

**AGENDA MINUTES
CITY COMMISSION MEETING
CITY HALL, 501 W MEADOW STREET
MONDAY, APRIL 24, 2023 5:01 PM**

1. CALL TO ORDER

The Carver Heights/Montclair Area CRA held a regular meeting on Monday, April 24, 2023, at Leesburg City Hall. Chairperson Burry called the meeting to order at 5:01 p.m. with the following members present:

Commissioner Allyson Berry
Commissioner Jay Connell
Commissioner Mike Pederson
Commissioner Alan Reisman
Commissioner Erika Jasper
Chairperson Jimmy Burry

Also present were City Manager (CM) Al Minner, City Clerk (CC) J. Andi Purvis, City Attorney (CA) Grant Watson, the news media, and others.

INVOCATION

Chairperson Burry gave the invocation followed by the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAG OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

2. APPROVE MINUTES:

A. Regular meeting held March 27, 2023

Chairperson Burry asked for a motion to approve the minutes.

Commissioner Reisman made a motion to approve the minutes and Commissioner Jasper seconded the motion.

Commissioner Berry stated she would like to make an amendment to the meeting minutes. On page two, paragraph three it reads Commissioner Berry stated she remains committed to relocating the project due to the simple fact that she lives in that neighborhood. She polled the area and she had signatures to prove that on McCormack Street and Chester, as well as the street adjacent to where the crossstreet is from McCormick. They are all in agreement that they definitely want a food pantry. That needs to be corrected because they are not in agreement with the food pantry.

Commissioner Pederson made a motion to amend the meeting minutes of March 27, 2023 and Commissioner Reisman seconded the motion.

The roll call vote on the amendment was:

Commissioner Jasper	Yes
Commissioner Connell	Yes
Commissioner Reisman	Yes
Commissioner Pederson	Yes
Commissioner Berry	Yes
Chairperson Burry	Yes

Six yeas, no nays, the Commission approved the amendment to the meeting minutes.

The roll call vote was:

Commissioner Connell	Yes
Commissioner Reisman	Yes
Commissioner Pederson	Yes
Commissioner Berry	Yes
Commissioner Jasper	Yes
Chairperson Burry	Yes

Six yeas, no nays, the Commission approved the March 27, 2023 meeting minutes as amended.

3. INFORMATIONAL ITEM:

A. Mr. Kevin Conner's Resignation

Chairperson Burry explained that Mr. Kevin Connor had resigned from the board. He asked the city clerk about advertising for that position. **CC Purvis** said they will get the advertisement out tomorrow.

Chairperson Burry affirmed that there will be advertisements and hopefully some folks will be interested in that position. After that they will decide on a candidate as a board. That will be forthcoming. **CM Minner** mentioned it that is mostlikely a decision that is made by the city commission. However, he would double check with the city attorney.

4. CONSIDER CITY OWNED INVENTORY / PROPERTY LISTING BY COMMISSION DISTRICT

A. Land Inventory

Mayor Burry stated they have consideration of city-owned inventory/property listings by commission district.

CM Minner stated they left the last CRA meeting with a request from Commissioner Berry in reference to donations of the city's land inventory to different organizations before considering additional requests for land donations. He submitted that list to them on Friday. He apologized for the delay since they are typically sent out on Wednesday. The city staff has been working on the budget, legislative issues, and

