

**AGENDA MINUTES
CITY COMMISSION MEETING
CITY HALL, 501 W MEADOW STREET
THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 2023 5:10 PM**

1. CALL TO ORDER

The City of Leesburg Greater Leesburg CRA held a special meeting on Thursday, September 14, 2023, at Leesburg City Hall. Chairperson Burry called the meeting to order at 5:24 p.m. with the following members present:

Commissioner Allyson Berry
Commissioner Jay Connell
Commissioner James Reid
Commissioner Mike Pederson
Commissioner Alan Reisman
Commissioner Bettye Stevens-Coney
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

The invocation and Pledge of Allegiance were previously given at the Carver Heights/Montclair Community Redevelopment Agency meeting held immediately prior to this meeting.

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

2. APPROVE MINUTES:

A. Regular meeting held April 10, 2023

Commissioner Reisman made a motion to approve the regular meeting minutes of April 10, 2023, and Commissioner Berry seconded the motion.

Commissioner Stevens-Coney said she had a few corrections. On page two, in the second paragraph, instead of Dabney School being the first formal school for African Americans in Leesburg, it should be Lake County Training School. On page three, under the fourth bold print of the second line under Commissioner Stevens-Coney, she apologized if there was a misunderstanding in what she said. It states she provided a list of fifty names of the guys who live on Mike and Pine Street who would have a place to meet. Again, she apologized if she did not make that clarification. The reality or the clarification is this, please, she provided a list of over fifty names including both men and women who live in the east

town community, including the five to seven guys who frequent Mike and Pine Street. Those would be her corrections. **Chairperson Burry** asked if they needed a motion to amend the minutes. **CM Minner** replied yes.

Commissioner Pederson made a motion to amend the minutes with the corrections as stated by Commissioner Stevens-Coney and Commissioner Reisman seconded the motion.

The roll call vote was:

Commissioner Berry	Yes
Commissioner Reid	Yes
Commissioner Stevens-Coney	Yes
Commissioner Connell	Yes
Commissioner Reisman	Yes
Commissioner Pederson	Yes
Chairperson Burry	Yes

Seven yeas, no nays, the Commission approved the amendments to the minutes.

Commissioner Reisman made a motion to approve the minutes as amended and Commissioner Berry seconded the motion.

The roll call vote was:

Commissioner Reid	Yes
Commissioner Stevens-Coney	Yes
Commissioner Connell	Yes
Commissioner Reisman	Yes
Commissioner Pederson	Yes
Commissioner Berry	Yes
Chairperson Burry	Yes

Seven yeas, no nays, the Commission approved the minutes as amended.

3. RESOLUTIONS:

A. Resolutions amending the Budget for Fiscal Year 2022-23 and adopting the budget for the Fiscal Year 2023-24 for the Greater Leesburg Community Redevelopment Agency.

- 1. Resolution of the Greater Leesburg Community Redevelopment Agency of Leesburg, Florida, approving the amended Fiscal Year 2022-23 budget; appropriating certain funds to specific redevelopment projects; and providing an effective date.**

ADOPTED RESOLUTION 57

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

Commissioner Resiman made a motion to adopt the resolution and Commissioner Pederson seconded the motion.

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

The roll call vote was:

Commissioner Stevens-Coney	Yes
Commissioner Connell	Yes
Commissioner Reisman	Yes
Commissioner Pederson	Yes
Commissioner Berry	Yes
Commissioner Reid	Yes
Chairperson Burry	Yes

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

2. Resolution of the Greater Leesburg Community Redevelopment Agency of Leesburg, Florida, approving the Fiscal Year 2023-24 Budget; appropriating certain funds to specific redevelopment projects; and providing an effective date.

ADOPTED RESOLUTION 58

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

Commissioner Resiman made a motion to adopt the resolution and Commissioner Pederson seconded the motion.

Chairperson Burry requested comments from the Commission and the audience.

