

**AGENDA MINUTES
CITY COMMISSION MEETING
CITY HALL, 501 W MEADOW STREET
TUESDAY, AUGUST 13, 2024 5:30 PM**

1. CALL TO ORDER

The City of Leesburg Carver Heights/Montclair Area Community Redevelopment Agency held a regular meeting on Tuesday, August 13, 2024, at Leesburg City Hall. Chairperson Burry called the meeting to order at 5:31 p.m. with the following members present:

Commissioner Robert Alderman
Commissioner Allyson Berry
Commissioner Jay Connell
Commissioner Theresa Conner
Commissioner Mike Pederson
Commissioner Alan Reisman
Chairperson Jimmy Burry

Also present, were City Manager (CM) Al Minner, Budget Director (BD) Brandy McDaniel, City Clerk (CC) J. Andi Purvis, 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. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

A. Regular meeting held June 10, 2024

Commissioner Reisman made a motion to approve the regular meeting minutes of June 10, 2024, and Commissioner Pederson seconded the motion.

The roll call vote was:

Commissioner Pederson	Yes
Commissioner Berry	Yes
Commissioner Conner	Yes
Commissioner Alderman	Yes
Commissioner Connell	Yes
Commissioner Reisman	Yes

Chairperson Burry

Yes

Seven years, no days, the Commission approved the minutes.

3. FY 25 BUDGET DISCUSSION

CM Minner kicked off the meeting by saying there was a bit of a wrinkle during the budget process and, while being more inclusive with the other members of this board, after the city commission reviewed some issues, we agreed to have an extra meeting with all members of the CRA to discuss the issues. This body needs to come up with a plan for the unallocated funds, which is an accumulation of unspent monies from previous years and anticipated new revenues for FY 25. This includes incremental revenues that come into the city. When a CRA is created, that is the base year, then the increment or the value above that base year is money that is allocated towards the CRA and the county has its share of that increment. The county revenue and city tax revenue becomes the budget for the CRA. That money goes into the CRA budget, and they have to decide how to spend that money in the targeted district.

Referring to a chart, he showed where they were with respect to reserve monies and, with all things being equal, it is projected that by the end of FY 25, (September 30, 2025) they will have a little under 1.1 million dollars to spend. He showed a rendering of the tax revenues and this CRA is up about \$225,000. He showed a chart of the expenses. He said most of the expenses are fixed, meaning they need to spend money there unless they make significant changes to the programming. Personnel services cover the housing and redevelopment manager's position. Operating expenses cover various items around the CRA. The Resource Center operations are \$66,000 and the debt services are about a one million dollar note. We received that note from the electric fund which built the Resource Center. That note will expire in about ten years, and we pay about \$100,000 annually. The first four expenses shown are fixed expenses, and theoretically, the only one they cannot change is the payment to debt. At the end of the day, they have reserve monies at \$979,901.

Moving to another slide, he showed their debt expenses and the \$100,000 they have to pay annually to the electric fund which expires in 2033. The CRA itself retires in 2045. The next chart showed where they were as far as planning. The biggest change this year was the implementation of the home grant program. We significantly increased the grant funding for those homes. We currently have twelve homes on board, and we issued \$25,000, which was a mix of Lake County Action Agency (LCAA) money. These projects are going pretty well. Referring to a slide, he said during the workshops they talked about increasing the home grants two-fold, so instead of allocating \$300,000 they would double down, which would cover an estimated twenty-four homes versus twelve. So, in two years, they will have thirty-six homes remodeled. They also had a lot of discussion about a privacy wall. At this point, he turned it to the commission to discuss the million dollars, and how they wanted to spend it.

Chairperson Burry said if they were to double down on the home grant program it would put it at \$600,000. **CM Minner** agreed. If they double down on the home grant program, they would be left with \$491,749. **Chairperson Burry** added that we already have nineteen people who have applied. **Commissioner Reisman** concurred. That was what the housing and redevelopment manager told him. **Commissioner Berry** wanted to confirm that nineteen people had submitted applications for approval. **Chairperson Burry** answered yes. **CM Minner** commented that those applications were the ones from last year. However, he could not remember the exact number. **Commissioner Berry** said she did not think there were that many because some did not qualify for various reasons and some were not in this CRA block. **Someone from the audience** said there were twelve applications. **Commissioner Berry** mentioned that she thought there were other applications received that were not located in this CRA block. **CM Minner** agreed, but he could not remember the numbers. **Chairperson Burry** asked if that