electric power costs. There were a few items that caught their attention lately. He provided an excel chart and two maps. On the top of the excel chart it shows all the lots donated. There are about eighteen transactions but about twenty one lots in different configurations that have transpired since 2013. They listed the addresses, the ALT keys, which district each transaction occurred, who was the grantor and who was the grantee. Most of the grants were the city. In one case, it was Habitat for Humanity that gave some property to the city. On map item number four it lists the big city project between the city, CDC, and (CAC) Child Advocate Center, when we were doing the Aquatic Center. That was where we traded and/or swapped properties so the Aquatic Center could have the northeast corner of Pine and Canal Streets. The sketch of the district boundaries were handdrawn by yours truly, and he thought it was pretty close to the commission boundaries. Most of the transactions were in district one, there was a couple in districts two, three, and four. Number seventeen is right in the middle of districts two and three. He was not exactly sure where that one was. The second list are lots still listed in city inventory. As a disclaimer, these are the lots that the city could donate. They do not include all the properties that the city has. For example, it is a crazy one, but it comes to mind because Dan asked me about it. We own a lot in Tavares on SR-19. We received a petition a while back and the planning and zoning director asked if the city could sell that parcel to an interested buyer. It turns out that the city owns a lot in Tavares because that is where our beacon or our signal is for the ILS system. That is located in Tavares, so no, we cannot sell it. So, if the city has use of the property, it was not put on that list. City Hall, the police station, and the library are not on that list, nor are properties that are deemed for future use. The list provided was for are properties that are typically a normal empty lot or something the city acquired through code enforcement or the city just had. Between list "A" the donated lots and list "B" lots that are still in inventory, those would be the only transactions since 2013 that he is aware of. They may not have every single one, but he and the budget director put that list together. The Housing Director helped too and between the three of them they believe they listed everything. They also put a map together on the lots still donatable or still in inventory. The lionshare of the lots are in district one. **Commissioner Jasper** thanked them for compiling the list to let them know what was available.

Commissioner Jasper made a motion to move forward with donating some of the properties that are available in districts one, two, and three.

She continued to say when homeowners build houses, it eliminates blight and things of that nature. She was able to get information regarding the maintenance of these properties. The city is spending close to one hundred thousand dollars for the maintenance of these properties. Therefore, she would like to move forward with a motion to continue donating the properties to the Habitat for Humanity, Home and Partnership and the CDCs, CWC, etc. She passed out a list to all commission members of properties in the Carver Heights area that shows some purchase expense, the maintenance expense, and the total expense. From a taxpayer's point of view, when it comes to the maintenance and the city paying for that maintenance she would like to move forward and donate properties while eliminating any moratoriums or canceling the motion to transfer a title.

Chairperson Burry said there was a motion to continue with the donation process. He asked for a second to that motion. There was none. He stated with the lack of a second that motion fails.

Commissioner Pederson stated he heard the motion. However, he does not want to limit donations to just three groups. They have done an outstanding job, but he would like to open it up to any group who wants to come forward with a plan. Everyone should be included. He would also like more transparency regarding who buys the lots in the end because we are donating them. He spoke with the city manager about possibly selling them at fair market value. He brought into giving them away, but he would like more understanding and knowledge of what happens afterwards. His goal is to not be involved in the process, he wants to know what happens afterward. Right now, he does not understand who approves the homeowners so he would like more knowledge about what is happening. That information could be provided to the city manager and he could provide that information in his closing statements.

Commissioner Jasper mentioned being a board member of the CDC that a lot of low to moderate income along with workforce housing recipients receive these homes. **Commissioner Pederson** remarked that he saw a bulk of what is left are located in the Carver Heights area. He was sure that the same three groups will control most of those lots.

Commissioner Reisman asked the city manager if he could tell them how the city acquired the properties. **CM Minner** explained that is an openended question. We have two different things here; his chart and the chart Commissioner Jasper provided. Commissioner Jasper just provided her chart today and he was not familiar with it. On his chart the simple answer is that we received them a few different ways through foreclosure, a code enforcement action, or a direct purchase. He did not look into lots that are still in city inventory on the chart he provided, he did not look at how the city acquired those lots. He looked at where it was located and what district it was in. He would verify the chart that was just given to him. Some of the lots will have demolition costs, tax costs, and some will have mowing costs.