CM Minner stated the Downtown CRA budget has about \$916,000 in revenue, which is a twenty-three percent increase from last year. The major expense is the contribution to the Leesburg CDC. That contribution is required to be half of the increment and that comes out to \$458,000. They have a one hundred thousand dollar debt payment, which is the banknote that did the Main Street project. That note was made in 2015. The biggest modification was the \$350,000 of unallocated money that they were going to put in the reserve. The modification is for the funding of the special events division, which will be under the recreation department. That division will provide for two positions that include wages and benefits totaling about \$200,000. They will have operation costs of \$250,000. Currently there are no revenues, but as they get into this new venture they will get a better feel of what events to do and where revenues may or may not come from. They will supplement the budget with revenue streams to offset the expenses. However, at this time, they do not know what that is. He anticipated there would be unforeseen revenues in the coming year, but to be conservative, they did not put any revenue there. The big modification was for \$450,000 to do special events. In order to do special events at that level, they need to use about ninety-seven thousand dollars of cash and that in turn will reduce the reserve balance by that much. By the end of the next fiscal year, with all things being equal, come September 30, 2024, they should have about \$151,000 in cash left over. He said that Commissioner Reisman has talked to him on a few different occasions about revisiting some improvements to the downtown. They talked about parking and some other stuff. He wanted to throw out that there still is an allocation that remains for \$321,000

which was for the Market Street design concept. Going into the year, if they wanted to start looking at different concepts, they could because they still have \$321,000 they could reallocate. It was designated for engineering, but if they want to move into the parking concept or lighting concepts, there is money to do that. That concluded the budget as amended for FY 24, based on their discussions. **Commissioner Stevens-Coney** stated she had concerns. She remembered some time ago, within the CRA budget for the Greater Leesburg area, specifically east town, there was not any consideration for housing. Was she to understand that we do have consideration for housing and repairs, etc? **CM Minner** responded no. They did not have an allocation for home grants in the Downtown CRA. **Commissioner Berry** asked about the CRA block. She would like clarification on the CRA block on the east side of downtown Leesburg. It starts at Newell Hill Road and goes where? **CM Minner** answered that the Downtown CRA is from Dixie/Newell Hill Road and it goes across to US-27. From US-27 down to Dixie and it wraps back around to Newell Hill Road and Canal Street splits the east and west sides. **Commissioner Berry** inquired whether the CRA block would be on the west side of Canal Street and if the hospital was on the east side? **CM Minner** agreed. **Commissioner Berry** said that is something they should probably give consideration to later. **CM Minner** added at this time the answer is no because any house in the City of Leesburg fits the criteria of the home grant program. At this time, the only place they have allocated funding for that program is in the Carver Heights CRA. There is no funding for the home grant in the Greater Leesburg CRA. **Commissioner Stevens-Coney** stated her question was how do they accommodate the needs of that area? There are blighted sections in that area, specifically thinking of Ferguson Avenue. There are other areas and pockets where these citizens are in grave need and they would meet the criteria for help. **CM Minner** responded that was above his pay grade. There have been several discussions about priorities and competing demands. The competing demands in the Downtown CRA are threefold. That includes questions about what we do on Main Street in the downtown, what events are held in the district, and what do we do for revitalization? Those are the competing demands. At this time, based on previous discussions, they still had an unallocation. This body has given the implementer for signs for churches, which is not a great expense, but they still need to tackle that. He felt comfortable that they could tackle that this fiscal year without a significant contribution line item for that. He could handle that operationally. However, the flat out answer is, that this is the time to discuss the competing demands. This body has had several discussions, at least the city commission has about shifting the demand to the events. So this would be the time to discuss where they want to do that. Other funding sources would be to grab some other general fund monies and fund it that way. Currently, there are no funds for the home grant program for the Greater Leesburg CRA. **Commissioner Berry** inquired about the east side of Canal Street and, based on Commissioner Stevens-Coney's comments, that is an area that is blighted. Could they discuss using general funds for that? **CM Minner** suggested, if they did that, they could use general fund revenues, reserve revenues, or reserve monies that are in the Downtown CRA. They still have \$150,000 in the Downtown CRA and they could allocate some of that money to the home grant program. **Commissioner Stevens-Coney** asked if they could do that? **CM Minner** responded that if they wanted to fund it, they would need to make a motion to use some of the reserve funds to fund the home program.

