

**Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA)
Lake Wales Housing Authority
Meeting Minutes June 15, 2021
(Approved)**

6/15/2021 - Minutes

1. CALL TO ORDER & ROLL CALL

Chair Robin Gibson called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone. He said that this meeting is important and its good for the two boards to get together. Its up to us to rebuild Grove Manor which is important to the whole community.

CRA members present: Robin Gibson - Chair, Terrye Howell, Eugene Fultz - Mayor, Kris Fitzgerald

CRA Members absent: Daniel Williams

CRA Staff Present: James Slaton, Executive Director, Jennifer Nanek, City Clerk

Housing Authority members present: Helen Walters, Narvell Peterson, Wanda Lawson

Housing Authority members Absent: Lisa Long Montgomery

Housing Authority Staff Present: Albert Kirkland, Jr, Executive Director

2. COMMENTS AND PETITIONS

3. Discussion - Housing Authority Grant Request

James Slaton, Executive Director, reviewed the Lake Wales Connected Plan and the goal to connect the two areas of downtown. The Housing Authority has requested funds, \$1million, to help with redesign of Grove Manor. The CRA pledged matching funds for financing through a program they did not receive. Mr. Slaton said that design is key. The design must fit with the Lake Wales Connected Plan. They hope to come up with something that both boards can be happy with. Staff of the CRA and Housing Authority are meeting to come up with a plan for review before agreeing to \$1million.

Chair Robin Gibson said he hopes both boards have the same goal of uniting the two communities. The orange grove there in years past served as a buffer between the two communities. He would like to hear if their goal is the same.

Narvell Petersen said that Grove Manor is the heart of the community. He remembers the orange grove there. He would like this to be a nice place. We need good soil for our garden for our children to grow. \$1million is nothing to better our community.

Helen Walters said we need change and unity in the City. Grove Manor can contribute to the unity and beautification of our community. She said she loves this town and her heart is here.

Wanda Lawson said Grove Manor used to be a diverse apartment complex. We need to get back to that and unify the community. Grove Manor is a good starting point.

Chair Robin Gibson agreed that we need a mixed use diverse community in Grove Manor. He said that would be a big plus.

Chair Gibson invited Michelle Threatt, who will soon be appointed to the Housing Authority, to offer her

thoughts. Ms. Threatt said she grew up in the Sunrise complex. Ms. Threatt said connecting can start before this project gets underway. There are things we can do know. Grove Manor needs an upgrade. She said she would like more trees in the area. She is concerned about those that might be pushed out. We need to help those people. The projects should be a stepping stone to the next level.

Chair Gibson said this project is a great opportunity. There is a whole plan to put more trees and sidewalks in the Northwest area. Mr. Slaton shared the next steps to implement this plan. Phase 1 begins next fiscal year.

Durinda Wells, who is applying to be on the board, recommended programs to help families move out of Grove Manor.

Mayor Fultz said the complex needs income diversity as well as racial diversity. It will look like a housing development where all the units look the same. He encouraged everyone to work together on this. We expect a certain quality of units built by the Housing Authority just like other homes. This is a worthwhile investment. The City has not had a voice before in how these are built. We want an upgrade with Grove Manor.

Chair Gibson said we have an opportunity to do something better. Mixed use is a way to combat urban sprawl.

Commissioner Fitzgerald said this is a good opportunity and agreed with the need for programs like job training, cooking, after school programs, to help families improve and maybe move out.

Commissioner Howell said she is a liaison to the Housing Authority and there is not a lot of discussion about how folks feel about Grove Manor. This project needs to be connected to other elements of the Lake Wales Connected Plan throughout the City. She agreed with the need for those programs mentioned in Lake Wales and for mixed income residents. She said we still more housing in Lake Wales. Sunrise is better than what it was.

Chair Robin Gibson said we are on the same ground. This is an opportunity to help unify our community.

Al Kirkland, Executive Director, said that he has met with staff and they are working out issues as far as the design. A current challenge will be transitioning some of the families. They are addressing this. He explained that HUD is getting away from Public Housing. We need new ways to address housing needs all over. As they apply for funding there are some things that should be in place. He introduced Erin Schlitts & Michael Henzy representatives of Smith & Henzy Advisory Group the company that will help with the reconstruction of Grove Manor.

Erin Schlitts reviewed how the families will be transitioned. They will issue tenant protection vouchers and the project will be in three phases to limit those that will be displaced.

Michael Henzy reviewed the tax credits that we will be applying for in the 4th quarter this year. He reviewed some of Florida Housing's requirements for construction which are stringent. They are working with Dover-Kohl on the site plan and building design.

Erin Schlitts agreed that the programs are essential and reviewed what they hope to have such as computer training and financial literacy. commissioner Fitzgerald asked about the families finding other housing. Ms. Schlitts explained how the vouchers worked and that they will help the families find other housing. Mayor Fultz said finding available units is hard right now as little is available. Mr. Kirkland said they faced this challenge with Sunrise and were successful.

Chair Robin Gibson said it seems that our goals for this project are the same. The next thing is how do we get there. He was disappointed that the last attempt failed and that it was a lottery. We need to be careful with our money. He asked for discussion on how to submit the best application to get the tax credits. Mr. Kirkland reviewed the different programs and asked Erin to explain about what we are applying for and why we need the match.

Erin Schlitts reviewed what we have to do to get this financing. We can increase chances of winning by meeting certain goals. Chair Gibson asked how many were submitted last time. Mr. Kirkland said 10 were submitted. Chair Gibson and Mayor Fultz commented that there is a greater need here. Ms. Schlitts explained how to be more competitive including a local match.

Chair Robin Gibson asked about the return of investment. When will the City make the money back? Mr. Slaton said 30 years. Chair Gibson said this is through increments. Mr. Slaton said yes.

Mayor Fultz asked what the units look like? Mr. Slaton said we are meeting with Dover Kohl on design.

Chair Robin Gibson said its important that this help our tax base. Mr. Kirkland said if the design doesn't meet with Dover-Kohl's approval they won't request the funding. Mr. Slaton said we are working on this and will have a recommendation for the board. Chair Robin Gibson said we need to be cautious how we spend other people's money.

Commissioner Howell asked what happens if the CRA turns down the request. Mr. Kirkland said they would explore other alternatives.

One member said if the CRA doesn't put the money in then the development won't fit the design. Chair Robin Gibson said that's important leverage. The design is important and it needs to comply with Dover-Kohl. The timing of this would be perfect.

Mayor Fultz said the plan is good. We want to say yes if everything is done right.

Chair Robin Gibson said this was a helpful meeting. We want to do this thing right.

James Slaton asked what mixed use is. This is just mixed income. Erin Schlitts confirmed this. Chair Gibson asked if they can be multi-story. Ms. Schlitts said yes. Mr. Slaton said this housing complex would be managed by another group. Mr. Mike Henzy confirmed this.

Mr. Slaton said we can apply the next two years and increase chances. Ms. Schlitts said there are two different tracks that they are trying to get funding from. Chair Gibson asked when they will need the \$1million. Ms. Schlitts said in two years.

Mr. Kirkland said he is excited about this. He said this can work.

4. ADJOURN

The meeting was adjourned at 4:25 p.m.

Chair/Vice-Chair

ATTEST:

