

**AGENDA MINUTES
CITY COMMISSION MEETING
VENETIAN CENTER, 1 DOZIER COURT
MONDAY, JULY 12, 2021 5:15 PM**

1. CALL TO ORDER

The City of Leesburg Carver Heights / Montclair Area CRA held a regular meeting Monday, July 12, 2021, at the Venetian Center. Chairperson Christian called the meeting to order at 5:16 p.m. with the following members present:

Commissioner Jimmy Burry
Commissioner Jay Connell
Commissioner Kevin Connor
Commissioner Erika Jasper
Commissioner Mike Pederson
Commissioner Dan Robuck
Chairperson John Christian

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

INVOCATION

Commissioner Erika Jasper 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 February 8, 2021

Commissioner Pederson made motion to adopt the regular meeting minutes from February 8, 2021 and Commissioner Robuck seconded the motion.

Chairperson Christian requested comments from the Commission and the audience. There were none.

The roll call vote was:

Commissioner Pederson	Yes
Commissioner Burry	Yes
Commissioner Jasper	Yes

Commissioner Connor	Yes
Commissioner Robuck	Yes
Commissioner Connell	Yes
Chairperson Christian	Yes

Seven yeas, no nays, the Commission adopted the minutes.

3. RESOLUTIONS:

- A. Resolution of the Carver Heights/Montclair Area Community Redevelopment Agency of the City of Leesburg, Florida authorizing the City Manager to execute a purchase vacant land contract from the Land O' Lakes Lodge IBPOE of W #656 Trust for the purpose of removing blighted conditions within the community; and providing an effective date.**

ADOPTED RESOLUTION 93

Commissioner Robuck introduced the resolution to be read by title only. CC Purvis read the resolution by title only.

Commissioner Robuck made motion to adopt the resolution and Commissioner Burry seconded the motion.

Chairperson Christian requested comments from the Commission and the audience.

Commissioner Connor stated he is concerned with how we are going to secure that property.

Housing Director (HD) Ken Thomas remarked that staff plans to install a fence around it in order to keep out the vagrants, trash and debris. They will keep the grass cut in hopes of putting a house or commercial structure on that property.

Chairperson Christian stated for the record, because he is sure at some point it will be a point of concern and a topic of discussion, but the Elks Lodge approached the City of Leesburg asking us to purchase this property. It was not the City of Leesburg going to the Elks Club. Many of you are probably aware of the people who sit out on that property all day and night and it has become a very big concern of the community, but the Elks Lodge approached the city to purchase this property.

Commissioner Robuck commented that he figured they must have approached the city, given the price. This is the first time the City has paid this kind of price for a piece of property and it may be even undervalued. It was nice to see someone actually come in wanting to cleanup the city and not hold us hostage over it. **Commissioner Jasper** chimed in saying she is excited about the city purchasing this piece of property and hopefully we can establish a residential home there for a future family.

The roll call vote was:

Commissioner Burry	Yes
Commissioner Jasper	Yes
Commissioner Connor	Yes

Commissioner Robuck	Yes
Commissioner Connell	Yes
Commissioner Pederson	Yes
Chairperson Christian	Yes

Seven yeas, no nays, the Commission adopted the resolution.

4. ROLL CALL:

Commissioner Pederson had nothing.

Commissioner Robuck commented that we talked at our budget meeting regarding the Carver Heights CRA and about some potential future plans and he wondered if we wanted to talk about that tonight or at a different meeting. He believes Chairman Christian and Commissioner Jasper have some ideas and since we have to do it in the Sunshine, maybe this would be an opportunity to share some of those ideas and we could explore it further with community meetings, but he would like to get the ball rolling.

Commissioner Burry had nothing.

Commissioner Connell had nothing.

Commissioner Jasper stated she has a few items to explore. We were talking at the budget meeting last week, with this particular case in point, the purchase of the Elks property and how the City can combat blight to move forward. Do we have any additional plans of how we can do that within the CRA Carver Heights community? Referring to a picture of the Elks property; she stated this past Saturday there was a group of individuals on this property who have been problematic in the past, she has been receiving complaints from nearby neighbors about the noise and the riff raft on the corner, so she is excited about this opportunity. She knows there was a comment made last week that we should save the funds, but she thinks this is a prime example of how we could move forward with the CRA funds to acquire land for housing and commercial development in the future. We could also use those funds for the expansion of roadways and beautification so we can avoid this case in point. The music was loud and very obnoxious, so she is very excited about the opportunity the City has here. She listed in the order of priority how she would like to use those funds; acquisition of land, expansion of roadways, development of affordable housing, a Carver Heights commercial center small business grant assistance, and Beecher Street beautification. These are just some ideas to explore in the future and hopefully we can have more follow-up meetings where we can implement some of these ideas and hear from our other commissioners if they have any additional ideas. **Chairperson Christian** asked if there would be anything she would like to see first or second on that list.

Commissioner Jasper answered they are already listed in the order she would like to see them, but acquisition of land is the first, then commercial and residential development, and the expansion of the roadways along with the development of affordable housing. Those would be the ones she would really like to see, but it is not a one person show. **Commissioner Pederson** stated to follow up on Commissioner Robuck's comments earlier regarding our budget meeting and in that meeting he commented that we were sitting on a lot of cash and cash coming in. He has concerns over leveraging that and we had a pretty good discussion on that and the City Manager expressed concerns there as well. He is not against borrowing money, but does not want to see us borrow too much money. He thinks these are all good projects and as long as we can keep our finances and our debt to a minimum he is fine with all this. **Chairperson Christian** stated he noticed the CRA already has some lots available for housing and he is concerned that this particular lot because with the City purchasing this lot, those same

individuals, are we going to tell them you cannot park here or we are going to let them park. When we put up the fence and take it down to build a house or commercial building, he would like to see a chain-link fence so we can move it quickly into some type of development on this property as opposed to putting up a ten thousand dollar fence, which costs almost as much as we paid for the property. We need to have a plan because this is the corner of Berry Park, which turns towards Carver Middle on the other side and if we do something we need to do it right; whether it is a single-family home or a small multi-family development. It needs to be something we can all be proud of as a City working with a developer.