was the difference between nineteen and twelve. **CM Minner** agreed. That could be the delta because seven of the applications did not qualify because they were not located in the Carver Heights CRA. **Chairperson Burry** pointed out that the program seems to be effective, and he would anticipate should we offer that program again that more people will be interested now that they have seen results. He wanted to strike while the iron was hot to get more improvements made in the community through this program. With regard to the privacy wall, he has reservations about the physical optics of the city walling off a neighborhood. He knew it would be for safety reasons, but he did not think it would look good having a big wall between Carver Heights and the brand new Susan Street facility. For that reason, he believes there are other reasons for retaining some of that money, and we are not positive about the balance we are required to carry. **CM Minner** responded that he had conversations individually with each of them, and the chairperson was a big advocate of the Susan Street Park and the recreational improvements there. We tentatively have Susan Street budgeted at 7.5 million dollars through a bunch of different funding sources. We would shift a bunch of money over from ARP funds and the marina where we did some cat and mouse, but the big piece was in the neighborhood of two million dollars from U.S. Highway 441/27 CRA. We did that after identifying Susan Street being on the boundary of the Carver Heights and U.S. Highway 441/27 CRA's. At that time, he suggested to the chairperson that they should probably double down on the home grants and keep \$490,000 in the bucket for potential spillovers of Susan Street. That should be a concept for this body to consider. **Commissioner Berry** said she does not want to see \$490,000 go into the privacy wall, but that is what the estimated prices came back at. However, we do need to do something to contain the area because there will be an issue with games going on. We will need to do something to save the fields from dirt bikes and three-wheelers when no one is there. She felt there was a need and a necessity for containing Carver Heights from blight. She wished there was better pricing and funding because she stands where she stands. She understands everybody's concerns, but she does not look at this as drawing a line, but the Susan Street project is in the heart of district one, and they are not receiving a benefit from it from a CRA standpoint. We are using U.S. Highway 441/27 CRA, so Carver Heights Montclair CRA will not get the tax benefit. We have to provide something for the children and residents because we want them to participate, but how many kids in the area play soccer or even play on a team? Could we start with some training? **Chairperson Burry** clarified that the facility will include football and lacrosse. **Commissioner Berry** agreed. Her goal and thought was to create some form of training for young kids. We have football with Pop Warner, but let's get some soccer training, so the kids know how to play soccer. There would be benefits all the way around if we could just find a lower price. She stands on the need for a wall, so can we find some other forms of funding to get protection or a divider because it will help stop blight in and out of Carver Heights. It will also help with crime in that area. **Commissioner Reisman** wanted to know if her issue was with crime going through people's residential establishments. Would an individual grant for those homeowners for fencing work? **Commissioner Berry** responded that fencing is around the homes, but the fencing does not run the whole area from Susan Street into Carver Heights. If there was a grant put into place for the church located at 908 McCormack, that may help because he has asked for that. However, they will still get through the side of the church. Something has to be done. We are just repeating ourselves, and she does not want to beat a dead horse. However, there is a concern, so can we get more estimates? Can we put up half the wall this year and half later? We have done fencing on three sides of a park before. **Commissioner Connell** questioned how much the wall cost. **Chairperson Burry** said it would be \$491,000. **CM Minner** clarified that it would cost closer to one million dollars. **Commissioner Berry** agreed, but she was not looking for one million dollars. **Commissioner Connell** said he was not sure the city was in the business of building barriers to keep people from trespassing on individual private property. They could make that argument all the way around, but cities do not build barrier walls to stop people from going on somebody else's private property. **Commissioner Berry** commented that the barrier wall was two parts; for sound control of the games and for protection. **Commissioner Connell** wanted to know who the protection was from? **Commissioner Berry** said there was a lot of crime in Carver Heights. **Commissioner Connell** asked if it was any worse today than it was

