

**MINUTES FROM THE REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING OF THE  
READING REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY OF THE CITY OF  
READING HELD ON 20<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER 2017**

The Redevelopment Authority of the City of Reading held the regular Monthly Meeting at 815 Washington Street, Room 2-53 in the City of Reading, County of Berks, and Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, on 20<sup>th</sup> day of September, 2017.

The meeting was called to order at 3:04 p.m. by Mr. Luckey, Vice-Chairman and on roll call, the following were present:

Mr. Chris Heinly,	Chairman
Mr. James Radwanski,	Member
Mr. Melvyn Jacobson,	Member

Also present were:

Mr. Adam Mukerji, Executive Director  
Mr. Dennis Witwer, Executive Assistant  
Mr. Keith Money, Barley, Snyder  
Mr. Dana Damato, Manager of City Codes department  
Mr. Ernest Schlegel, Former Water Authority Chairman

Absent:

Mr. Juan Zabala,	Member
Mr. Dan Luckey,	Vice-Chairman

Upon roll call, Mr. Witwer declared a quorum.

The consent agenda was approved unanimously.

**Public Comment**

Mr. Mukerji introduced Mr. Dana Damato, manager of the City codes department.

Mr. Damato asked the board for help with the city's blight problem. He stated that blighted properties are one of the biggest problems he faces in his role as manager of codes.

Mr. Damato stated that he had already spoke to Mr. Mukerji about the problem and understands that eminent domain is a very costly and time consuming process. He asked the board how he could help the authority in helping him combat the problem.

He passed out a one page report from the City of Lancaster and talked about the way they are combatting blight in their city.

Mr. Mukerji talked about the many differences between the City of Lancaster Redevelopment Authority and the RRA. A major point is that the RRA gets no financial assistance from the City of Reading.

Mr. Mooney discussed the pilot program that the RRA attempted with C.O.R.E.; where real estate agents would market properties that the RRA acquired from B.P.R.C. list. That program did not work, because real estate agents only wanted to market specific properties and not the ones the RRA had acquired.

Mr. Witwer stated that the properties the RRA did acquire ended up sitting for years, becoming dumping grounds and in turn the city would cite and fine the RRA for quality of life issues.

The board discussed land banking and the pro and cons of creating a repository for properties. A housing court with one judge was also discussed, along with the cost of rehab for blighted homes that are dilapidated. To bring a blighted property up to code would cost upwards of \$50,000 which in most cases are not recovered from the sales price of the property.

### Greening Penn Street

At this time Mr. Ernest Schlegel spoke to the board about the EPA funded study of Penn Street. He told the board that he was impressed by the report, which had many good suggestions.

Mr. Schlegel asked the board if the RRA would be in charge of implementing the project in the future. Mr. Mukerji answered yes.

Mr. Schlegel shared his concerns that this study could end up being shelved, like so many other studies done in the past. He asked how much support the RRA is getting from the administration.

Mr. Mukerji stated that he is getting no support from this administration. He stated that he and the consultant, Mr. Collins had a

meeting with the Mayor and members of the administration. The Mayor stated that this was not a priority. Mr. Mukerji stated that the meeting lasted no longer than 10 minutes

Mr. Mukerji stated that he is looking elsewhere for funding, that he had already contacted B.C.C.F. and several other foundations for match funding. There are also grants that he will be applying for, however many deadlines for these grants for 2018 were fast approaching.

Mr. Heinly stated that funding this project to improve Reading's downtown must be top priority and more pressure should be put on the administration and City Council to fund the project.

Mr. Mukerji stated that the total project would be in three phases and would take several years to complete. The Mayor stated in the meeting with Mr. Collins that since the project would not be completed while he was in office, he was not interested.

The board was very disappointed.

#### Buttonwood Gateway Housing Development

Mr. Mukerji updated the board on the progress he was making with the housing development in the Buttonwood Gateway neighborhood. He stated that this is a project that the Mayor wants done and involves several agencies besides the RRA; namely Berks County Redevelopment Authority, O.C.R. and Habitat for Humanity.

Mr. Mukerji stated that he is working with Liberty Environmental to apply for an I.S.R.P grant. A "Notice of intent to remediate" will be sent shortly to DEP. He explained that the land was cleaned for industrial use only and in order for residential development to take place in the area, the land must be cleaned to D.E.P.'s residential standards, which is where the I.S.R.P. grant will come into play.

Mr. Heinly stated that this is an important project and stated that Mr. Mukerji has the full support of the board to move forward with finding funds to bring the project to completion.

At this time the board entered into an executive session to discuss future sale of RRA properties.

At 4:12 p.m. the board entered into regular session.

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

**The next monthly meeting of the Reading Redevelopment Authority will be held on 18<sup>th</sup> October 2017.**

**Respectfully submitted by:**

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**Executive Assistant**