Commissioner Berry said these are donated lots so she understands some expense with keeping the lots cleared so they do not become eyesores to the community. There should be a cost for mowing if nothing is on the property. Moving forward they should have more information as Commissioner Pederson said. They should know who the homebuyer is and how the list is comprised. In the future they could create a committee to determine how they assess who gets the property. She would like to have a disclosure of the sales and a closing summary. **Commissioner Connell** asked who was paying the mowing expense and where is that money coming from. **Commissioner Pederson** remarked that he was going to ask if they were an allocation or a direct expense. **Commissioner Reisman** asked where Commissioner Jasper's list came from. **Commissioner Jasper** replied from what she understood, it came from some city staff members. **Commissioner Connell** wanted to clarify that the city was really paying seventy one thousand, eight hundred and eighty two dollars to mow fifteen lots a year? We need to find a new mowing company because that is crazy. **Commissioner Pederson** added he was willing to bet those costs were because the city owned the lots. He wondered if it was an allocation of public works or a direct expense. **CM Minner** answered that he needs to verify the chart. It was just dropped on him too. He had a request for such a chart today, but this chart did not come from him. There have been requests for various charts throughout the city. Yes, seventy one thousand dollars for mowing expenses is probably a number that would be overlooked because it floats in with some other various contracts. That is a number they would want to cut which feeds into the need to get rid of the lot. However, he needs to verify the numbers and what department the informatoin came from. Some may have come from the budget director, some from housing department, and public works. It did not come from him and it did not come back through him. We do not need to be upset about that and he will verify those numbers and check to see if there are any cost saving items in there. They can rest assured that he will bring this back to them very shortly.

Whether it is for a sale or donation because we will need every penny for FY 24. **Commissioner Jasper** mentioned that was the reason and rationale for saying they need to move forward with donating these properties and give them to the non-profit organizations. Maybe not just for the slated ones that she spoke of earlier, but to get them off the city's inventory. It would allow organizations to build homes. It would eliminate blight and generate more tax revenue for the city when they donate the properties. Seventy one thousand dollars is a lot of money. **Commissioner Berry** agrees with eliminating blight and getting more homeowners. However, as the commissioner of district one, she has twenty lots listed and until she fully understands what is going on she would like the hold to continue. **Commissioner Connell** agrees.

Commissioner Reisman also agrees and stated if this is costing the city this much the city should recoup some of these costs whether it is a sale or something to that effect. **CM Minner** commented that there is some shock value in that chart, if that number is right at seventy three sixty nine for mowing the empty lots. With the lot on Nebraska, alt key 27067, and using a round number that seventy four hundred dollars divided by twelve, is six hundred dollars a month, which is really one hundred dollars a year over the past fifteen years. When they break that number down it is not a crazy number. They have had a lot in the inventory since 2009 and assuming that the numbers are accumalitive, that means 2009 they have spent

seventy four hundred dollars mowing the grass. The budget director is agreeing, so they probably mow the grass once a month or once a quarter and that would be about one hundred dollars a mow and that is about the right price. That is an accumulative number; and when we break that number down over the terms of the year what comes across in the budget process is probably fifteen to twenty grand as a contractual number that goes to the abatement contractor. That number does not move the needle, so do not stress about that number. We will have expenses maintaining empty lots and seventy one thousand dollars since 2009 for twenty lots is not a crazy number. It does not mean it is a good number, but it is one that is indicative of owning vacant property. **Commissioner Jasper** remarked that she knows the young man who mows the property at 1115 CR 468. That expense is missing from her list along with another one on McCormick Street. She does not have an accurate number, but that gentleman does charge to mow. She said they could verify her numbers. **Commissioner Pederson** stated this was the first time he saw this report. He noticed that the city owned many lots since 2005 and he is ready to donate them. They need to do something with the lots. If someone wants to make a little money he would support donating them and get them off the books. He is a former banker and they had regulations on them so they could not keep them on the books more than five years. They had to move them out. It does not make sense to sit on them for all the reasons spoken. He respects Commissioner Berry's comments, but we need to get them off the books and it will help the community. The program has worked well and he thought they were taking them in and getting them out pretty quick. We have been donating lots and he assumed we were donating them as fast as they came in. He did not know the city was sitting on lots up to eighteen years. He would support a motion if the commission could come to an agreement for getting rid of the lots. Whether it be to the three groups or anyone else who has a vested interest in them. **Commissioner Jasper** said she would second that motion.

