

Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA)
Meeting Minutes May 14, 2024
(APPROVED)

5/14/2024 - Minutes

1. CALL TO ORDER & ROLL CALL

Members Present: Chair Robin Gibson, Keith Thompson, Carol Gillespie, Daniel Williams, Keith Thompson

Members Absent: Mayor Jack Hilligoss,

Staff Members Present: James Slaton, Executive Director; Jennifer Nanek, City Clerk; Albert C Galloway, Jr., City Attorney

Chair Robin Gibson called the meeting to order at approximately 2:00 p.m.

2. COMMENTS AND PETITIONS

Catherine Price, resident, asked the CRA to return Lake Alta Park to the City of Lake Wales.

3. Election Of Chair And Vice-Chair

Commissioner Thompson nominated Robin Gibson to serve as chair again. Commissioner Williams seconded the nomination. Robin Gibson accepted the nomination.

by voice vote:

Commissioner Thompson "YES"

Commissioner Williams "YES"

Commissioner Gillespie "YES"

Chair Gibson "YES"

Motion approved 4-0.

Commissioner Williams nominated Keith Thompson to serve as vice-chair. Commissioner Gillespie seconded the nomination. Commissioner Thompson accepted the nomination.

by voice vote"

Commissioner Williams "YES"

Commissioner Gillespie "YES"

Commissioner Thompson "YES"

Chair Gibson "YES"

Motion approved 4-0.

4. Minutes - March 12, 2024

Commissioner Thompson made a motion to approve the two sets of minutes from March 12, 2024. Commissioner Williams seconded the motion.

by voice vote:

ALL "YES"

Motion approved 4-0.

5. Microtransit Service Agreement With Lakeland Area Mass Transit District

[Begin Agenda Memo]

SYNOPSIS: Staff is requesting CRA Board approval of the Microtransit Service Agreement for a 1-year pilot program.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the CRA Board take the following actions:

1. Approve the Microtransit Service Agreement.
2. Authorize the expenditure of \$29,510.
3. Authorize the Executive Director to execute the necessary documents on behalf of the CRA.

BACKGROUND

At the February 13, 2024 Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) Board Meeting, Citrus Connection gave a presentation regarding their Squeeze Service. The Lake Wales Circulator was added in October 2023, and this new service would help to address connectivity Downtown during construction. The CRA Board gave consensus to pursue a 1-year pilot program for the new service.

This service will be a 4-way partnership with Main Street, Citrus Connection, Lake Wales CRA, and the City of Lake Wales. The operating agreement is \$59,020 for the first year to run the service. Main Street will cover half of the cost and the CRA will cover the other half. The City's Multi Modal Impact Fee purchased two (2) Squeeze golf carts in March. After the first year, we will review the numbers to decide whether to continue or expand the service.

LAKE WALES CONNECTED PLAN ACTION STEPS

Action #	Description
68	Explore potential for local shuttle

OTHER OPTIONS

Do not approve Microtransit Service Agreement with Lakeland Area Mass Transit District.

FISCAL IMPACT

The fiscal impact is \$29,510 (half of the total cost of \$59,020.)

[End Agenda Memo]

James Slaton, Executive Director, reviewed this item. He said that there was a question from a Commissioner asking if we negotiated the price. Mr. Slaton said they didn't this is their costs.

Tom Phillips, Executive Director of Lakeland Area Mass Transit, reviewed transit in Polk County and Lake Wales. He reviewed the new circulator route and the proposed Squeeze service for downtown. He commended Lake Wales for being the most progressive transit community in Polk County.

Mr. Phillips said the City did not go out to bid for this service but they don't go out to bid for any transit services. The City of Lake Wales is a partner to provide this service with the Citrus Connection. As another government agency they are held to the same procurement standards as others as going out to bid.

Commissioner Thompson said this is comparable to residential utilities. There is no one else to bid with. Mr. Phillips confirmed this. There are for-profit businesses that can do this but would cost more. The Lakeland Area Mass Transit does not make money on this. Mr. Phillips said they can also help with special events with 30 days notice.

Commissioner Thompson asked if the schedule can change as needed. Mr. Phillips confirmed that as conditions change they can shift the times and routes as needed.

Commissioner Thompson said that this is a good partnership. He commended City staff for efforts on this.

Commissioner Gillespie asked if there was legal review of the contract. Albert Galloway, Jr., City Attorney, said he did and had no concerns. Commissioner Gillespie referenced section 6 on page two. She asked what provisions of other agreements are incorporated into this and what obligations that the City might have? Mr. Galloway said that the City has available to it whatever benefits there are under those agreements that are available to it should the City seek to exercise them. Mr. Phillips gave examples of benefits such as being part of a fuel consortium so they pay less for fuel and the City benefits from that. The City benefits from insurance from the Florida League of Cities. All the contracts that they are part of the City benefits. The biggest ones are the sovereign immunity, insurance and fuel costs. Commissioner Gillespie confirms that Lake Wales gets all the benefits that the district gets. Mr. Phillips confirmed this. Commissioner Gillespie asked to confirm that we have none of the obligations? Mr. Phillips confirmed this. Commissioner Gillespie asked what obligations those would be? Mr. Phillips said their procurement or purchasing standards for example. Commissioner Gillespie asked Mr. Galloway if he had seen these agreements. Mr. Galloway said no. Commissioner Gillespie expressed concern about being obligated to something that we are not aware of. Mr. Galloway said he doesn't read it that way. We get the benefits but not the burdens.

Commissioner Thompson made a motion to approve the agreement. Commissioner Williams seconded the motion.

Commissioner Gillespie asked if the \$29,000 in this includes the cost of the golf carts. Mr. Slaton said no, they purchased the golf carts already which was approved in February.

by voice vote:

Commissioner Thompson "YES"
Commissioner Williams "YES"
Commissioner Gillespie "YES"
Chair Gibson "YES"

Motion approved 4-0.

6. Helping Hands Program

[Begin Agenda Memo]

SYNOPSIS: The purpose of this request is to consider the establishment of the Helping Hands Program.

RECOMMENDATION Staff recommends that the Board approve the launch of the Helping Hands Program.

BACKGROUND According to Census Tract 143.01, 57% of homes in the Northwest Neighborhood are rented. Many homes in this targeted area are in critical need of repairs, but landlords are unable to afford

updates due to increasing costs. The program is designed to assist landlords with improving rental properties within the Northwest Neighborhood. Once a landlord is approved for the program, rent cannot be increased for three (3) years.

The program offers an opportunity for landlords to rehabilitate their rental homes or duplexes in the Northwest Neighborhood. Items available include a range of construction materials, including smoke detectors, stove ranges, A/C units, ceiling fans, refrigerators, exterior paint, interior doors, floor tiles, and more - all generously donated by Lt. Ed Palmer of the Lake Wales Police Department through a partnership with the Polk County Sheriff's Department. It is essential to note that the landlord is responsible for installing the materials themselves. We hope that this program will provide a helping hand to landlords looking to improve their properties and the community as a whole while also addressing the rising costs of rent.

Helping Hands aims to assist by operating primarily on donated items, but in some cases, additional support is required. In such cases, we offer up to \$3,000 in financial assistance to help with front yard clean-up and necessary yard improvements. Well-maintained yard not only adds value to a home but also contributes to the overall well-being of individuals and families.

FISCAL IMPACT \$30,000

OTHER OPTIONS Not accept CRA staff recommendations.

[End Agenda Memo]

Cheryl Baksh, CRA Coordinator, reviewed this item. Darrell Starling, CRA Consultant, reviewed the proposed program.

Chair Gibson asked about the warranties on the items or new appliances. They don't apply? Mr. Starling said they are "as is". Chair Gibson asked if the warranties expired. Mr. Starling said he imagines so. Commissioner Thompson explained, as he used to work in retail, these things get donated if they become a non-stock item all the store can do is mark it way down or donate it. Warranties are null and void at that point. Manufacturers won't honor warranties.

James Slaton, Executive Director, asked what we are asking for in return for this help. Ms. Baksh said there are a lot of stipulations. They can't be an AirBnB's and they can't raise the rent for three years.

Commissioner Thompson asked how many rental properties in the northwest area might avail themselves of this. Mr. Starling said he can think of 8-10 that may be interested. Many of the landlords live in Lake Wales and are low income landlords. This is a way to improve living situations.

