

**AGENDA MINUTES
CITY COMMISSION MEETING
CITY HALL, 501 W MEADOW STREET
TUESDAY, AUGUST 13, 2024 6:30 PM**

1. CALL TO ORDER

The City of Leesburg Greater Leesburg Community Redevelopment Agency held a regular meeting on Tuesday, August 13, 2024, at Leesburg City Hall. Chairperson Burry called the meeting to order at 6:31 p.m. with the following members present:

Commissioner Allyson Berry
Commissioner Jay Connell
Commissioner Mike Pederson
Commissioner Samantha Ponder
Commissioner Alan Reisman
Chairperson Jimmy Burry

Commissioner John Sokol was absent. Also present, were City Manager (CM) Al Minner, City Clerk (CC) J. Andi Purvis, the news media, and others.

INVOCATION

The invocation and pledge of allegiance were previously given at the Carver Heights Montclair Area Community Redevelopment Agency meeting that was held just prior to this meeting.

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

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

A. Regular meeting held May 28, 2024

Commissioner Reisman made a motion to approve the regular meeting minutes from May 28, 2024, and Commissioner Pederson seconded the motion.

The roll call vote was:

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

Six years, no days, the Commission approved the meeting minutes.

3. FY 25 BUDGET DISCUSSION:

CM Minner started by saying everything said during the Carver Heights CRA meeting also applies to this CRA. This CRA is sitting on about \$340,000 of unallocated funds. Referring to a chart, he showed an incremental revenue of about one million dollars at about a 7% increase. Referring to the performance chart last year, we decided to do special events, and we funded special events to the tune of \$445,000, which includes insurance costs and other stuff. Operating expenses are about half a million dollars, which includes the payment to the Leesburg CDC and the debt service for the Main Street project of \$101,042. These two things have to be done. With that being said, we have about \$340,000 to spend. One thing we decided, and we made it a priority for the downtown this year, was to put 1.24 million dollars into the downtown parking and associated projects. We funded that with DST revenue. The purpose was to go back through and analyze the non-conforming issues on the side streets and to improve those areas. They would improve the non-conforming parking spots on the side streets, which include Main Street, and the numbered streets. That will reduce the amount of on-street parking, so we will have to make up for that. We looked at the old partnership building, and we could use that area to improve parking. Blake from GAI spoke about that back in December. He identified the parking spots that needed to be taken out on the side streets, and he said we need to find a centralized location to create more parking. We identified where the old partnership building is as a good spot for improved parking. Another thing we discussed during the budget process was the relocation of the gas department and potentially knocking down those facilities. This links into the concept because in that 1.2 million dollars for the downtown projects, part of the concept was to knock down the partnership building. We also talked about relocating the special events division to the Tropic building. We have put together leases with the Center for the Arts, the Melon Patch, and the special events division. Those conversations were more difficult than he thought due to space needs and practicality. As it turns out, the hardest folks to deal with was our very own special events department, and the recreation director has been in his office more than once. As we started talking about relocating the gas department to Griffin Road, the interpretation of the facility was that it was not good for the gas department. However, it would work perfectly for the special events division. It would work out perfectly for the special events division because they are a group of two or three people. They would also have a storage facility for their equipment, which is currently in the partnership building. They were looking to put their equipment elsewhere, or they would have to build another facility. They talked about storing their equipment in the public works facility where the old Metro Steel building is located. However, they did not like that concept because it would be too far away to haul stuff in and out. Long story short, the special events division has fallen in love with the gas department's old building. If the gas department moves out, they want to move in there. It will then make it a better fit at the Tropic for the Center of the Arts and Melon Patch. He would come back with the concept as they moved forward in the budget process with moving the gas department to Griffin Road, and the concept would be to move the special events division to the old gas building. The only thing we would give up there is the potential sale of that facility; however, we have not received an offer yet on it. **Chairperson Burry** mentioned that the gas building is located right on the trail. **Commissioner Pederson** thought it would be a great idea if it worked for them, but would the big gas line stay where the concrete slab is? He would like to tie in and continue the parking there to help improve the parking situation. If they could somehow tie that together, that would be great. **CM Minner** wanted to clarify that it was not a gas line, it was a water line, and it was not going anywhere. That is the main arterial artery that comes out of the water plant. **Commissioner Pederson** said he was referring to the northern half and tying that into the Life Stream parking lot. **Commissioner Reisman** said we would only lose one side of the street because the other side of the street could still be acquired. **CM Minner** agreed. They could sell if need be, but he believes Mr. Strickland had some ideas for storage over there as well. There are two facilities there, one on the east side and one on the west side of Sixth Street. It is still to be determined,

