

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR WORKSHOP MEETING
CITY COUNCIL
BOCA RATON, FLORIDA
MONDAY, AUGUST 8, 2005
1:30 PM

The regular workshop meeting of the City Council of the City of Boca Raton, Florida was called to order by Mayor Steven L. Abrams at 1:30 p.m.

ATTENDING THE MEETING WERE:

Mayor Steven L. Abrams
Deputy Mayor Susan Whelchel
Council Member Bill Hager (arrived at 1:40 p.m.)
Council Member Susan Haynie
Council Member Peter R. Baronoff

Also attending the meeting were:

City Manager Leif J. Ahnell
City Attorney Diana Grub Frieser
City Clerk Sharma Carannante

PROCLAMATION:

Florida Water, Wastewater and Systems Operators Week – August 15 – 19, 2005

Utility Services Director Chris Helfrich accepted the proclamation on behalf of his staff and recognized several staff members.

PRESENTATION:

Citywide Read-a-thon: Community Resources/Affairs Specialist – Emily Lilly
Library Service Manager – Catherine O'Connell

Emily Lilly and Catherine O'Connell advised that this year's book selection is "Seedfolks." Details were provided regarding the book and the author and the upcoming Plants, Posies 'n Family FruitFest event.

1. BOARD INTERVIEWS:

- a. North Federal Highway Steering Committee – one (1) vacancy, due to resignation of Carrie Lynn, in the category of "Residential Property Owner."

Jan Grenell interviewed for the position.

Workforce Housing (1:45 PM)

Community Improvement Administrator Teresa McClurg gave the PowerPoint presentation. She explained that the Chamber of Commerce provided the City with a White Paper summarizing their findings on workforce housing. Essentially, the Chamber declared that workforce housing in Boca Raton is needed and the lack of same was impacting business retention and recruitment efforts. In addition, employees' commuting from other areas has an impact on traffic, employee stress, and the sense of community. The Chamber concluded its findings by suggesting that the City provide incentives and implement regulatory changes to encourage implementation of workforce housing.

Staff analyzed the White Paper and determined the following: 1) the City is a regional employment center; employee commuting is not new, 2) business retention/recruitment is a highly competitive activity and housing is just one factor in the mix, 3) the sense of community and identity for Boca Raton is very strong and positive, 4) housing and economic development are linked, 5) housing prices have escalated rapidly in all areas of Palm Beach County and adjacent counties, 6) the housing gap exists partly because of high housing costs and the percentage of lower paying jobs, and 7) staff continues to actively research the workforce housing issue.

Ms. McClurg then reviewed those factors driving up the cost of housing; defined the terms, “affordable housing” and “workforce housing” and the target incomes related to same; and outlined ways to facilitate housing and assist demand, and ways to encourage the housing supply. She also delineated nationally and regionally used planning and regulatory options and revenue sources, and identified universal constraints. Focus was then given to initiatives that the City has already implemented to help alleviate the housing problem, which include the SHIP/First Time Homebuyer Program, the Housing Rehab Program, rental assistance (BRHA), and mobility initiatives to link jobs to housing.

Ms. McClurg then spoke to establishing a regional approach to the issue, advising that Palm Beach County has determined that workforce/affordable housing is a high priority and has taken steps to address same. She detailed those initiatives currently under consideration including: a) realignment of existing County housing assistance programs, b) adoption of a definition for “workforce housing,” c) implementing a County-wide Community Land Trust, d) revisions to County inclusionary zoning/density programs, e) a linkage fee program, f) a housing needs study, and g) identification of possible revenue sources. Regional concerns included, but were not limited to: scarce resources; a method for effectively distributing workforce housing throughout the County; availability of transportation and links to transportation hubs; participation of government, the School Board, and the private sector, specifically, the willingness of the development community to come to the table.

