

**MINUTES FROM A SPECIAL MEETING OF THE READING
REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY OF THE CITY OF READING
HELD ON 16th MAY 2018**

The Redevelopment Authority of the City of Reading held a meeting at 815 Washington Street, Room 2-53 in the City of Reading, County of Berks, and Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, on 16th day of May, 2018.

The meeting was called to order at 3:05 p.m. by Mr. Jacobson, and on roll call, the following were present:

Mr. Melvyn Jacobson,	Member
Mr. Juan Zabala,	Member
Ms. Pam Shupp	Member
Mr. Glenn Steckman	Member

Also present were:

Mr. Dennis Witwer, Executive Assistant
Mr. Keith Mooney, Barley, Snyder
Mr. Adam Mukerji, RRA Consultant

Absent:

Mr. Chris Heinly, Chairman

Other attendees:

Councilwoman Donna Reed
Mr. & Mrs. Robert Melendez
Mr. Cristobal Arroyo

Upon roll call, Mr. Witwer declared a quorum.

Public Comment:

Mr. Robert Melendez addressed the board regarding a property the RRA owns at 301 Washington Street, that he was once the owner of. He stated that there are back taxes on the property that have not been removed by the RRA which are effecting his wife's credit as they are still in her name.

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Mr. Mooney stated that because Mr. Melendez had chosen to take legal action against the RRA, the board could not speak publicly on the matter.

Finance Report:

Ms. Shupp informed the board that she had met with Mr. Witwer in previous weeks to go over some financial matters, specifically the RRA's finance reports. She stated that the meeting was very productive and that she feels in the future a finance report will be produced that reflects all accounts.

Mr. Witwer stated that he is expecting to have Quick Books installed onto his computer so that creating reports will be easy. Someone from Blosky & Associates will be giving a tutorial on how to use the software.

Mr. Steckman asked when a budget will be produced. He was concerned that the board doesn't know how sustainable to authority is for moving forward into the future. He stated that it was his understanding that the authority hadn't contributed any funds to the employees "pension" in quite a few years and that annual pay increases have not been given. He stated that this should all be reflected in a budget.

Ms. Shupp stated that she is working with Mr. Witwer on this issue and that it will take some time, but believes it will be easier once the proper accounting software is available.

Mr. Steckman asked if a proposed budget could be created and ready for the next board meeting in June.

Ms. Shupp said that she will work with Mr. Witwer and have something put together, but a final version may take a little more time.

Before moving on to the next topic of business, Mr. Zabala asked his fellow board members what they feel is the role they should play in the community. He stated that since he has been on the board, he hasn't witnessed any redevelopment projects or any plans for community revitalization.

Mr. Steckman stated that right now the authority is in a transition and is trying to find a balance of how to move forward, which brought him back to the topic of a budget. The board needs to understand what funds they currently have to decide how to move forward in the community.

Ms. Shupp stated that she would like to see a redevelopment plan put together. This would give the authority an idea on where to focus their energies in the future.

Mr. Mukerji stated that during the last administration, the authority was focused on rehabilitating the neighborhood in the North 4th street neighborhood in the 100 to the 300 block. He stated that the authority worked with Habitat for Humanity, donating five properties to the organization for rehabilitation for first time homeowners, in the 300 block of N 4th St.

Mr. Mukerji also stated that during the same time as the rehabilitation the authority acquired the Bookbindery Apartments to keep the building from being purchased by a slumlord. This was all in efforts to stabilize the neighborhood.

Riverview Industrial Site:

Mr. Mukerji stated that he had received an offer from a company called Bright Farms, but stated that the current proposal would not be suitable for the site, because the footprint of land they are proposing to purchase lays right in the middle of the current road configuration. He proposed the idea of renegotiating with Bright Farms to see repositioning the layout of their building at another location on the land would be possible. He explained that the building would need to be positioned in such a way that the building would receive sun light in a specific location.

Mr. Steckman stated that the site in its current state is not good for marketing. He stated that when he was last down to the site, he saw piles of millings, broken curbs, sinkholes and he also stated that the current pad and steel structure on the site should be removed completely.

It was asked of Mr. Steckman if there was an update on the road connection to the bypass, from Pendot, to which he stated that there are some concerns about underground gas lines which appear to be too shallow for the weight of traffic and UGI is working on a solution to the problem. He stated that the road extension will be coming, but has been pushed back to 2020.

Mr. Steckman asked if there are any conceptual renderings of how the 50 acres could best be developed.

Mr. Mukerji stated that Bogia Engineering had created three different land development plans for the lot. He stated that there is no plan

for any residential development on the land and that heavy industrial, walk to work jobs is the highest and best use for the land.

Ms. Shupp reminded the board that the KOZ benefits are going to expire soon, but LURTA is still in effect and would be a nice incentive for developers.