last year because there has never been a wall there. **Commissioner Berry** answered it was terrible. **Commissioner Connell** stated then it would be a police department issue. The police department should be more involved if we have that kind of crime there. He asked if we had hired a full-time officer for Carver Heights? **CM Minner** said no. They talked about it, but it did not happen. **Commissioner Pederson** pointed out that we budgeted for twelve new police officers, so there will be more presence in Carver Heights. **Commissioner Connell** emphasized that the city was not in the business of walling off private property just to keep people from trespassing. That is not a business the city should get into. **Commissioner Berry** said when we say private property, isn't Susan Street private property? **Commissioner Connell** pointed out that at a previous meeting she talked about people walking through people's individual yards. **Commissioner Berry** responded that she was not asking to fence private property, she was trying to contain the Susan Street area. She wanted to divert people to keep them on the trail versus cutting through private property. **Commissioner Connell** said it would be good to keep people off private property. **Commissioner Berry** said the wall would be on the Susan Street property where the fields and everything else is. **Commissioner Connell** questioned if she wanted to keep people out of Susan Street? **Commissioner Berry** answered no. The wall protects people who are in Susan Street along with protecting people who live in Carver Heights. It would be a sound barrier to the noise. On Susan Street there was a chain link fence, but it is gone now. People can ride three-wheelers and dirt bikes there. Cars are not driving through there now, but they will. We also have foot traffic to and from, and they leave shopping cart buggies along the trail. **Commissioner Connell** wanted to know what would happen if people were on the trail, and they wanted to go to Susan Street? **Commissioner Berry** replied they would walk on the trail to get to Susan Street. **Chairperson Burry** stated the wall would be on the other side. **Commissioner Connell** wanted to know how people would get to the neighborhood on the other side? **Chairperson Burry** said they would have to use the trail. **Commissioner Connell** wanted to know what good a wall would do if they could just walk around it? **Commissioner Berry** responded that when they walk around the wall they have to remain on the trail versus cutting through private property. **Chairperson Burry** said he looked at the fields at Susan Street and compared that to where the houses are on McCormack Street. He then looked at Sleepy Hollow and those homes and the homes at Sleepy Hollow are right on top of it. He wanted to know how many complaints we get from those homes about noise? **Commissioner Berry** responded that the person she spoke with said there were complaints. **Chairperson Burry** explained that he would want to know what we field in complaints before justifying a wall. **Commissioner Berry** said she understood. However, this is a totally different dynamic as far as the foot traffic and blight coming through that area. Sound is her concern, because it is located right at the back of these homes. They have Birchwood, Pamela, Hill, and McCormack. If they keep going, they have Beecher, Tuskegee, and Chester. Sound will be an issue and if a wall was not part of the design, it should be. The elderly residents in this neighborhood will have to listen to crowds cheering at ten thirty at night. She was all in favor of the park being established, but we still need to be considerate of the people that live there. The sad part is that most people who live on McCormack do not even know about Susan Street. She walked around and asked them. She even asked them to come to the meetings. One gentleman asked her why they would put it in this neighborhood. Most people are not aware of the project. **Commissioner Connell** pointed out that Susan Street has been there for fifty plus years. If someone buys or moves to a new area, they should be aware of their surroundings before moving there. They moved to that area knowing there was a recreational complex there. **Commissioner Berry** said these homes have been there since the 1950s. The Susan Street project is new. **Commissioner Connell** explained that the original Susan Street has been there forever, and it is a recreational complex. **Commissioner Berry** stated it was used for tennis, baseball, and football. **Commissioner Connell** added those fields are also used for soccer. **Commissioner Berry** inquired about the time the games would end. **Commissioner Connell** replied that baseball plays at night. **Commissioner Berry** wanted to know what the time would be for games ending. They are arguing about where she lives. This is at the back of her home. She was not disputing the fact that there would not be noise, which was not the main concern. Her main concern is blight, traffic, and crime. **Commissioner Connell** said he was confused. Was she

implying that blight and crime would come from the complex? **Commissioner Berry** said no. It is the traffic that comes from the commercial complex. That is the go-to area for going to work and the homeless walking through it. That is the new cut through path versus staying on the trails. Instead of just walking up to McCormack and going up to Center Street to get through by the Dairy Queen, they go through behind Big Lots and the Teen Center. They cut through to the end of the cul-de-sac of McCormack and go through that wooded area. They are now coming between 908 McCormack and the church. **Commissioner Connell** asked if that was going on now? **Commissioner Berry** answered yes, and that was a concern. **Commissioner Connell** said then it really had nothing to do with the renovations of Susan Street. **Commissioner Berry** said no, not at all. Her request was when Susan Street was being designed. A chain link fence was there. She did not think that would work, so she was trying to figure out what else they could do. That was when the wall idea came. It was her concern and she was screaming and begging for her constituents. Unfortunately, no one was there, but that was a problem.