Chairperson Burry questioned what the criteria was for applicants who come in now that want to acquire a lot to be donated. What information do we currently require of them. **CM Minner** answered that the city does not have criteria to sell off an asset. There really is not a procedural procurement process to sell an asset because a procurement is purchasing taking something in, like when you buy a vehicle or a transformer that is a purchase. Then they have a bid process or an RFP process so we do not necessarily have to have a process to sell off an asset. They just have to have an open process for those who may be interested in purchasing an asset. Frankly that is why we generate assets because it is a code enforcement action so we take them over, we remedy the blight, so we knock down an old structure and it becomes a vacant lot. These things slip into the inventory and getting rid of them is hard because we have had how many discussions and this board is reasonably new so this board has not had the discussion of selling off an asset, a piece of property, for it to be challenged because we did not get a fair and reasonable offer on each of these processes. If we sought to get rid of all the assets he would recommend that they need to do some sort of advertisement to keep the process fair and square. The easier way is a donation to the charitable organization where you have a mutual benefit like the Habitat or the CDC. Those are charitable organizations where there are common missions, in that route it is reasonable to consider a donation. It is up to the commission if they go down the sale route there may be some type of process that they will want to put together that lists these lots and solicit a best bid. They did that some at the airport with respect to when hangar prices came up and that type of stuff. It sounds odd, but getting rid of an asset can sometimes be tricky. **Commissioner Berry** commented that eighteen years is a long time, but as a newer commissioner coming on board and she is familiar with the area and the addresses that are in her district and she knows they have organizations that are ready and in place to receive the lots. However, there needs to be more research so she can understand the information before moving forward. That is a fair request for a new person coming on. We have already waited eighteen years, a few more months will not be bad. **Commissioner Connell** fully agrees with Commissioner Berry. When these properties come up for either donation or sale, do they come back to commission for approval or is that something they approve at an administrative standpoint. **CM Minner** replied with these type donations they have all come back to the commission or this body. In this case, the lots will be the asset of this body, some will be the asset of the city commission which will be a general fund asset. That

information was not included on the charts. In any case if we sold off a lot or donated a lot it has to come back to this body. **Commissioner Connell** confirmed that it will come back for either a sale or for an approval to donate. He believes as far as a donation part they should at least pay the city back for what was invested in that property from maintenance or legal fees, whatever we might have had to acquire that property. That is only fair, and if we give a piece of property away they will reimburse our expenses to acquire ownership. **Commissioner Jasper** asked if he was speaking for the nonprofit organization or is that for selling. **Commissioner Connell** answered it would be for anyone. If we are giving a piece of property away, like the one on Nebraska, we have seven thousand three hundred and sixty nine dollars in maintenance on that, the city should at least recover that expense. It really would not be a donation but it would be a cheap piece of property. In essence we are giving it to them at a very low rate. However, we really need to recoup our costs on the properties that we invested property tax money on or having to pay for maintaining them. **Commissioner Berry** added that we need to have further discussion in order to come to an agreement. **Commissioner Connell** agreed. He does not think they should rush to any type of judgment tonight.

