

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING
BOCA RATON COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY
MONDAY, JUNE 13, 2005
3:30 P.M.

The regular meeting of the Boca Raton Community Redevelopment Agency was called to order by Chairman Bill Hager at approximately 3:30 p.m.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAG:

ROLL CALL:

Chairman Bill Hager
Vice Chairman Susan Whelchel
Commissioner Steven L. Abrams
Commissioner Peter R. Baronoff
Commissioner Susan Haynie

Also attending the meeting were:

CRA Executive Director Jorge Camejo
Boca Raton City Manager Leif J. Ahnell
Boca Raton City Attorney Diana Grub Frieser, Attorney to the Agency

AMENDMENTS TO THE AGENDA:

There were no amendments to the agenda.

MINUTES:

Minutes of the Regular Meeting of April 11, 2005

Motion was made by Commissioner Abrams, seconded by Vice Chairman Whelchel, to approve the minutes as presented. Motion carried unanimously; Chairman Hager, Vice Chairman Whelchel, Commissioners Abrams, Baronoff, and Haynie voting yes.

REGULAR BUSINESS - PART I - QUASI-JUDICIAL & RELATED PUBLIC HEARINGS:

1. DDRI IDA NO. CRP-05-01

An Individual Development Approval of the City of Boca Raton Community Redevelopment Agency granting the petition of 33/8th Inc. for an Individual Development Approval to develop 84 residential units, with an internal parking garage, located at 33 Southeast 8th Street

Chairman Hager advised that this was a quasi-judicial public hearing. The City Attorney outlined the procedures to be followed and the City Clerk administered the oath to those who indicated they wished to speak on this matter.

Executive Director Jorge Camejo introduced Development Services Senior Planner Jim Bell, who gave the PowerPoint presentation. He explained that this was a request to construct a 100-foot, nine-story residential building with 84 units, known as the Boca Lofts, containing approximately 286,000 square feet of total development, including open space, the parking garage, and covered areas; details were provided. Acreage, zoning, land use designation, and access were reviewed. Using an aerial photo, Mr. Bell advised that the site currently contains a vacant medical office building on a majority of the property that is proposed to be demolished.

The site plan was then reviewed. The proposed development would be comprised of one nine-story building with two structures and a four-story internal parking garage, which would be hidden from off-

premise view. One story of the parking garage would be underground. The residential building would contain five stories of loft units; details were provided on a floor-by-floor basis. Setbacks, open space, parking, vehicular access, and trip generations were outlined; concurrency, compatibility, and consistency were addressed.

Mr. Bell advised that the site is located in Subarea F in the downtown. While a transfer of development rights is not required, a conversion of office space to residential is necessary to accommodate the total of 84 units; approval would result in a decrease of office space in the downtown.

The Community Appearance Board (CAB) reviewed this proposal and recommended approval with the following conditions: 1) additional landscaping on the east, west, and north sides of the property, 2) provide a detail for a trellis to be located above the fourth floor, and 3) provide a detail for the material and screening for the parking garage. The Planning and Zoning Board also recommended approval with staff's conditions, as well as those conditions outlined by the CAB. In conclusion, Development Services recommended approval with the conditions incorporated in the IDA. Mr. Bell then answered questions from Commissioners regarding covered open space, compact parking spaces, and street parking. Responding to Commission members, Mr. Camejo spoke to the issue of architectural design, saying this structure was described as a modern expression of Mizner architecture. Much discussion followed.

Bruce Retzsch, the architect for the project, spoke in support of the proposal and explained the ideas behind the architectural design. He then answered questions from members.

The overall consensus of the CRA was that this design was not compatible with surrounding structures, deeming it stark and modernistic. CRA members suggested that the developer work with staff to design a building incorporating more traditional architectural features.

Motion was made by Commissioner Haynie, seconded by Commissioner Baronoff, to continue the public hearing on DDRI IDA NO. CRP-05-01 to the CRA meeting of July 25, 2005. Motion carried unanimously; Chairman Hager, Vice Chairman Whelchel, Commissioners Abrams, Baronoff, and Haynie voting yes.

PUBLIC REQUESTS:

No one came forward to speak.

REGULAR BUSINESS - PART II - RESOLUTIONS:

2. Resolution No. 2005-01-CRA

A resolution of the Boca Raton Community Redevelopment Agency canceling the first regular meeting in July 2005; providing for severability; providing for repealer; providing an effective date

Mr. Camejo explained that this resolution attempted to follow the summer meeting schedule as determined by the City Council and would effectively cancel the first regularly scheduled July meeting of the CRA.

