found, it would need to be considered for a waiver. The waiver would be presented to the BCC, the board that appoints it, and they would decide to grant it. It would not be brought before the advisory committee.

Amanda clarified any committee business, previous or future, outside of a public meeting is not to be discussed among committee members.

**VI. Advisory Committee Member Comments**

Kim Blessinger mentioned the Groundbreaking for Ray Neri Park. She advocated for leaving part of the bridges open so that people could enjoy part of it while the park is under construction.

Steve Cleveland mentioned that he has been on the board for ten years. Effective immediately, he has resigned from the advisory committee to protect the committee, his commissioners, and the community due to the accusations against him and the Florida Dream Center, which have been deemed false.

Jen Post feels he has been bullied into resignation by accusations lodged at him during improper times during our meetings, and she feels this is inappropriate. It bothers her that other voices have led to this.



Charles Flynt asked when we have the election. Amanda said the Advisory Committee must vote on a new Chair and Vice Chair, which does not have to be tonight. It was decided to postpone this discussion until the June meeting.

Motion to adjourn: Kim Blessinger motioned to adjourn the meeting and Dominic Howarth Seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 8:00 PM.