He is not sure if we already have someone, but would love to see us working with someone that we can have a partnership with. He is not about giving away land anymore, they can give us a little something to put back into the CRA to payoff whatever we borrowed, as opposed to giving it away. With the cost of housing and land there should be a minimal cost. He would like to see some kind of inventory on what we have and if we are going to acquire more, he would like to see some commercial. He would like to see someone come to the neighborhood and provide job opportunities and increase the tax base. He asked the Housing Director if he could bring information back to them at a future CRA meeting and if any of the other commissioners have any ideas they should send them to Ken, so he can put something together. **Housing Director (HD) Ken Thomas** pointed out on this piece of property we could finance or fund a single-family for under two hundred thousand. We can build a three to four bedroom, two bath home with one of the partners we have. Homes in Partnership and another organization have shown interest in building single-family homes in the Carver Heights community so we could go ahead and build a three bedroom, two bath home because most people would be more inclined to purchase a home in the Carver Heights community if they could see it. Lets not kid ourselves, people are not knocking on our doors to relocate to the Carver Heights area so, we would have to make it somewhat attractive for them to be there. If we built one so they could see it we would have a better chance of to selling it.

Chairperson Christian replied that if we did that and sold it, would we get our proceeds back and not the developer; how would that work. **HD Thomas** answered if we built it with our money we would get a return. **Chairperson Christian** then asked would we pay the developer at cost with a small profit. **HD Thomas** agreed. **Chairperson Christian** stated that lot is attractive because it had a house on it previously, so that would allow a cheaper house because we would not have to pay that twenty thousand dollar impact fee. **Commissioner Robuck** inquired if the developers just do this on their own and if that has been modeled in the past. **HD Thomas** answered there have been a couple models out there, but they could utilize our property to build their house. In the past, as the Chairman stated, we have given the lots away to the property end user in order to entice them to build in the Carver Heights community. The other model is that we build the house and when it sells at CO we get a return or we get paid back the money that we put out to build the home and then you would have to decide if you wanted to charge for the land or give it away to the property owner. **Commissioner Robuck** stated he is interested in hearing the different options, but he is not super wild about the City getting involved in the home building business because you can lose a lot of money that way. It is not the kind work the City should be doing.

He would also like to see us preserve our cash because we would have to put the cash up in order to purchase properties. With looking at possibly doing commercial if we could get enough continuous parcels with our cash, tear down what is out there, if it is not already vacant, and entice a commercial developer. That probably means giving the land away because you are doing it in an area that for whatever reason the private market is not doing it on its own, but it is an opportunity zone which has some tax benefits. He is really interested in the idea and if we could accumulate some parcels and do some commercial it could be really great for this area. **HD Thomas** stated he can bring back some possibilities at the next meeting. He will get together with the City Manager and discuss priorities for this area. We know where our commercial nodes are and the properties that are more positive to do economic development. **Commissioner Burry** commented that he was looking at a map on his phone and he agrees with Commissioner Robuck; he can see this area with more commercial because there is not a lot of transportation issues. It could be a food service type business or something that everybody in the area could benefit from as opposed to a home. **Commissioner Pederson** remarked that he is fine

with all the discussions, but he does agree with Commissioner Robuck that he does not think we want to get into the house building business. We should leave that to the private sector. **Commissioner Connell** commented that he agrees we should not be getting into building houses.

Commissioner Connor stated referring to this lot he does not think this lot is suitable for commercial because of its size. When you are talking about a building and a parking lot it does not allow enough room. He believes a residential home would be the best option for this property. **Commissioner Pederson** asked if this land is vacant or improved. **Chairperson Christian** answered it is vacant. He continued to say that HD Thomas is going to bring back other commercial and problems that he can identify not just with this property but with any other properties that are blighted within the CRA so we can piece together and make a bigger commercial piece of property. **Commissioner Jasper** gave kudos to Maria at the Art Center because she has an upcoming art project that is going to take place in the Montclair and Beverly Shores areas. She has meetings regarding this tomorrow and on July 15th; so if anyone is interested or has any questions see her.

Chairperson Christian complimented Commissioner Jasper on her hard work along with staff and the commission with bringing new ideas to the table. He mentioned that he noticed with the American Recovery Act funds that some cities are using those funds for affordable housing and workforce housing so, he is assuming that is an approved expense. He is wondering if some of these projects coming up can be funded using some of those funds to assist in getting rid of some of this blight. He also brought some pictures that showed Chester Street showing overgrown utility facilities as well as some properties we have that are in terrible shape. Also, on Stinson Street we have a weekly dumping ground and he believes Code Enforcement has been saying that every week someone is dumping stuff and we have to go pick it up. He does not know what our ideas are about stopping this or how we can mitigate that because we still have people dumping stuff on Stinson Street in Carver Heights. **CM Minner** stated he will look into this.

Max Parker, President of West Leesburg CDC thanked Commissioner Jasper for what she has proposed; he thinks the community will really appreciate it.

5. 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.

The meeting adjourned at 5:35 p.m.