Motion was made by Vice Chairman Whelchel, seconded by Commissioner Baronoff, to adopt Resolution No. 2005-01-CRA. Motion carried unanimously; Chairman Hager, Vice Chairman Whelchel, Commissioners Abrams, Baronoff, and Haynie voting yes.

QUASI-JUDICIAL PUBLIC HEARING – APPEAL OF BOARD DECISION:

There were no items for consideration.

OTHER BUSINESS:

There were no items for consideration.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

3. Pedestrian Spine for the Downtown - Discussion

Mr. Camejo gave the PowerPoint presentation; information provided at a meeting last week with affected property owners was also distributed to members.

A brief history of the proposed spine, which had its beginnings in 1968, was reviewed. Mr. Camejo explained that the spine was described as encompassing a variety of pedestrian activities, such as outdoor cafes and retail establishments, which would encourage pedestrians to walk from one end of the spine to the other. Problems with constructing the spine were then reviewed, as were different options for implementing same. Mr. Camejo advised that a workshop discussion took place in 2000 and proposals for realigning the spine were outlined again at that time.

Mr. Camejo reported on last week's meeting with affected property owners, explaining that the meeting was initiated by the CRA in order to establish dialogue and obtain input. The overwhelming majority of people indicated that they wished to cooperate with the City in moving forward as quickly as possible to bring this project to fruition. Discussion turned to the possibility of using eminent domain and/or public incentives to assist in making this spine a reality.

It was suggested that staff be directed to work with affected property owners and the proposed downtown committee and then return to the CRA with a workable plan for the spine. It was also suggested that the City pledge rights-of-way, located at 1st Avenue and Boca Raton Road, and two alleys, in addition to organizing the coordination and design of the spine, using eminent domain only as necessary. Emphasis was placed on working with the property owners and proceeding in a pragmatic way. Discussion then turned to composition of the proposed downtown committee.

4. Proposed Downtown Committee - Discussion

Chairman Hager referred to a memo distributed by Mr. Camejo at the dais and spoke to the makeup of the proposed committee, stating that it should be as inclusive as possible. Ms. Whelchel advocated tasking the Downtown Visions Committee with assisting in creating a plan for the pedestrian spine, citing that committee's considerable knowledge of the area and issue in question. Responding to the CRA, Mr. Camejo reviewed the legislation creating the Visions 90 Committee and the composition of the current membership. The consensus of the CRA was to use the Downtown Visions Committee as a vehicle to work with staff on the spine; staff would then make recommendations to the CRA.

Keith O'Donnell, a member of the Downtown Visions Committee, suggested the committee be "reformed" and provided with additional charges, in addition to working on a plan for the spine.

Derek Vander Ploeg, also a member of the Downtown Visions Committee, voiced support of the proposal to have the Committee work on creation of a plan for the spine.

Leo Fox, a property owner on Boca Raton Road, stated that he was not opposed to the spine or improvement of the downtown area. However, he wished to clarify the position of many of the affected property owners he had spoken with, who were also his clients. He acknowledged that there was frustration on the part of the owners because there have been assessments on that area for 15 years and nothing has happened. He indicated that many owners have lived under the "cloud" of potential eminent domain and have been reticent to undertake improvements. Mr. Fox advised that there were many options available and he was willing to work with the Downtown Visions Committee, which he felt should include a membership that is representative of all property owners in the affected area, and appealed to the CRA to be cautious in regard to the use of eminent domain.

Lenore Wachtel stated that what has always been missing from the equation is a determination by the City as to how much money the City is willing to spend on the spine, what the City is willing to do, and where the money will come from.

Motion was made by Vice Chairman Whelchel, seconded by Commissioner Baronoff, to direct CRA staff to develop a pragmatic plan for the extension of the spine through the two-block area directly south of Mizner Park and to deliver said plan to the CRA with appropriate recommendations on how to proceed with execution of the plan in consultation with Downtown Visions and community organizations. Motion carried unanimously on a voice vote; Chairman Hager, Vice Chairman Whelchel, Commissioners Abrams, Baronoff, and Haynie voting yes.

ATTORNEY'S REPORT:

The Attorney had nothing to report at this time.

COMMISSIONERS' REPORTS:

Vice Chairman Whelchel proposed various items for the next meeting's agenda. Chairman Hager took her suggestions under advisement.

ADJOURNMENT:

Motion was made by Commissioner Haynie, seconded by Chairman Hager, to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried unanimously on a voice vote; Chairman Hager, Vice Chairman Whelchel, Commissioners Abrams, Baronoff, and Haynie voting yes.

The regular meeting of the Boca Raton Community Redevelopment Agency adjourned at approximately 5:02 p.m., Monday, June 13, 2005.

Bill Hager, Chairman

ATTEST:

Sharma Carannante, City Clerk