Commissioner Stevens-Coney made a motion that they use some of the reserve funds to fund the specific areas of need in the eastern Leesburg area.

CM Minner stated there had been a lot of discussions going on and she did not put an amount in the motion. If this commission asks to allocate some of the reserve money to the downtown, they would take the money out of their reserve account. The question is, how much they want to take out of that reserve account. If they fund that program, \$25,000 is the maximum amount per grant, so that would allow for six houses, potentially, using the reserve funds. The motion lacked an amount and the question of whether they wanted to spend that reserve money. **Commissioner Stevens-Coney** said she is in that area quite frequently and she sees the needs and she listens to the people. She is being asked about this area

and about the blighted needs. She wanted to bring that to the commission. If they were at liberty to state an amount, they could certainly do that. If twenty-five is the minimum, then they will go with that.

Chairperson Burry asked that she restate the motion exactly as she wanted it, because there was no second to the motion and they wanted to understand.

Commissioner Stevens-Coney made a motion to use at least a minimum of twenty-five thousand dollars to service some of the blighted areas on the east side of Leesburg and Commissioner Berry seconded the motion.

Commissioner Berry explained in the CRA block that she understands there are blighted areas and district one on the east side of town. She agrees with that. However, she does not necessarily want to lose the reserve. Could they consider using some general fund money and some of the reserve? **CM Minner** said yes. They would need to amend the proposed budget two ways. First, they would need to amend the Downtown CRA budget with a specific level of funding from the reserves. Then, when they get to the general fund, they would need to make an amendment to that budget to include reserve funds to go towards a specific area.

Commissioner Berry made a motion that they take fifty thousand out of the reserve balance for the Downtown CRA and Commissioner Stevens-Coney seconded the motion.

Commissioner Connell inquired if they were really thinking about taking the reserves down to one hundred thousand dollars. That account would be pretty low. With the special events, he did not think they should be appropriating \$450,000 for a brand new department. They do not even know what events to have or what they are even going to do. No one has provided anything about their operations or how they are going to conduct business. We are putting the cart before the horse on this. We should have had all that information before appropriating the money and agreeing to create a new department.

Chairperson Burry said he understands his position, but if they do not pay someone to become that person that makes those decisions that brings it to them, how will they ever get there? **Commissioner Connell** answered they should have some type of template or criteria for what events they will be doing. Then that could be amended and molded around, but they should not go into this blind by saying here is five hundred thousand dollars you guys figure it out. **Chairperson Burry** added at the last meeting that they had a template. **Commissioner Pederson** said it was a 4-1 vote and time is of the essence. They had to speed up that motion so they could hire people. If they did not do that, there would be no events in the next fiscal year. They need to get that department up and running. **Chairperson Burry** stated there was a motion on the floor to take fifty thousand dollars and direct it towards a mirrored type program that is in the Carver Heights CRA. It would operate the same way and it would allow up to \$25,000 with a five-year lien. **CM Minner** commented that they would take \$50,000 from the reserves to fund the home program in the Greater Leesburg CRA. **Commissioner Pederson** pointed out that last year they gave them \$750,000 from the ARP money. He thought it was used for homes and home improvements. **CM Minner** clarified that \$750,000 was provided to both CDC's. **Commissioner Connell** wanted to know how that money was spent. **CM Minner** responded that the West Leesburg CDC money has not been spent to date. Their plan was to purchase lots which were part of the moratorium. The Leesburg CDC spent their money on different rehabilitation programs. Some were within the Carver Heights CRA and some were not. Remember, pursuant to the decree, the Leesburg CDC was not required to spend it in one spot. The Leesburg CDC was given the opportunity to spend the downtown increment where the CDC saw fit. Some of the money was spent in the Snow Apartments, which is just outside the Downtown CRA. Some of it was spent in Carver Heights, but that is within their rights. Commissioner Pederson's argument was that maybe they did not need to take the fifty grand and put it towards the home program because they were using ARP monies in different ways to help blight. **Commissioner Pederson** appreciated that comment. He was combining that with Commissioner Connell's comments.