Chairperson Burry stated everyone is going off in a bunch of different directions. He asked the city manager to do some homework on this, look into what type of costs the city is talking about that Commissioner Connell brought up about the individual lots. If someone was to take a donation of a lot, what money would the city have in mowing and whatever, you know is there a possibility to recoup that. He would like to see some number so they know. It would be a good idea as Commissioner Peterson and Commissioner Berry brought up that we formulate more information about who they are giving it to, who will be living there, and having a flow chart of how it will work for them so they get to an approval. **CM Minner** said he would work on that. **Commissioner Jasper** said he made a comment about getting more information, but the organizations they have donated to in the past, they have been very reputable and very responsible in finding a designee. Their reputation speaks for itself that they can move forward. She did not think they should get into the business of that dimension for figuring out who the buyer is. Their reputation has spoken for itself over the course of the years. **Chairperson Burry** mentioned that they need to have an understanding of the process. For them as a board when they give the lots away what is the process? They may not be involved with deciding the applicant because that may go through a financial institution for a loan and that does not matter to them. However, they want to see a process, is what he understood. **Commissioner Pederson** pointed out that he does not want to be involved in the process. He just asked for a paper or file until this commission has access to the information if needed. He was not trying to meddle in the process. If they sell them it would be a different set of rules versus donating. He still supports donating them. There has to be a reason for why the city has owned some of the lots for five to eighteen years. People could find these lots and if someone was interested they could look up to see who owns it. It happens all the time and if they wanted to buy it they could make an offer. We need to get these off the books. **Commissioner Jasper** agrees. **Chairperson Burry** inquired if everyone can agree that they will come back at next meeting with some information. **CM Minner** stated that he will do some homework before the next meeting, they are getting into budget time, and he does not want to delay anything. He understands the urgency, but he does not want to commit to the next meeting due to the time of the year. **Commissioner Jasper** asked about the timeframe. **CM Minner** said he hoped for about a month. **CC Purvis** reminded them of the Art Board Workshop before the next city commission meeting. **CM Minner** added that they are looking at the second meeting in May.

John Christian, with the Christian Worship Center, Executive Director, Chairman of the Community Development Corporation for Leesburg, said he heard the comments and those numbers as they are over a long period of time. He wanted them consider something. Lake County has a similar program for donation. They are not involved in any selection, they just set the parameters of the person who buys the house; they have to be in the low to moderate income category. That keeps them out of the process of deciding personally who gets the house. They set the parameters, they put that in the title for the home.

So, whoever, and as his church has received a couple lots from the county they go through the County Housing Department. They verify that person meets the income guidelines. They get a loan from the bank and they buy the house. That is the end of it. The CDC has been a recipient of many houses from the city. Those houses were in very bad shape and most times they will install a realtor who would put the house on the market and a buyer comes in just like a traditional market. They do a contract with the realtor and they buy the house. That is how the CDC has done three or four of the house it has received from the city. The mowing costs as since 2005 where the city has owned some of those lots. If they had them to decide which lots they wanted he would not pick the one that the city has been cutting for fifteen years. He would want the one they just acquired two years ago. He wanted them to think about if they go into district one, Carver Heights, they want to get a developer who will come in because they are taking the risk of building a two hundred thousand dollar house. They are taking the risk of someone buying that house. When they say pick the selection of a lot they have to make sure it is in line with city goals. Removing blight, eliminating crime and as the chief alluded to at the groundbreaking for the CDC that is how you eliminate blight, that is how it reduces crime. They would put homeowners on the vacant lots. Even the city owns one right now, 1010 Georgia Street, has about four yards of mulch that has been there for about three years. When they cut the mowing contracts they do not just go out and hire the cheapest guy, they receive bids. Those bids come in from major companies so when they cut a fifty to one hundred foot lot they are probably charging seventy five dollars every time they cut it. He watched them cut grass when it did not even need to be cut, but because they have a contract through the great City of Leesburg that is what you are paying and it is more than what they should be paying. When they wait a month or six months they are paying one hundred and fifty dollars to cut a lot that probably did not need to be cut. They have Homes and Partnerships and they have two houses under construction right now in Carver Heights. Their church has a house under construction and the CDC will be breaking ground, so there are non-profit developers in this city ready to build bona fide builds. For them to think about not building, it is a disservice to the citizens and taxpayers of Leesburg.

