

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING
BOCA RATON COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY
TUESDAY, MAY 27, 2008
*1:30 P.M.

*The Regular Meeting of the Boca Raton Community Redevelopment Agency was called to order by Chairman Arts at approximately 2:30 p.m.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAG:

ROLL CALL:

Chairman M.J. Mike Arts
Vice Chairman Bill Hager
Commissioner Peter R. Baronoff
Commissioner Susan Haynie
Commissioner Susan Whelchel

Also attending the meeting were:

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

AMENDMENTS TO THE AGENDA:

There were no amendments to the agenda.

MINUTES:

Minutes of the Regular Meeting of May 12, 2008

Motion was made by Commissioner Haynie, seconded by Vice Chairman Hager, to approve the minutes as presented. Motion carried unanimously on a voice vote; Chairman Arts, Vice Chairman Hager, Commissioners Baronoff, Haynie 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:

There were no items for consideration.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

1. Downtown Marketing Update

Mr. Ahnell explained that last year the CRA discussed formation of a merchants association for the downtown; staff recommended, at that time, that an association would be successful only if the merchants wished to organize and participate. To that end, a survey was created and mailed out;

Development Services Manager of Administrative Services Ruby Childers would give a presentation on same and answer any questions from the Agency.

Ms. Childers referred to paperwork previously distributed to the CRA, advising that a downtown marketing survey went out recently to approximately 1,700 commercial property and business owners in the downtown; the survey included a cover letter from the City Manager, a map of downtown's boundaries, and a three-page questionnaire. The purpose of the survey is to obtain the merchants' perceptions of the downtown as well as information on the customer base. The questions were presented in two parts with 1) a focus on the business, itself, and 2) a focus on customer base. Ms. Childers then reviewed the questions found in the survey, which included but were not limited to, type of business, hours, product or service provided, parking, methods of advertising, special events, what brings business to the downtown, whether any regulatory restraints were affecting downtown business, and level of interest in participating in a merchant association or directory. Ms. Childers indicated that an opportunity was also extended to merchants to participate in a focus group, which would assist in formulating an association, and a downtown website. She stated the website could be the foundation for starting an association and would be cost-feasible. Ms. Childers then concluded her presentation and answered questions from Agency members, as did the City Manager.

Mr. Ahnell indicated that the Chamber of Commerce voiced interest in facilitating an association and advised that once the surveys are returned, the information would be compiled and staff would return to the Agency with various strategies.

Responding to Agency members, Mr. Ahnell advised that approximately 80% of the events sponsored by the City are conducted in the downtown. Based on Council's direction, the City has eliminated most of the smaller events, which were not always well attended; focus is being given to larger events that are more like attractions, in order to bring more people and business into the City. Mr. Ahnell clarified with the Agency that funds were budgeted for July 4 fireworks this year.

Further discussion revealed that the surveys would be returned to PMG Associates and the information contained therein assembled by them as well. It was noted that staff is also looking at the possibility of assisting commercial properties and businesses in other areas of the City to ensure that everyone is successful and has the same opportunities.

Responding to queries from Chairman Arts, Mr. Ahnell explained that Mr. Gindroz of Urban Design Associates (UDA) planned to come before the CRA in July to give a final presentation on the downtown. Pending approval from the CRA, staff would make the necessary changes to move the program forward. He also advised that a plan had been submitted concurrently as a test case for the southeast corner of Palmetto Park Road and Federal Highway, in the downtown; staff hoped to present that petition simultaneously with Mr. Gindroz' presentation. Regarding Palmetto Park Road, specifically, the portion of Federal Highway to Mizner Boulevard, staff was speaking with Mr. Gindroz about how to make the crosswalk connection from the north side of Palmetto Park Road to the south side in what would eventually be a spine; details were provided. Once a design comes back from UDA, staff can proceed with construction.

At this time, Commissioner Whelchel requested a tour of the Palmetto Park Road location, while Mr. Gindroz is in attendance, and asked to see the plans as well. Mr. Ahnell advised that Mr. Gindroz would be contacted in regard to same.

ATTORNEY'S REPORT:

The City Attorney had nothing to report at this time.

COMMISSIONERS' REPORTS:

Commissioner Haynie questioned when the theater in the former cartoon museum building is proposed to open, what the official name of the building is, and if there is none, whether the CRA could name it. Mr. Ahnell advised that the building has not yet been officially named, noting that not all the tenants have been identified at this time. Regarding the theater, he stated that it would probably open in approximately six to nine months; details were provided. However, the lower floors might open in late fall. Responding

to a query about the proposed bookstore, Mr. Ahnell advised that he had numerous conversations with Mr. Svekis and he is still pursuing financing for the project.

Commissioner Whelchel questioned whether the CRA had the right to name the building; the City Manager is to follow up. Ms. Whelchel then asked whether the CRA has granted rights for determination of activity taking place in the theater. Mr. Ahnell explained that activities were defined through the lease; details were provided.

ADJOURNMENT:

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

The regular meeting of the Boca Raton Community Redevelopment Agency adjourned at approximately 2:58 p.m., Tuesday, May 27, 2008.

M.J. Mike Arts, Chairman

ATTEST:

Sharma Hagerty, City Clerk