He did not want to take the reserve down either. That is why he pointed that out, because they just spent \$750,000. They are looking out for that neighborhood and trying to improve it. **Commissioner Berry** pointed out that there was a motion on the floor. If it does not come from the reserve, what other areas could they take it from, because there is a need for a home improvement program in that area? There are blighted areas that are not in the CRA block. That was why she made sure she outlined that area. **CM Minner** stated if her concerns were about other blighted areas outside of those two redevelopment districts, that would go back to the general fund for allocation. **Commissioner Stevens-Coney** wanted to clarify what they were saying. **Commissioner Pederson** said there was a motion on the floor for fifty thousand dollars. **Commissioner Reid** wanted to make sure this money would be reallocated from the reserves to a home ownership grant that mirrors one that they talked about last time with respect to Carver Heights. He wanted to make sure it would still be open to all houses. **CM Minner** answered almost. The home program is open to all houses. The home program grant was modified back in June and it is open to the entire city. They had to fund that program, so they funded that program during the first hearing of the Carver Heights CRA meeting in the amount of \$300,000. The amended motion on the floor is to take \$50,000 from the reserves in the Downtown CRA and to spend that specifically in the Downtown CRA. Now, Commissioner Berry is angling to get more money to cover the whole city and another discussion will be held when they talk about the general fund. **Commissioner Reid** asked if they do not fund the whole city now, is someone who lives outside these areas allowed to apply for that grant, or do they not qualify for it? Do they want to open this up to everyone? The amendment on the floor was to just open it up on the east side. **CM Minner** mentioned it would just be used for Downtown CRA. The \$50,000 would only be used in the downtown CRA block. **Commissioner Pederson** said he may be confused because he thought they approved some dollars at the city level in the general fund. It was not a lot, but it was about one hundred thousand dollars a year. **Chairperson Burry** stated this would be for someone who lives in the Downtown CRA. It would have to be owner-occupied and they could get up to twenty-five thousand dollars to fix up their home. They may also have to have a five-year lien. With this motion, they may be able to do two houses. **Commissioner Reid** said he was looking for the distinct necessity. **Chairperson Burry** stated that was the difference because Carver Heights has the funds and, because of the special events division being funded through this CRA, the funds do not exist in abundance. **CM Minner** confirmed that was a correct analysis.

The roll call vote was:

Commissioner Connell	No
Commissioner Reisman	No
Commissioner Pederson	No
Commissioner Berry	Yes
Commissioner Reid	No
Commissioner Stevens-Coney	Yes
Chairperson Burry	No

Two years, five days, the Commission denied the amendment.

Chairperson Burry stated they were back to approving the budget as presented.

Commissioner Reisman made a motion to approve 3.A.2 and Commissioner Berry seconded the motion.

Commissioner Pederson made a comment that he would vote yes to support this. However, he did not agree that the \$450,000 to fund the special events division should come out of this CRA budget entirely. Some of those funds should come from the general fund. They will deal with that next year, but down the road it should be spread out more. This is a big hit for the CRA and it benefits the entire community. **Commissioner Reid** asked if the special events were Bikefest and the Martin Luther King parade?

