



# CITY COUNCIL

## Nominations & Appointments Committee

**Tuesday, July 5, 2022  
Meeting Report**

**Attendance:** J. Cepeda-Freytiz, W. Butler, D. Reed (in person), M. Goodman-Hinnershitz (electronically)

**Others Attending:** M. Smith, L. Kelleher (in person), B. Rivera (electronically)

The meeting was called to order at 4:09 pm by Ms. Cepeda-Freytiz.

### **I. Interviews**

- **John Miller Jr – appointment – Redevelopment Authority**

Ms. Cepeda-Freytiz questioned why Mr. Miller was interested in serving in this position and to provide a brief background. Mr. Miller stated that he has been a Reading resident since 2000 and currently lives in Hessian Camp. He stated that prior to moving to Reading he was raised in Oley. He stated that during his teen years he worked construction in Reading.

Mr. Miller stated that he has been purchasing rental properties and has since founded his own construction company – Reading Bucket Service. He stated that he is currently working with Shuman Development on the N 6<sup>th</sup> St property and that 100% of the work that his business does is within Reading. He stated that he helps private redevelopment efforts and expressed the belief that this provides the proper experience needed to serve on the Redevelopment Authority.

Mr. Butler questioned if Mr. Miller could describe what he believes the purpose of the Redevelopment Authority is. Mr. Miller stated that he believes the Redevelopment Authority should eliminate blight. He stated that there are different ways to do so and stated that two ways are to acquire properties for rehab and resale or to demolish them and construct new.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz questioned how Mr. Miller would conduct RRA business. Mr. Miller stated that he understands there is currently a void. He stated that he would be completely open to direction from both the administration and Council on where to focus efforts. He expressed

the belief that the Authority was misguided in the past and has contributed to blight in Reading. He stated that he is very familiar with the RRA's current properties and what they need to move them forward.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz questioned how Mr. Miller would help move the RRA forward. Mr. Miller noted the need for strong leadership and members with the proper backgrounds. He expressed the belief that there have been too many changes of direction recently. He stated that since the RRA purchased the Penn Optical Building on S 8<sup>th</sup> St 15 years ago it has never been occupied. He expressed the belief that there are foundational issues at this location. He expressed the belief that the RRA should not acquire properties that the private sector can redevelop.

Ms. Reed questioned if Mr. Miller would have the time needed to devote to the RRA. Mr. Miller stated that he will make the time. He stated that there is a saying that if you want something done that it should be assigned to a busy person.

Ms. Reed questioned if there were properties that Mr. Miller would like to address as priorities. Mr. Miller stated that work should begin with low hanging fruit – the Washington St and N 4<sup>th</sup> St properties. He stated that the S 8<sup>th</sup> St property will be more complicated. He suggested that work on properties proceed from what will be the easiest to what will be the most difficult.

Mr. Daubert arrived at this time.

Ms. Reed questioned what Mr. Miller sees as the most challenging property of the RRA. Mr. Miller expressed the belief that it is the S 8<sup>th</sup> St property. He noted the need to follow proper processes to get properties back on the tax rolls.

Mr. Daubert stated that he had no questions at this time and will review the meeting video.

Ms. Cepeda-Freytiz stated that she appreciates Mr. Miller's bluntness. She questioned what Mr. Miller would address in his first three months as an RRA member if he is appointed. Mr. Miller stated that there is a backlog of clerical needs and unpaid bills to address first and foremost. He noted the need for the RRA to reorganize. He stated that an evaluation of the RRA's assets should be completed by visiting – and doing walk throughs – of RRA properties so that it can be determined how to proceed. He expressed the belief that sometimes properties need to be purchased by the RRA but that they should not hold them for a long time.

Ms. Cepeda-Freytiz questioned the timeline to turn a property over. Mr. Miller stated that it would be specific to each property. He stated that some process issues will be out of the RRA's control. He expressed the belief that 2 – 3 years should be a reasonable amount of time for most properties.

Ms. Cepeda-Freytiz thanked Mr. Miller for his interest in serving on the RRA. She stated that there are more applicants than vacancies and that he will be informed if he will be appointed at the conclusion of the interview process.

- **Thomas McMahon – appointment – Redevelopment Authority**

Ms. Cepeda-Freytiz thanked Mr. McMahon for his interest in serving on the Redevelopment Authority. She asked Mr. McMahon why he was interested and to provide a brief background. Mr. McMahon stated that he has lived in Reading for 37 years. He stated that after retiring as an engineer he served two terms as Reading's mayor. He expressed the belief that the RRA is a mess and it's time to address the issues. He noted the need for a study to determine the real number of blighted and vacant properties in Reading. He stated that he has walked every neighborhood and knows the City well. He stated that he has missed working with the City.

Mr. Butler questioned where Mr. McMahon believes redevelopment should occur. Mr. McMahon noted the need to better market the 50 acre Dana South and the Glidden site. He stated that these are large parcels that could bring more jobs to Reading. He noted the need to engage with Habitat for Humanity, Neighborhood Housing Services, and Our City Reading. He stated that blighted properties in a neighborhood reduce the property value of the properties around them. He expressed the belief that RRA members should talk with neighbors of blighted properties.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz questioned what Mr. McMahon would address first if he is appointed to RRA. Mr. McMahon noted the need to complete the strategic plan being drafted by Hailstone and then to implement the plan. He noted the need to connect with the community to determine the community's needs. He suggested that properties that are very distressed be demolished and rebuilt. He suggested addressing blocks with several blighted properties. He noted the need for major action.

Ms. Reed questioned if Mr. McMahon had time to commit to serving on the RRA. Mr. McMahon stated that he will make time.

Ms. Reed questioned which RRA properties Mr. McMahon would address as a priority with the largest impact. Mr. McMahon stated that he would like input from City Council. He noted the need to avoid gentrifying neighborhoods. He suggested raising entire blocks to rebuild neighborhoods.

Mr. Daubert questioned what Mr. McMahon would like to address in his first 100 days if he is appointed. Mr. McMahon noted the need to meet with Mr. Mooney for background information and to drive by all the RRA properties. He expressed the belief that some of the RRA properties are in very bad condition. He also noted the need to learn what Reading's sister cities are doing to address blight.

Ms. Cepeda-Freytiz questioned how Mr. McMahon would market current RRA properties. Mr. McMahon stated that realtors, the Chamber, Habitat for Humanity, Neighborhood Housing Services and Our City Reading should all be contacted.

Ms. Cepeda-Freytiz agreed that Reading should utilize its current resources more efficiently. She thanked Mr. McMahon for his interested and explained that additional interviews will be conducted and he will be notified if he will be appointed.

*(Note – due to a last minute scheduling conflict Mr. Becker and Ms. Becker were unable to attend this meeting. Their interviews will be rescheduled.)*

The next group of interviews will be scheduled for Monday, July 11 beginning at 4 pm.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:44 pm

Respectfully submitted by,  
*Shelly Smith,*  
Deputy City Clerk