but moving special events there would be a happy solution for all parties. We will start to isolate that more next month because this evening we received some of the pieces of all this, and it is all falling into place. The resolutions and ordinances to make decisions regarding the rental agreements and closing streets will come before the city commission in the next month or so. **Commissioner Berry** wanted to know how big the side of the gas building was for where the special events division wanted to go? How many offices are there? **CM Minner** responded that the gas department has twenty to twenty-five people. He believed twenty-nine positions were budgeted, but there were a few openings. Right now, the gas department is jammed in there. If they take a facility that has twenty-nine people jammed in and give it to a department of three with storage, it then becomes usable for them. After pitching to the commission that the building was a dump and that it needed to go away, the recreation director came into his office saying they wanted it for the special events division. The special events division storage capacities are not as sensitive as the city clerk's, so all they need to do is cut a garage and put a garage door in where the city clerk currently has files stored. So, this would be a workable plan. **Commissioner Berry** wanted to verify that the gas department building would still house the city clerk's files. **CM Minner** said yes they would be stored at the Griffin Road location. We need to build an air-controlled facility that is larger than the current one. We will modify the old Knights of Columbus building for the gas department and do some expansion to it along with some stuff for the electric department. That would cover the relocation of Griffin Road and Sixth Street. They may need to put some lipstick on the building at Sixth Street to formalize it for the special events division. When that is done, we can go back and knock down the old partnership building and look at putting in a parking lot and other parking improvements. That is the proposal now on the table.

Now, even though that is not CRA money, it is an important downtown improvement project for everybody. We now need to talk about the \$340,000, and Commissioner Reisman has talked about putting some of this money into the FSL program for the downtown. He suggested keeping a lot of this money unspent because we have some other projects coming up and the 1.2 million dollars is a good number for the first swag at the parking improvements. Should they approve this budget, the first step would be to bring back Blake from GAI to have him do a more thorough review and to start designing some concepts for the downtown parking. Then use that money to pay the consultant fee for GAI and do some capital projects. Once the parking stuff is done, they can talk about other projects, and they may leak into FY 26-27. They would get back to the Market Street concept, the pocket park concept, the market lighting concept, and the centralized dumpsters concept to make it neater, cleaner, and easier for all businesses in the downtown. That would be phase two of the next improvement programs.

Commissioner Berry asked if anything could be shaved or used for something else out of the million dollars for parking? **CM Minner** said, unfortunately, no. **Commissioner Pederson** stated they would blow through that 1.240 million dollars guaranteed. **CM Minner** agreed. They would blow through 1.2 million dollars pretty quickly. **Commissioner Berry** said we would pay 1.2 million dollars for parking, but we will not pay one million dollars for a wall. **CM Minner** said that is why they were here.

Commissioner Pederson commented that they were not trying to be argumentative, but the Downtown Master Redevelopment plan has parking as the number one issue. It is time to spend money in the downtown. He has been very vocal about parking, and he could not have been happier about what they are doing with parking. It will cost more than 1.240 million dollars, and the city manager will have to find the difference. **Commissioner Reisman** added that someone just bought the Chevy building, so there is more new development coming. In the packet the deputy city manager sends out, Tom Frost, just unloaded close to \$300,000 for the three parcels where God's Café was. There is more development coming, and we need more parking in the downtown for that development. **Commissioner Pederson** said he worked downtown, and he only lives one mile away. He is pro downtown. He does not complain about parking, but everybody does. It has been a constant complaint, and he still hears it today. He was glad to see that we were finally dealing with it. He was thrilled to tie in the former gas plant in some form or fashion with the special events division. It will match up with our current parking. We may not pick up