CM Minner commented that some dates popped out at him of where the city purchased the lots and there are some some lots on there that they may not want to donate. For example, alt key 11755000, 715 Beecher, that is two lots Beecher and Beecher Street. That is the northeast corner of Berry Park. The city bought that in 2016 for that price and that was an old dilapidated house so they knocked that down. It is now the northeast corner of the park, so that would not be something they want to sell. However, the mowing expense is something they need to look at. Alt key 1290392, 115 CR 468, he calls that the little island house next to the Resource Center. The city just purchased that last year and that is probably why there is no mowing expense number because it has not caught up. Alt key 1267358, 701 McCormick Street, that is the food pantry lot and the city purchased that, where the proposed food pantry was going to be. That is a lot the city is in the process of knocking down. They may want to marry that lot with with another one which gives that corner of the park. A lot of stuff goes into this and that is why it will take some time to weave through.

Jacob, 2119 Wasika Lane over by Picciola Road, said he wanted to comment that they are not for the complex way of going about it because of the fact. **Mayor Burry** informed him that would something to address at the city commission meeting not at the CRA meeting. That meeting will start as soon as this meeting is over. They will have public comment at that point. **Mr. Jacob** replied that because it is 5:35 he thought they were already in that meeting. **CM Minner** stated that item would be pulled from the agenda. The petitioner asked for a thirty days notice. The city will have to re-advertise that hearing. Keep in touch with his office or the planning and zoning department for when that will be rescheduled.

Kenneth Goodwin, the executive director of Homes in Partnership, located in Eustis, stated they have been building affordable housing for the last fifty years. They only provide housing to low and very low income persons. When they receive a donated lot from the City of Leesburg they do not pass any cost

over to the end buyer. Particularly if it is a Leesburg resident and that is most of the people that they build for in Leesburg. It is for people who already live here, who want to remain in Leesburg. That way they can get a house that is affordable. Typically their houses, when they are on the market, will sell for about two hundred and twenty five thousand dollars. They are appraised around two hundred and seventy five thousand dollars or above so that person who gets that house gets it for with instant equity. If they are able to sell that house to them without putting a purchase price for the land then that house is generally going to be for under two hundred thousand dollars. That will still have the same two hundred seventy five thousand dollar minimum appraisal value. He encouraged them to look strongly at the process that is being discussed. They have been talking with City of Leesburg officials for the last several years and the prior executive director did it for a few years before that. They have clients that have already been pre-qualified through our USDA program, all the loans are funded through the United States Department of Agriculture. They are low interest loans at four percent, which is about three percent lower than the current market. They are thirty to thirty eight year loans, so they are very affordable. We are talking about monthly payments that range from about one thousand one hundred dollars to around fourteen or fifteen hundred dollars a month. Individuals can get a brand new home for less than what they are paying for rent. They can also build wealth in the process. It is a process that has been working for years with the cooperation of the Department of Agriculture. It is a win-win situation, not only for the city, but for the end buyer. He encouraged them to look at it closely.

Commissioner Berry wanted to add one more thing. She is definitely in agreement for ridding blight and creating homes for individuals. Also for something to consider with the mowing cost, maybe we can get volunteers from lawn services in the area who might be willing to do it to cut the cost. That could be something else to consider. If they have time to put all their heads together and bring the community together to think it through there is a possibility of saving as much as possible on the cost for mowing.

5. ROLL CALL:

Commissioner Jasper had no further comment.

Commissioner Connell had no comment.

Commissioner Reisman had nothing further to discuss.

Commissioner Pederson had no comment.

Commissioner Berry had no further comment.

Chairperson Burry had no further comment.

6. ADJOURN:

PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES NEEDING ASSISTANCE TO PARTICIPATE IN ANY OF THESE PROCEEDINGS SHOULD CONTACT THE HUMAN RESOURCES DEPARTMENT, ADA COORDINATOR, AT 728-9740, 48 HOURS IN ADVANCE OF THE MEETING.

F.S.S. 286.0105 "If a person decides to appeal any decision made by the Commission with respect to any matter considered at this meeting, they will need a record of the proceedings, and that for such purpose they may need to ensure that a verbatim record of the proceedings is made, which record includes the testimony and evidence upon which the

appeal is to be based." The City of Leesburg does not provide this verbatim record.

Commissioner Pederson made a motion to adjourn and Commissioner Jasper seconded the motion. The meeting adjourned at 5:39 p.m.