Commissioner Connell remarked that he would hate to see the CRA spend all their allotted money on a wall. **Commissioner Berry** agreed. She did not see them spend one million dollars, but that is what was quoted. She wanted to know if there could be other forms of walls and pricing because only one quote was given. Have we dug any further? Her understanding was that the quote was a stated amount. **CM Minner** explained that the one million dollar estimate on the security wall was a DOT spec. We gave them two options, and they spit balled it as far as an estimate goes. The higher end was the type of wall we see on the turnpike or highways along residential areas. That would be a ten-foot high concrete slab wall and that wall includes some sound insulation properties as well as a barrier. The other would be a concrete block wall that would be stucco. It would look more like a fence, it would provide some sound proofing, but not everything. However, Commissioner Reisman asked as a potential compromise if we could maybe put up that type of wall on the west side of the Susan Street Recreational Facility. They specked out the perimeter fencing around that as part of the Susan Street project as a coded chain link fence, so in English there would be a chain link fence with plastic on it. It would be a little more attractive than just a plain chain link. If they can envision it on the side where the existing baseball fields and parking lot are, it would run down the woods and up Birchwood. They could screen the western side and connect that chain link fence to a wall. That might help with some of the sound issues being talked about and provide some security, so people are not using the park as a cut through. **Commissioner Conner** asked about the fence. Could they add a certain type of plant to help with a sound barrier? If they are going to do Susan Street and lock that in, the plants should grow and help. They would not put bamboo in because it grows wild, but something to block some of that, and they could put little strips in the chain-link fence. They could use Clusia-type plants, because that would help with the sound coming through. **Commissioner Berry** said she was open to compromising, but we have to do something. What is happening now will only get worse. **Commissioner Conner** added at the last meeting she saw the other issue was with people writing graffiti on the wall. That would just cause blight again, and we would be constantly taking care of it. If they dropped that fence on the Susan Street complex side, and put plants on their side of the fence, it would be nice and presentable. Plus, it would be thick enough, so people cannot just walk through because there would be a fence and plants arranged on the outside.

Commissioner Pederson said he would support the home grant program at \$600,000, but he would not support a wall. We will make the national news, and then we will deal with the graffiti problem. He does not like anything about it. However, he does like the idea of a plant barrier. He has become more of a fan of natural barriers versus fences in subdivisions. It is a great idea because it will reduce sound, but he would not support a wall. **Commissioner Alderman** said he rode down that path just to look at it, and he saw on the complex side where people opened that fence so, with enough determination, they would open it up. He does like the plant idea, but instead of just putting it on the Susan Street complex side, it should be done on both sides, because if they go down the Middle School side there is a retention fence around the pond. He can see right down the side of that fence where a pathway is and there are two or three other pathways cut around the retention pond. He likes the idea of starting a little further down where the school starts with the plants and the same thing on the other side. However, there are potential problems

with wooded areas. They have not traveled through it now because it is wet and swampy, but when it dries up someone will find a pathway through there. We need to figure out how far they want to take those plants down the trail. The plants would be a better idea because of the optics of the wall. He does not want people feeling like they are being separated, but we need something to deter traffic, because they basically opened that fence up. He did not know what they used, but they had some good tools. **Chairperson Burry** said they needed to measure from the edge of the fields to McCormack Street. We need to know how far that distance is. Then we needed to go out to Sleepy Hollow and measure the distance from the fields there because we were talking about lining three roads with plantings. He knows there is concern, but are there issues at Sleepy Hollow with noise? If there are no issues, then there should be no issues at Susan Street. Does the recreation department know about noise complaints? Who handles that kind of stuff? **Commissioner Pederson** agreed. He said that during the budget meetings, he heard comments that people do not want the noise, and he does not want to spend all this money. We could move it somewhere else or just tone down the whole Susan Street idea. With 7.5 million dollars, we are now worrying about neighbors complaining about lights and sound. The more we talk about this, the more he struggles with it. **Commissioner Berry** said her concern was that most of the neighbors are elderly. We are talking about the street that the Freezer Plant turns on, then from there it will go all the way down to the end of the cul-de-sac. There are elderly residents with maybe two households with young kids. **Chairperson Burry** commented that we need to find out if there are complaints about Sleepy Hollow, since the houses in Sleepy Hollow are right on the fields. He hears this being a concern, but is it a reality? Does it happen? Do we get those complaints? **Commissioner Alderman** said the main thing is to deter foot traffic. The plants need to be tall, thick and sticky to deter foot traffic all the way down through that area. **Commissioner Berry** said she was open to whatever because she did not want to spend one million dollars on a wall. There are so many other things that need to be done in the community. They should hold on to that money. She was not stating that at all. That was never her beef, but there needed to be something done to stop the foot traffic. **Commissioner Pederson** commented that without going sideways, would it make sense to improve Susan Street as it currently is for the Carver Heights community and build another complex somewhere else? **CM Minner** responded no. **Commissioner Pederson** wondered if it could be done on the edge of town, away from residential areas. **Chairperson Burry** asked if there were any public comments.

