



MEETING MINUTES

Lealman Community Redevelopment Area Advisory Committee Meeting

Wednesday, October 23, 2024, 6 PM

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

Committee Members Absent: Kenneth Williams

Pinellas County Staff Present: Amy Davis, Felix Nunez, Jason Ester, Scott Swearngen

I. Call to Order

Chair Charles Flynt called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

II. Introductions (new member)

The Advisory Committee completed introductions. New Advisory Committee Member Tony Coryn was introduced.

III. Citizens Input

David Lee, a resident, provided input:

- He mentioned that the county is working on cleanup. He acknowledged the efforts but raised concerns about rogue contractors damaging new sidewalks and curb gutters in the neighborhood, which might potentially be damaging infrastructure in their efforts. He wants to ensure the county is aware of this.
- He advocated for the proposed Gazebo, which the Lealman District Services will discuss in tonight's meeting per the agenda packet. He feels it's a tangible item for the community to enjoy and that the problem with the homeless can be mitigated.
- He addressed the Boley development site plan and the fact that he didn't see the site buffer along 46th Avenue, which he stated is a requirement for the use of affordable housing investments and that it was something the neighborhood was looking forward to, and that not everyone in the neighborhood was behind it.

IV. Approval of Minutes

Dominic Howarth moved to approve the 6-23-2024 Lealman CRA Advisory Committee Meeting minutes. Kim Blessinger seconded the motion, which was carried unanimously.

V. Lealman CRA Agenda Items



- Community Gazebo Request – Neil Brickfield, Lealman Community District Services

Neil Brickfield from Lealman Community District Services presented the idea of a community gazebo for Lealman. Mr. Brickfield shared the history of community celebrations in Lealman, emphasizing the need for a visible, identifiable, and meaningful structure. There was a discussion about the potential placement of the gazebo, with suggestions for both Lealman Community Park and Ray Neri Park.

Concerns were raised about the gazebo's feasibility and practicality, and suggestions were made for alternative structures like a band shell or pergola. The committee discussed the community gazebo request, and Jen Post motioned to conduct a feasibility study for an event space/structure at Lealman Park. Jeremy Heath seconded the motion, which carried unanimously. Amy mentioned that can be discussed at the January CRA Committee meeting when the preliminary CRA Budget will be discussed.

- Update on The Point Development – Kevin Marone, CEO, Boley Centers

Kevin Marone and Adam Morris from Boley Centers presented the Point Development project. The project involves developing affordable housing units on a triangular property at 3901 46th Avenue North. The Florida Housing Finance Corporation has awarded funding and financing for the project. They discussed the unit structure, with a mix of one-bedroom units at various AMI levels, and answered questions from the Advisory Committee regarding the proposed development, its impact on the neighborhood, and other questions regarding Boley's property management of the building.

- Progress Report on Joe's Creek Industrial Park Master Plan – Jared Schneider, Project Manager Kimley-Horn

Jared Schneider introduced the master plan for Joe's Creek Industrial Park (JCIP) item, highlighting an update of the research conducted by SB Friedman Development Advisors, a partner on the project. The master plan aims to create a master plan for the JCIP and assess the infrastructure impacts and needs to implement the plan. Caitlin Johnson from SB Friedman presented the real estate market analysis, highlighting the area's industrial and multi-family market potential. They discussed the challenges and opportunities for industrial and multi-family development in the Lealman Targeted Employment Center (TEC).

Jeremy Heath raised concerns about the feasibility of industrial redevelopment in Joe's Creek, emphasizing the need for mixed-use development, referencing the results of the TIELS study. Committee members expressed the importance of understanding the market realities and making informed decisions based on independent analysis. Much discussion amongst committee members about past discussion and what type of development would be best in the JCIP area. The discussion concluded with a commitment to continue the conversation and gather community input for the master plan.

Kimley Horn and SB Friedman will host stakeholder meetings on November 12 and 13th and conduct a survey to get more feedback from the community.

- Discussion of Mural/Public Art Program – requesting direction

The committee explored options for the public art program, focusing on wrapping traffic control boxes and



creating murals in the community. The county will cover two utility boxes in Lealman through its abatement program in the coming fiscal year. Of the remaining ten boxes in Lealman, only three will not be replaced by upcoming capital projects, making them eligible for wrapping. The committee considered whether to proceed with these three boxes immediately or to save the effort for a larger project in the future.

Becca McCoy, a new LEX employee from Atlanta with experience in public art, was introduced as a potential in-house expert to join a sub-committee, along with Felix as the CRA staff representation, and Dominic Howarth as the CRA Advisory Committee representation to serve on the Public Art sub-committee to select the art projects and sites.

Committee members were invited to propose sites by email to finalize mural placements. After deliberation, the committee agreed on a mixed approach, opting to wrap three utility boxes while focusing the remaining budget on murals. A motion passed to approve the plan for three utility box wraps and use the remaining funds for murals. Kim Blessinger motioned to do the three signal boxes and murals, and Dominic Howarth Seconded. The committee voted to approve unanimously.