Commissioner Pederson responded it would cover all the free events. **Commissioner Connell** added that they really do not know because there is no criteria for what they will be doing. **Chairperson Burry** said the Partnership used to conduct those events. **Commissioner Reid** asked about the actual events. **Chairperson Burry** answered it would be the Fourth of July, the Christmas Stroll, and the Christmas Parade. **CM Minner** stated the concept laid out broad parameters for three levels of events. Commissioner Reid did not hear that discussion because it was held at the city commission level and not the CRA level. Those discussions were held at the last two city commission, regular meetings. The concept was to take over the events from the Partnership and there are three levels of events. One is community-wide events, the hitch being that these events are held in the CRA. It is shown that other communities use their incremental money, like Tavares, to fund these types of events and they are conducted in the district. The major events are defined as the Fourth of July and the holiday events. There are some considerations about what other major events they want. Do we want to continue Bikefest or do we want to do a new event? Right now, we know we want to invest in major events and that includes the Fourth of July and other holiday events. There will be other events, but those will be determined as we move forward. There will be secondary events like the boo-bash, movie night at the pavilion, the market and other events that the recreation department might do. They may have slides and bounce houses and different festivals that occur. Those would be the type of events we fund. However, there will be at least three to four major events with some secondary type events. There will be tertiary ticketed events like the fish fry, which the other not-for-profit organizations may still want to do to help fund their organization. The major events the city will do with the funding of \$450,000. The special events manager will put these events on with the assistance of the recreation director. They will focus on the Fourth of July event and Bikefest. They will focus on the holidays and other events are to be determined. **Commissioner Reid** asked if this was an effort to enhance events that already occur. **CM Minner** said yes. **Chairperson Burry** mentioned that the city was taking them over. They were being passed off. The city did not actively pursue this. The Leesburg Partnership approached the city because they could no longer do them. That is important to know. This was not something the city was taking away from that organization. This is something the city was being asked to take on. The city commission discussed this and it is very important for the city as a whole to have these kinds of events and to enhance the entertainment in the City of Leesburg. **CM Minner** commented that since the mid-90s the Leesburg Partnership has handled these events for the city. The city did not have an event expense. Those events were funded by profits made from Bikefest and MardiGras. As they moved through time, MardiGras and the Bikefest were not as profitable. Therefore, the Partnership was unable to continue with other events. The Partnership has now asked the city to take them on, but for the past thirty years that expense was with the Partnership. However, now that mechanism does not work. So, the Partnership came to the city and asked if we would take them over. This was discussed by the city commission and the super majority of that body wanted to carry on special events. **Commissioner Reid** asked, since the Partnership was no longer in charge, who would it be? **CM Minner** answered the city would be in charge of it. **Commissioner Reid** asked who would be the events planner? **CM Minner** replied that the city was currently recruiting for those positions. Structurally, the recreation director is under the city manager and within that department they will create a special events division. The city is currently recruiting two positions; the special events manager and a special events coordinator. Those positions will report to the recreation director. **Commissioner Pederson** added that the Leesburg Partnership was being dissolved. If we did not move on this, all events would go away. That is why time is of the essence. **Commissioner Reisman** said they voted at the last commission meeting to take it. **Chairperson Burry** stated the special events are the city's responsibility now and they have to be funded somehow.

The roll call vote was:

Commissioner Reisman	Yes
Commissioner Pederson	Yes
Commissioner Berry	Yes

Commissioner Reid	Yes
Commissioner Stevens-Coney	Yes
Commissioner Connell	No
Chairperson Burry	Yes

Six yeas, one nay, the Commission adopted the resolution.

4. ROLL CALL:

Commissioner Pederson had nothing to comment on.

Commissioner Berry had no comment.

Commissioner Reid had nothing to comment on.

Commissioner Stevens-Coney said she had a smile on her face because she was aware that the bathrooms for John L. Johnson Park are not in the CRA budget. However, they are in the discretionary funds and the bathrooms will be provided for at John L. Johnson Park. The parents, the grandparents, as well as the great-grandparents will be very happy about this. As for the teenagers and everybody who attends, they will have some way to relieve themselves of their physical needs. She was very proud.

Commissioner Connell had no comment.

Commissioner Reisman had no comment.

Chairperson Burry had no comment.

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.

With a motion by Commissioner Reisman and a second by Commissioner Pederson, the meeting adjourned at 5:59 p.m.