In conclusion, the options put forward by the City for addressing the issue of workforce housing were as follows: modify the current homebuyer program policy in light of escalating prices and flat incomes (in process), work with the Chamber of Commerce to identify the types of businesses being recruited and the housing needs/gaps of the target employees, have the City and the Chamber partner with the County to identify and implement regional solutions and, based on those regional solutions, consider regulatory changes to encourage or require workforce housing such as inclusionary zoning and density bonuses and the related Comp Plan changes.

Planning and Zoning Director Carmen Annunziato emphasized two recent initiatives related to workforce housing: 1) authorization to expend \$750,000 to assist in relocating the Tri-Rail station to Yamato Road at the Boca Technology Center, and 2) evaluation of the Comprehensive Plan with regard to mobility, as a means of bringing workers closer to their place of employment. He advised that staff prepared an analysis of the housing element, showing what City Council has accomplished over the last several years to assist with affordable housing; the analysis will be provided to the City Manager, the Mayor and Council under separate cover.

Ms. McClurg answered questions from Council regarding whether housing would remain affordable in the future and whether solutions should be driven regionally or locally. Discussion included, but was not limited to, available programs and resources that municipalities can take advantage of for affordable housing, as well as constructing homes near transit hubs. It was determined that to provide affordable housing, density must be increased, housing must be subsidized either through tax dollars or private dollars, and mobility links must be created.

Chamber of Commerce Workforce Housing Presentation

Al Travasos, Chairman of the Boca Raton Chamber of Commerce Workforce Housing Task Force, referred to a study delivered to Council in May 2004 and stated that workforce housing is a community problem and a business problem. In addition to increased traffic, employee turnover has caused area businesses to raise prices to cover higher employee costs, resulting in Boca Raton citizens paying more for everything. Mr. Travasos stated that the following presentation would present a solution; he then gave the floor to Charles Siemen.

Attorney Charles Siemen, representing the Chamber of Commerce, gave a PowerPoint presentation on workforce housing. The following elements were proposed: 1) one member of the household is a full-time employee with a place of employment within the City of Boca Raton, 2) the household income is no greater than 120% of area median income, 3) annual housing costs do not exceed 30% of the household's adjusted gross income, 4) dwelling units created under the program would be deed restricted affordable workforce housing in perpetuity, and 5) tenant qualifications to be determined at the time of occupancy or purchase.

Workforce housing would be allowed in multi-family, business, commercial, and industrial districts. A deed restriction would apply wherein the house would be rented or sold as a primary residence – no seasonal or rental housing to a third party; subletting would be prohibited. The initial sale price would not exceed a maximum of 120% of area median income; details were provided. Mr. Siemen spoke to the issue of density and the Comprehensive Plan, development incentives such as density bonuses and set-asides, and floor area ratio

conversions. Additional incentives included a 20% deviation from setbacks, from lot coverage requirements, and from lot width requirements, and a reduction of on-site parking requirements, specifically, not less than one parking space per workforce unit, despite the number of habitable rooms. Mr. Siemen then spoke to an off-site alternative whereby four off-site workforce-housing units would be required for every one market-rate unit constructed on site; details were provided. He concluded his presentation and answered questions from Council.

Mike Arts, representing the Chamber of Commerce, outlined actions taken by cities around the country to provide affordable housing. He voiced support of the above proposal and urged Council to take action now.

Mayor Abrams advised that the Chamber's proposal provides for possible solutions, as opposed to the White Paper, which was very general. He then stated the reasons as to why this problem has been difficult to overcome and asked the Chamber to speak with developers about whether they would be open to adopting some of these techniques, should the City Code be amended. Staff was directed to review the proposal and return to Council in 30 days with a recommendation, taking into account feasibility and desirability.

2. PUBLIC REQUESTS:

Albert Nelson spoke in support of using eminent domain as a means of obtaining land for workforce housing; he cited *Kelo vs. City of New London, Connecticut*, and suggested the City condemn several parcels in order to aggregate properties. He advocated having the City create a land development corporation for the purpose of eminent domain; a task force would also be created to locate land for condemnation.

