

**MINUTES OF THE REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY OF THE CITY
OF READING HELD ON 21st MARCH 2019**

The Redevelopment Authority of the City of Reading held a meeting at 815 Washington Street, City Hall, 3rd Floor Conference room in the City of Reading, County of Berks, and Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, on 21st day of MARCH, 2019.

The meeting was called to order at 5:00 p.m. by Mr. Jacobson, Chairman and on roll call, the following were present:

Mr. Melvyn Jacobson,	Chairman
Mr. Juan Zabala,	Vice-Chairman
Dr. Lazaro Pepen	Treasurer/Secretary
Mr. Glenn Steckman	Member

Also present were:

Mr. Dennis Witwer, Executive Assistant
Mr. Keith Mooney, Barley, Snyder
Mr. Edward Oswald, Reading Eagle
Mr. John Hefferon

Upon roll call, Mr. Witwer declared a quorum.

Public Comment:

Mr. John Hefferon, a multiple property owner in the city of Reading handed out to the board some photographs he had taken of properties in the vicinity of the 300 block of S. 5th Street. He stated that he wanted to bring to the board members attention common problems citizen's face when it comes to the codes department, stating that there are approximately 17 property maintenance inspectors and each inspector has a different set of rules that they follow. He stated that it is his belief that some properties and property owners are targeted by the city while others are allowed to get away with major infractions.

Consent Agenda:

Mr. Steckman made a motion to approve the consent agenda, Dr. Pepen seconded the motion. All members accepted.

Election of Officers:

Mr. Steckman made the following nominations for the 2019-2020 officers of the board:

Mr. Jacobson – Chairman

Mr. Zabala – Vice-Chairman

Dr. Pepen – Treasurer/Secretary

Mr. Witwer – Assistant Treasurer/Asst. Secretary

Each member accepted his nomination and upon vote, all nominations were unanimously approved.

RRA Property List:

Mr. Zabala presented the board with a list of the properties owned by the authority that was listed by categories of “buildings”, “green space”, “parking” and “sidewalks”. He expressed his ideas as to how best to market and dispose of certain properties, noting that the “green spaces” should be sold to adjacent property owners for \$1.00 and other spaces be donated to the city.

Mr. Steckman stated that he agreed and that the properties offered to the City could help offset the cities liability from the Angelica Park land issue. He also went on to state that he believes that the land sold to any adjacent property owner should be replotted so that the two properties would become one deeded property, avoiding any confusing for the property own in the future should they decided to sell their home.

In regards to the parking lots, the board requested that Mr. Witwer e-mail them the 2003 parking lease agreement with the Parking Authority.

New Business:

Mr. Jacobson gave the board an update on a meeting, known as 3-P (Public, Private Partnership), in which he was a guest speaker, earlier in the month. The topic of his presentation was the “Greening of Penn Street” study and the charrettes which were held in conjunction with the study.

Mr. Jacobson gave a history of the study and advised that the study is of great interest to many organizations throughout the City and has been received positively by many.

Mr. Steckman and Mr. Jacobson stated that phase II of the study would cost approximately \$180,000.00 which would pay for a downtown preliminary engineering study of all the utilities in the corridor. Mr. Steckman suggested that the board consider recommending to city council and the administration that funding be worked into the 2020 budget to cover such costs of a phase II study.

1404 Fairview St.:

Mr. Witwer and Mr. Mooney advised the board that Neighborhood Housing Services had pulled their offer to purchase the property located at 1404 Fairview Street. Mr. Mooney stated that another offer had been made by Mr. Daniel Lugo to purchase the property for the amount of \$2,100.

The board stated they would take the offer under advisement.

CDBG, HOME Funds & Micro-loans

Mr. Steckman advised the board that there are hundreds of thousands of dollars that are not being utilized by the city that the RRA could apply for. He mention that up until about 9 years ago, the RRA used to receive CDBG funds to help facilitate many projects in the city, such as the IMAX Theater and the Buttonwood Gateway business complex.

Mr. Steckman stated that there is \$240,000 set aside for the micro-loan program, which could help home owners with repairs needed to their homes and that there is approximately one-million dollars in HOME funds that could be tapped into. The money is just sitting, unused, with the potential of being taken away from the city by HUD.

Mr. Steckman stated that the city recently purchased two new firetrucks with CDBG funds, so that the city would not lose the money. He mentioned that, although such funds can be used for those types of purchases, the money should be going to home owners to off-set the cost of expensive home repairs. These "sunset" loans could be payable up to \$20,000-\$25,000 per home.

Website:

Mr. Jacobson stated that he would like to look into contracting with a website developer to create a new website for the authority. He stated that he knows of someone who offered to design a new website for \$1,500.00.

Mr. Zabala asked what had happened to the last website. Mr. Witwer answered that it had become too costly to maintain and the previous board at the time did not wish to renew the contract.

The board discussed possibilities for future maintenance of the new site once it would be created. It was suggested that perhaps the city's IT department would be willing to make any necessary updates when needed.

Executive Session:

At this time the board entered into executive session to discuss legal and staff matters.

Regular Session:

The board entered back into regular session.

Mr. Steckman directed Mr. Witwer to research the price for selling the authority owned vehicle and to place an advertisement in the local Merchandizer for sale. He also asked Mr. Witwer to start the cleanout process of the files located in the storage space in the 3rd & Spruce building.

There being no further business to be brought before the board, Mr. Zabala made a motion to adjourn the meeting; all members were in favor.

Respectfully submitted by:

Executive Assistant