The committee agreed to revisit mural placements once suggestions are gathered, keeping Becca involved as an art advisor for the subcommittee.

Additional Lealman CRA and Non-CRA Updates by Amy Davis

CRA Items

- **Lealman Park Project:** The light installation scheduled for completion in September has been delayed due to storm damage. Park restoration, including tree maintenance, will precede the light project, followed by invasive species removal and shoreline restoration.
- **Sidewalk Project:** The sidewalk along 39th Street, connecting the park to the elementary school, has been completed.
- **Habitat Agreement:** The Board of County Commissioners approved a revised habitat agreement, extending it to five years with the same total funding but added flexibility for timing property acquisitions.
- **Work Plan and Budget:** Approved at the September 19 meeting.
- **CRA Staffing Change:** An administrative assistant position was replaced with a CRA specialist role to focus on technical tasks, grants, and communications. The hiring process has started with 41-42 applicants.
- **New Law for Special Districts:** A new law requires special districts, including CRAs, to establish performance measures. The Florida Redevelopment Association is still discussing the specifics of these performance measures as CRA's already has an annual reporting requirement in place and the state statute does not provide a lot of guidance. Proposed performance measures will be presented to the advisory committee at the next meeting in November.
- **Storm Water Improvement:** The team is working on a grant submission for a \$17.8 million project to replace the stormwater culvert under US 19 with a larger sized culvert to improve stormwater conveyance for Joe's Creek Industrial Park supporting redevelopment and business retention in the area. The grant application will request under 30% of the project cost, with additional funding from CRA and county sources. In order to



qualify for additional points and to show support of the project, Amy Davis proposed that the CRA contribute 15% of the project costs and to include this information on the grant application. Committee members discussed the need for detailed information before committing CRA funds. A larger county-funded Joe's Creek restoration project, including trails and amenities, is also ongoing. It was agreed to have the discussion extended with more detail for the next CRA Advisory Committee meeting to provide more information about the project and how the stormwater culvert project in light of the Joe Creek restoration project.

- **LEX updates:** The inaugural local farmers market is set for Sunday. It aims to bring fresh, affordable food to the community and plans to continue if successful. Additionally, with CareerSource Pinellas merging with Hillsborough County and closing its local office, the team is using the available space for a temporary gallery and distribution center for storm relief supplies, including food, water, and pet supplies, thanks to donations and collaborative partnerships.

Non-CRA Items

- **Hurricane Response:** Lealman has been relatively fortunate in recent hurricanes, with debris pickup progressing from West to East Lealman.
- **Lealman Heights Project:** An RFP process is underway with negotiations continuing with the top-ranked firm. This project remains in the "cone of silence" until negotiations are complete.
- **Demolition and Clean-Up:** Demolition was completed on the structure known as the Blue House, with an additional burnt-out house on 44th Street now approved for demolition by the Commission.
- **ADU Ordinance:** On July 30, the Board of County Commissioners adopted an Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) ordinance.
- **Infrastructure Improvements:** Paving north of 54th is complete, and street planting is ongoing to increase tree coverage. In August, a construction contract was awarded for 46th Avenue improvements, including drainage, sidewalks, and traffic signal upgrades.
- **Additional Projects:** Bids were received for the ARPA-funded sidewalk project on 28th Street, which was approved on July 30.
- **Short-Term Rental Regulations:** The local planning agenda includes an amendment to the land development code to increase accountability for short-term rental owners and address community complaints. This program may require short-term rental properties to acquire a Certificate of Use.

Advisory Committee Member Comments

- Jeremy Heath addressed concerns regarding a financial issue related to the Alleyway cleanup program, which the CRA funded. He mentioned a report filed by the Pinellas County Inspector General, where one complaint was considered unfounded and another unsubstantiated. The report highlighted potential financial losses due to inaccuracies, incomplete records, and possible fraudulent activities in the cleanup program, though the amount of money lost remains unclear. Heath recommended that the board request an official review of the situation to enhance transparency and accountability. He encouraged everyone to read the report, found on the Pinellas County Inspector General's website.



- Jen Post asked for clarification regarding a recent change in the statute for CRAs, which restrict funding for community events. She had difficulty finding any clear language confirming this change. It was explained that the state statute has become more restrictive, specifying that CRAs can only fund a defined list of activities, excluding funding for events unless they are directly related to the CRA's work. Amy provided an example of a possible qualifying event, such as a grand opening event for a new development funded by the CRA and also acknowledged that statute change significantly impacted CRAs and that this subject is still being discussed at CRA conferences.
- Kim Blessinger advised that a fence on the turtle bridge at Ray Neri Park has collapsed and could be a hazard and asked if this could be addressed.

VI **Adjourn**

Jen Post moved to adjourn the meeting. Dominic Howarth seconded. The meeting adjourned at 8:20 PM.