Anthony Cutaia offered two suggestions related to workforce housing: 1) have the City develop a housing financing agency in order to provide money for homebuyers, and 2) issue a certificate for lower taxes and insurance payments to those who meet certain criteria; tax exempt bonds could be used for the subsidy.

Craig Hertz, Treasurer from NCCI, was not supportive of eminent domain but did voice support for the Chamber's position and proposal.

Charley Fix with Habitat for Humanity asked that the City keep his organization in mind when land and/or programs are available. He explained that Habitat for Humanity would be happy to work with developers on this issue and that Habitat for Humanity finances the homes they build; details were provided.

The regular workshop meeting of City Council recessed at 3:30 p.m. and reconvened at 4:20 p.m.

3. REVIEW OF REGULAR AGENDA ITEMS:

- a. Questions relating to the agenda.

(Consent Agenda Item 3.e. / Resolution No. 132-2005 – Work Order No. 15 with Kimley-Horn and Associates, P.E. for bicycle lanes on Federal Highway between Glades Road and Yamato Road) Council Member Haynie requested the status of the NE 20th Street and Federal Highway road improvements, advising that she was hesitant to move forward with this item since the other improvements were still under discussion. Mr. Ahnell explained that the road improvements in question related to Federal Highway from Glades Road to NE 20 Street; it would be approximately five years before the FDOT would fund same. However, the City supports going forward with building the bike lanes now from Glades Road to Yamato Road.

(Consent Agenda Item 3.d.2. / Portable Radios) Council Member Hager asked for assurance that the equipment used to interface between Police Services and Fire Rescue is "seamless." Mr. Ahnell confirmed same and explained that the units are compatible with existing equipment.

(Regular Agenda Item Nos. 6 – 9 / Ordinance Nos. 4889, 4890, 4891 and 4892 - Sale of a parcel of land and various abandonments) Council Member Hager questioned whether a guiding set of principles existed that the City must adhere to when considering the sale of City-owned land. The City Manager explained that the decision to sell this, or any property, lies with Council. In evaluating the possible sale of City-owned land, there is an appraisal process, in addition to recommendations from staff. Mr. Ahnell advised that the item in question

happens to be excess road right-of-way that has no economic value to the City; the petitioner will pay what the City paid for it.

4. FUTURE AGENDA MATTERS/ITEMS OF COUNCIL/PUBLIC CONCERN:

There were no items for consideration.

5. CITY MANAGER REPORTS:

The City Manager reminded those present of the meeting with the Beach and Park District members tomorrow at 4:00 p.m. in the Community Center; a copy of the agenda and back-up material was previously provided to Council.

6. CITY ATTORNEY REPORTS:

The City Attorney advised that she had distributed supplemental documents to Council regarding adult use establishments, which would be discussed tomorrow night, and asked that Council members bring this material with them to the meeting.

7. MAYOR AND COUNCIL MEMBER REQUESTS AND REPORTS:

Council Member Hager referred to the City's recent loss of former Firefighter Michael DeBrecht and suggested that he be remembered when opportunities arise for naming city facilities. Deputy Mayor Whelchel reported that she attended the funeral and spoke positively of same.

Mayor Abrams asked for an update on the plans to widen Palmetto Park Road, west of I-95. The City Manager advised that the County is working on expanding Palmetto, west of I-95, to eight lanes at least to the turnpike. He added that the section of Palmetto Park Road between SW 12th Avenue and I-95 might also be widened; preliminary design work had been done. Mayor Abrams voiced the need to evaluate the project and review the possible visual and recreational impacts to Sugar Sand Park. Mr. Ahnell is to keep Council apprised of the issue.

The regular workshop meeting of the City Council of the City of Boca Raton, Florida, adjourned at approximately 4:29 p.m. on Monday, August 8, 2005.

Vanessa Hines, Assistant City Clerk