Mr. Jacobson asked if there are any in house plans which the planning department may have designed. Mr. Steckman stated that it was in the works, but there is nothing current.

Mr. Steckman discussed marketing strategies and the overlay district associated with the site.

Buttonwood Gateway Housing Development:

Mr. Mukerji advised the board the Liberty Environmental has been engaged to work on environmental testing on the land as the land was only stabilized and approved by DEP for commercial use. Land must be tested and cleaned for residential use.

Mr. Steckman asked if the DCED ISRP grant had been submitted for the project.

Mr. Mukerji stated that the grant was not started but will apply for the grant, but will need more cost information from Liberty Environmental.

Ms. Shupp asked what agreements had the RRA with the developers, to which Mr. Mooney stated that there is an agreement of sale in place. He also stated that the RRA is still waiting for some properties to be conveyed from OCR for one dollar, title work must be completed. Habitat for Humanity also has property that they will develop themselves.

Mr. Steckman stated that the City is working on a Façade program for the existing homeowners in the development area, so that they can clean up their homes to fit it with the new homes which will be built.

Ms. Shupp stated that her organization will help to work on the ISRP Grant.

Mr. Steckman made a motion, Ms. Shupp seconded the motion. Mr. Zabala did not support the motion 3yea/1ney

Greening Penn Street:

Mr. Jacobson advised the board that he has met with the Executive Director of Downtown Revitalization, Aaron Gantz. He stated that all initiatives for the Green Penn Street project are moving ahead nicely.

Mr. Jacobson stated that a coalition should be created and that the City of Reading needs to become more involved in the project.

On another topic, Mr. Jacobson asked Mr. Mukerji for a written status report by the next RRA meeting which outlines all current and pending projects that he is working on along with any times lines for grant submissions that he may be working on and a list of any open contracts the RRA has with any one. He asked that the report be submitted to the board by 15th June.

Local First Incentives:

Mr. Zabala told the board that he would like to see the City and the RRA adapt a “Local First Incentive” program. He advised the board that other cities have such an incentives for awarding contracts to local businesses. He stated that the City of Reading awards lots of contracts all year long and he would like to know what criteria a contracting company needs to have to win a bid. He would like to see local city companies be awarding contracts to keep the city’s taxpayers money stay in the city. He would like to see a mandate that 30% of labor come from city contractors.

He emphasized the importance of minority owned companies as well. He stated that he knows of many minority own companies that would like to be included in bids, but the owners are not sure how to go about submitting bids.

Mr. Steckman stated that the City of Reading has a points rating when it comes awarding bids. All project RFP’s are advertised and companies can submit their proposals to the city for consideration.

Mr. Zabala stated that advertising solely in the Reading Eagle is not enough as the demographic of the city is Spanish speaking and the City should advertise in a Spanish publication as well.

Ms. Shupp advised Mr. Zabala that the minority businesses should be sure to have their company certified as a Minority or Woman owned business, this would help in the awarding process.

Mr. Mooney reminded everyone that any contractor who is bidding on a contract must be bonded for up to the amount of the project. This is where some companies run into problems and lose contracts. He also stated that all the RRA would have to do is adopt a formal policy that complies with the law and could use the City's policy.

3rd & Spruce storage building:

Ms. Shupp read aloud a PMI report of the damage to the building the needs to be repaired. She asked if anyone knew what the assessment of the building was.

Mr. Mooney stated that the information could be found on the County assessment website.

Mr. Witwer stated that he could give a tour of the building to anyone who would like to go through to see the damage.

Mr. Jacobson stated that he would like to go down so that he could be together a scope of work that contractors could build an estimate off of. He asked Mr. Witwer to send rejection letters to the three companies that had already submitted bids and to also advise that an RFP would be put together and those companies could resubmit a proposal.

Bylaws:

The board reviewed the current bylaws. The last amendment to the bylaws was in 2001. The board discussed proposed changes to the current bylaws.

Mr. Steckman made a motion to have Mr. Mooney write a draft amendment to the sale of RRA properties.

Before closing the meeting, Mr. Jacobson stated that he has been singing all checks for the RRA. He stated that the legal bills for the last two months have been very high and that he would like to have a point person to make contact with the RRA solicitor. He admitted that he had reached out to the solicitor many times through phone calls and e-mails and that all adds up. He suggested that moving forward, Mr. Witwer should be the person who contacts Mr. Mooney if any of the board members have any questions or concerns. The other board members agreed, if they have any need for the solicitor, they would reach out to Mr. Witwer would then contact Mr. Mooney.

Mr. Jacobson also asked the board members to be sure to print out their own packets for board meetings. The cost of paper and ink can become expensive and anywhere the RRA can cut cost would be followed.

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

Respectfully submitted by:

Executive Assistant

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