Chair Gibson asked how do we distinguish between slum lords and landlord trying to help tenants. Mr. Starling said they have a vetting process. They can't have code cases or a yard filled with junk and debris. They check on the income levels. Many renters will love this as the landlord can't afford improvements. The renter wants to stay because the landlord hasn't raised the rent.

Chair Gibson said we don't want to show favoritism. We can delegate discretion to the administrators handling the program. He has confidence in the staff to determine who to help.

Commissioner Gillespie said there are lots of protections built in to this program that avoid abuse. If this is enforced the Landlords will have to help the tenants.

Mr. Slaton said those that are living in a building with less than responsive landlords probably really need this help. There is money budgeted to help with work on the outside of buildings.

Commissioner Gillespie asked about the \$30,000 budgeted at about \$3000 per house. Mr. Slaton said that is an estimate. Several houses could get assistance that is just a limit.

Commissioner Thompson asked about installation of appliances. Are we providing this? Or are there requirements? They need to work. Mr. Slaton agreed that we are not providing installation. There will be inspections to see if they are installed.

Commissioner Thompson asked about enforcement. If a landlord sells the stuff what is the response? Mr. Starling explained that they have 90 days to use the materials. They require before and after photos. Mr. Slaton said we need some punitive measures. Mr. Starling said they have a reverter situation if materials are sold and landlords can be held liable.

Commissioner Williams said they should trust staff on who to help and make good decisions. Mr. Starling said there is a 6 month inspection in the program.

Commissioner Thompson made a motion to approve the program. Commissioner Williams seconded the motion.

by voice vote:

Commissioner Thompson "YES"

Commissioner Williams "YES"

Commissioner Gillespie "YES"

Chair Gibson "YES"

Motion approved 4-0.

7. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

James Slaton, Executive Director, said that he distributed copies of the 2022 Resident survey for the discussion on the budget at tomorrow's work session. This was discussed.

Mr. Slaton said that Monday there will be an open house at the Family Recreation Center for the Economic Development and Strategic plan.

Mr. Slaton said we got good publicity about the Squeeze service on Fox news. The ribbon cutting is Friday at 9:30 at the Post Office.

Commissioner Gillespie said she is glad to have joined and she is still learning but so far, the board is doing a great job.

Commissioner Williams commended the creativity of the CRA and hopes we continue to strive for excellence. Chair Gibson agreed. Commissioner Thompson said that is the benefit of CRAs. They can think outside the box. This was discussed.

Chair Robin Gibson discussed the failed Lake Alta development proposal. We need creativity and a solution for Lake Alta. He highlighted the importance of finding a solution that considers both the economic and social aspects. The CRA's ownership of part of the land creates an opportunity to use increased property value to fund improvements on the neglected area. He emphasized the need for resident involvement and a compromise on density to achieve a solution that benefits the entire community. He proposed approaching the Planning and Zoning Board to develop solutions.

Commissioner Williams expressed initial enthusiasm for the project, believing it aligned with Lake Wales Envisioned. However, after speaking with residents concerned about density, traffic, and parking (particularly near schools), he feels the proposal should be revisited. He found residents receptive to park

development and suggests re-engaging the developer for further collaboration.

Chair Robin Gibson said He deliberately went there in the afternoons about 2:00 or 3:00 The traffic lines for Spook Hill and Bok North were not on their streets.

Commissioner Williams asked if the residents were able to get in? Chair Gibson said he had no trouble at all. He did not see an issue.

Commissioner Thompson asked if the developer was willing to play ball with us? Mr. Slaton said that after the rejection of Lake Alta many developers feel that Lake Wales is too risky for a large investment.

Chair Gibson said that we did not handle ourselves well. If we want the CRA could do this but he recommends against it. This should be left to the free market. We could design a solution and see if the developer would be willing to do it or sell the property to another. He liked the developer. He was distressed by the attacks that he endured. This is a test case and he would like to help make it work.

Commissioner Williams said that later he would be interested to talk further about what the CRA could do. He is not afraid of that challenge.

Commissioner Thompson said Lake Alta has never been a park.

8. ADJOURN

The meeting was adjourned at 3:28 p.m.

Chair/Vice-Chair

ATTEST:

City Clerk/Deputy City Clerk