a lot, but every bit helps. **Commissioner Berry** wanted to know how much money needed to be left in the pot. **CM Minner** said that was a question they needed to answer and that was the purpose of this meeting. **Commissioner Berry** said Commissioner Reisman wants to do signage in the downtown, she wants to do more home improvement grants since people are still waiting. She wanted to know how they would address the individuals who had already submitted applications for the home improvement program. These were accepted with the understanding that come September they would be on the list. **Commissioner Reisman** asked how many people were on the list. **Commissioner Pederson** pointed out that it happens with every grant program. We always receive more applications than we have money for. **Commissioner Berry** said she thought there may have been eight applicants, but she was not sure. These were applications received where they were told not this time but next time. Now is the next time. **Commissioner Reisman** said he was fine holding off on the FSL Grants until we finish the parking. We could re-evaluate that during the next budget season. **Commissioner Berry** asked if they could find out exactly how many applications there are, so they were not guessing. Is there a report on the number of people waiting? They had been estimating, but she wanted to know how many. **CM Minner** said he would speak on behalf of the consensus of this body. The home grants were developed, and we increased the home grant allowance for individual home projects. We did that, and we were successful with that this year. More specifically, Commissioner Berry was successful at getting that done and that was a significant change to the programming. However, they have taken their Carver Heights CRA hats off, and put on their Greater Leesburg CRA hats. The majority of members that spoke believe that the Leesburg CDC funding are dollars used towards improvement and Commissioner Pederson spoke about that clearly. He knows she has a desire to spread the home improvement grants to all pockets of the city. The pushback she is getting is that the consensus of this body does not want that. **Commissioner Berry** agreed, but she wanted to know how many applicants there were. She wanted a true number. **CM Minner** answered that twenty-one applications were received, we funded twelve and there are nine on the wait list. Of the nine, some are in Carver Heights CRA and some are not. He would look through the applications to get those numbers. **Commissioner Berry** stated to be clear, her focus was on Leesburg overall, because we need to expand and grow so we can get more revenue and people coming in. She knows the importance of it but, she does not understand how we can accept something and then tell them no without giving them an explanation except for first come, first served. **CM Minner** said the staff were very professional. We got out information about the home grant program, but we could not control who gave it citywide. When people filled out and submitted their applications, we were professional about how it was funded and who got the money. We told the folks in the Carver Heights area it was first come, first served, and that was written into the grant application. We prioritized the houses based on inspection reports and which ones were the worst from the application pool that we received. When we received applications from houses outside the project-funded area, we professionally informed those folks that they were not eligible for this because the money was not in their neighborhood. As far as the waiting list goes, there are nine, but we do not know the numbers off the top of our heads for which ones were outside Carver Heights and which ones were in Carver Heights. He will get that information to her tomorrow. **Commissioner Pederson** mentioned that he touched on this during the budget where half the money goes to the CDC, and he does not know how that money is spent. **Commissioner Reisman** added that they also requested to have a meeting with the CDC in order to get that information. **CM Minner** said they tasked him to get with the CDC so they could provide a state of the CDC at an upcoming meeting. He would get that meeting setup. **Commissioner Pederson** said that would be a great way to fund some of the things Commissioner Berry wants to do. **Commissioner Berry** stated that money was from the lawsuit. It is federally mandated to go to them, but what they do with the money is the question. **Commissioner Pederson** added that the mandate says they get half the money, but how they spend it is governed by the CDC. However, he suggested maybe leaning on them for the \$500,000, and maybe they could fund some of the things she wants to do. **CM Minner** continued to say, barring any significant changes, the way this has been proposed will come back in September for approval. **Commissioner Berry** questioned the \$340,000. **CM Minner** replied it

would sit, unless they came up with a different plan. **Commissioner Berry** asked if Commissioner Sokol sent in any suggestions. **CC Purvis** responded that she sent him the information, but had not heard back from him, since he was on a cruise.

