

Reading LRA
Wednesday, January 14, 2009
Council Chambers

Committee Members Attending: V. Spencer, S. Marmarou,
P. Coles, E. Rafaelli, J. Knockstead,

Staff attending: L. Kelleher, Point of Contact; Dr. Swiger, Mr. Flynn,
Mr. Steinberg, Casey Deiler, Mr. Tilley

Others Attending: None

Vaughn D. Spencer, Chair, called the Reading Local Redevelopment Authority (LRA) to order at 5 p.m. He suggested that those present introduce themselves.

Kick Off w/ Swiger Consulting Group

The schedule, noting the April deadline, and deliverables were reviewed. Ms. Kelleher stated that during her meeting with Congressman Gerlach's staff, Mr. Pugliese stated that they would provide assistance if an extension was needed. Mr. Swiger noted the groups' goal to complete the project by April 30th; however, in light of the amount of additional information needed from the Navy and the need for a tour of the facility, completing the project by April may be challenging. He noted that Ms. Kelleher has supplied the information and contacts she has access to.

Ms. Kelleher noted the question of the traffic study included in the list provided by Mr. Swiger. She inquired if this study could be completed by the City's Traffic Engineering Office. Mr. Swiger stated that this study should be completed by PennDOT and that he would follow up with the appropriate office.

Mr. Swiger stressed the need to schedule the first public meeting with the affected neighborhood as quickly as possible. After some discussion those present selected Wednesday, January 28th at 7 p.m. Those present discussed the facilities in the area available for this type of meeting. Ms. Kelleher was asked to see if the meeting could be held at 7th Day Adventist Church on Kenhorst Blvd. Ms. Kelleher stated that she planned to get an article about the meeting in the

Reading Eagle as quickly as possible. Meeting notices will be mailed to the area surrounding the Navy Marine Facility by the end of next week and display ads about the meeting will be placed in the newspaper during the days preceding the meeting.

Mr. Flynn described his meetings today with the local realtors' organization, the Reading Hospital, energy provider and school district. Additional meetings will be scheduled.

During a discussion on the parcel Mr. Swiger inquired if the parcel could be subdivided. Mr. Steinberg stated that the parcel will be transferred as a single lot, which can be subdivided after following the proper procedures. He noted the need to consider the overall impact on the surrounding community before subdividing the parcel.

Ms. Kelleher asked Mr. Steinberg to explain the inclusion of BRAC properties in the stimulus plan. Mr. Steinberg explained that at the beginning of the BRAC program the federal government required the receiving community to pay for the BRAC parcel except parcels to be conveyed for public or private use without compensation. The Clinton administration, working through the Congress, created no cost economic development conveyances for BRAC property, so that job creation and improving the tax base were recognized objectives and where those were the objectives, the property could be conveyed to the LRA at no cost. In the 1st year of the 2nd Bush Administration, the program was again changed to required compensation if the parcel is not used for public benefit (homeless, hospital, school building, government building, etc.).

Mr. Steinberg stated that the ADC (Association of Defense Communities) is advocating that the next administration's stimulus plan include no cost transfers for BRAC properties for either public benefit or economic development. He explained that providing no compensation transfers for only properties used for public conveyance drove communities to make less than desirable decisions as they could not afford to pay for the property. He suggested that Ms. Kelleher contact Senator Casey, Senator Specter and Congressman Gerlach quickly to encourage them to support legislation that would restore no cost economic development conveyances. Ms. Kelleher stated that she had a brief discussion about this issue with Mr. Pugliese from Congressman Gerlach's office. She promised to follow up with all parties as quickly as possible. Mr. Steinberg noted the importance of the LRA's membership in ADC.

Mr. Steinberg stated that the consultant group will not be making decisions on the use of the property for the LRA. The consultant group will merely provide suggestions and recommendations that the LRA can consider along with input the LRA gathers from the residents of this area and others.

As no further business was brought forward, the Reading LRA meeting was adjourned. Another meeting will be scheduled after the January 28th public meeting.

Respectfully submitted by Linda A. Kelleher CMC, City Clerk