Dr. Erika Jasper said she lives in this community, so she knows there have been comments about noise. However, they have not addressed the issues that they currently have with respect to the noise coming from the Elks Club, the Carver Heights Grocery Store and Berry Park. We have not addressed any of those issues. This community has been saturated with noise for years. Also, when talking about foot traffic and people walking to and from Palm Plaza, that has been going on for years. She agreed with Chairperson Burry about the optics of a wall. She does not think that is fitting for this community. She was excited about Susan Street because it would offer a lot of opportunities. She does not think noise was a real issue because we have not even combated the issues they currently have. She does not think that is a real issue because she lives in that community and no one ever asked her about noise at Susan Street. So, it would not be an issue moving forward. She was excited about this project and the opportunities it would bring for their community. The young people that are coming forth will be able to participate in these activities and have access to these activities.

Commissioner Berry said she did not want to consider moving the Susan Street project. That was not an option. She hears and understands everyone's concern, and she hoped everyone heard and understood hers because she lives there. She was on board in moving forward with the suggestion of a plant boundary. They should move that money to be more productive within district one. That is a plus and a major concern about using that money to be a focus on what we really need to be focusing on. **Commissioner Reisman** asked if it would be beneficial to hire a company to look into this and bring solutions back to us? **Commissioner Berry** commented that it was not rocket science. Anyone could tell

them what is going on. **Commissioner Pederson** mentioned on a positive note, we will spend \$600,000 in the community improving homes. We do not have to spend any other money, and we have more time to talk about this. He likes the landscape idea, but he does not want to run it forever; it would be a good thing to have behind the shopping center. At the commission meeting last night, they showed a beautiful concept at the back of the shopping center, but we all know that the shopping center does not look that good. A landscape buffer along that and maybe the other side would make it look better. We can massage this later because it sounds like we are in agreement about the \$600,000. **CM Minner** agreed. He suggested, for the sake of brevity, we move forward with the draft budget and the \$600,000 going to the home improvement grants. We will move \$491,000 down to the bottom and keep it for future consideration. We will swing back around with our consultant on Susan Street to get a vegetative buffer on the west side. They will see where that cost comes in at because he has no idea what it will cost. His knee-jerk reaction is around \$50,000 to go that length and to make sure it is thick. We will also need to irrigate it. They can throw that into the design specs, and it will be bid as an alternative. We will see what that number comes back at and, depending on the numbers, we may want to do both sides. However, remember on the west side, is Carver Heights CRA and the east side is U.S. Highway 441/27 CRA. **Commissioner Pederson** said he was not afraid to use this towards Susan Street, but if we are going to hit U.S. Highway 441/27 CRA for money, we need to hit Carver Heights equally. **CM Minner** said they could split it right down the middle, but there is a mathematical approach to it, based on where those improvements actually lie. However, the lion's share of the budget would go to the turf stadium field and that is coming from the U.S. Highway 441/27 CRA budget. He likes that concept of a 50/50 between the CRAs but the lion's share of expenses will be within U.S. Highway 441/27 CRA. We will throw some more concepts in there for vegetative buffering for beautification and screening at the back of the store as a deterrent. That is not a crazy issue, and we can do it as a change order once we see where the numbers come back. **Commissioner Berry** asked if the other two commissioners had anything to add to the budget or were they okay with what was presented. **Commissioner Conner** said she would like the vegetation to be *Clusia* because it does not need much water. **CM Minner** said it was an excellent looking plant and his wife loved them. It is a Japanese derivative plant. It is drought tolerant, and it likes lots of sunshine. It would make an awesome buffer. **Commissioner Conner** added that it grows tall. **Chairperson Burry** asked if they needed a motion from the commission to approve the \$600,000? **CM Minner** said no. Everybody seemed to be in agreement, so he would get that put in the budget for approval in September when we do the budget adoption process. The city commission adopts the budget that includes the general and enterprise funds. We do that by two separate resolutions. There will be a quick meeting with the CRA board to approve resolutions and that meeting will be on September 12th.

4. ROLL CALL:

Commissioner Pederson said he had nothing tonight.

Commissioner Berry had nothing else tonight.

Commissioner Conner had no comment.

Commissioner Alderman said that with the property located at 1111 Beecher Street he would like to put a community multipurpose center there to serve the community. It could be used for various activities, such as education, meetings, or whatever. He knows we have the CDC, but it would be nice to have something local in that community to serve that area. It could be thought out and done in a very economical way and, since it was a public facility at one time, it would be a good replacement.

Chairperson Burry asked if he was referring to where the old swimming pool used to be? **Commissioner Alderman** answered yes.

Commissioner Connell had no further comment.

Commissioner Reisman had nothing this evening.

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 Connell, the meeting adjourned at 6:16 p.m.