Commissioner Ponder said there was a meeting at a church regarding shootings that have been happening and something that came up about several people in her community speeding down Baker Street. The police chief at that time talked about a possible speed study to see if there was something needed like a speed bump or signage. However, she did not hear anything. She watched city commission videos to see if anything came back up about it. She was not sure if that was something they could look at to see if it was needed. Some people in the community are asking for speed bumps, and she explained that some things have to happen before we can have speed bumps put in. The police chief talked about doing a speed study. That is a concern because they have a lot of children in their neighborhood. There are buses that stop throughout their community and cars are constantly zooming by. Also, something she recently observed on her own when taking her children to the John L. Johnson park. Families there walk their dogs, and the dogs poop, and they leave it there. Can some signage be put in and a waste box with bags, so people can put the bags in there after collecting the droppings from their pets? It would help to keep the park nice. She knows we are doing some things to improve the park, but she pushes a stroller through the park, and she does not want to get it in her car. She was sure other people were dealing with it too. **Chairperson Burry** inquired if Baker Street was a problem between South East Street and Dixie? Is that being used as a cutoff for bypassing the light? **Commissioner Ponder** answered she imagined that was happening. **CM Minner** stated he would follow up with the chief. **Commissioner Ponder** said it was not the current chief, it was the prior chief that spoke at the church. He explained to all of them that they could not just put in speed bumps because some other things had to happen first. She was out checking the mail and residents asked her about it. **Chairperson Burry** added that speed bumps can come back to bite you too. **CM Minner** stated he would follow up the chief and get back to her on that. **Commissioner Ponder** added that her neighbors expressed that concern, but it would be our tires getting eaten up because we are the locals. It probably is not us who are speeding here. It is a little layered so we just need to figure out how to address it. We see kids coming up and down the street on their little golf carts to visit family members and cars zoom right past them. We need to figure out how to make it safer for the residents and help her so she does not have to push a stroller through dog poop in the park. **Commissioner Berry** said there could be receptacles put up in the park. **Commissioner Ponder** added that signage could be added since she has experienced it, and other families who patronize the park also see it. **Chairperson Burry** wanted to confirm that it was John L. Johnson Park? **Commissioner Ponder** answered yes. **Chairperson Burry** asked if there were any other questions or comments. **Commissioner Ponder** said there was mention of a shot detection device, and they said it was super expensive. She wanted to know if there had been any further investigation into that. Has anyone checked to see if there were any other companies that have some type of device that detects shots where the police would be notified directly if something were to happen? She was reading online about a program that can detect shots and notify them prior to 911 being called. That way, the police could respond even faster. She did not know how much discussion there had been about that. She remembered that when she was watching a video where Commissioner Berry brought that up. She was really interested in it so she tried to dig a bit more into it. **Commissioner Pederson** replied that the former chief was at the meeting as the new deputy city manager, but he remembered his comment being that we do receive immediate phone calls, and he thought those were a waste of money because they were very expensive. **CM Minner** said he would follow up on that. However, internally, we believe it would be ineffective. **Commissioner Ponder** said she would appreciate a follow-up because, from her research, it triangulates to give the exact location of where the sound came from, along with an immediate notification being sent. She would be interested to see if other cities use that technology and if it has made a difference. **Commissioner Berry** confirmed it was a request from the neighborhood watch from the Baker Street meeting and Chief Iozzi was there. She asked if he recalled the conversation about the neighborhood watch and the shooting. The deputy city

manager also gave a research study and said pricing was the issue, and it would not be that effective. **CM Minner** stated he would get more information on that. **Commissioner Ponder** wanted to know if that was traditionally funded by the CRA? **CM Minner** explained it would come from the general fund. **Commissioner Ponder** wanted to know if that was something they needed to discuss? **CM Minner** said it was good that she brought it up here, but typically public safety items are kicked back to the general fund. **Chairperson Burry** asked if there were any other comments or questions. There were none.

4. ROLL CALL:

The Commission had nothing further to discuss this evening.

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 Berry, the meeting adjourned at 6:57 p.m.