

The Board of Commissioners of the City of Camden Redevelopment Agency held its Monthly Caucus on Wednesday, June 3, 2015, at Camden City Hall, Suite 1300, Camden, New Jersey.

Chair Marilyn Torres called the meeting to order at approximately 6:00 PM. Board Clerk Carla Rhodes called roll.

**Present:** MT, VB, MN, JR, and MS

**Absent:** ~~VB~~ CR

**Excused:** KH

**Attendees:** Sandra Ross Johnson, Beth Marlin, Carla Rhodes, Johanna Conyer, James Harveson, Olivette Simpson, and Sulena Robinson-Rivera, CRA; LaVerne Williams of Branch Village

Ms. Rhodes advised the Board that, pursuant to the requirements of the Open Public Meetings Act, adequate notice(s) had been posted in the Courier-Post, the Philadelphia Inquirer, and the Office of the City Clerk.

#### Review of Minutes

Dates of Meetings- May 6 and May 13 2015

**Motion:** Ayes:

**Nays:** Abstentions:

**Comments:** In addition to the electronic copy previously supplied, a hard copy of the minutes were distributed. Executive Director/Board Secretary Sandra Ross Johnson advised the board the final submission of minutes included the addition of votes for certain resolutions. Ms. Torres asked all Commissioners if they had an opportunity to review the minutes. There were no further comments or questions.

#### Executive Director's Report

Date of Meeting- June 3, 2015

**Motion:** Ayes:

**Nays:** Abstentions:

**Comments:**

In addition to the previously submitted written report, Ms. Johnson advised the Commissioners of the resignation of Project Manager Donna Helmes, following 12 years of service at CRA, to other employment. She reported that CRA is to be the recipient of four US Environmental Protection Agency grants of \$900k+. The grants will be managed by Economic Development Director James Harveson. A press conference is pending and all Commissioners will be invited to attend. It was noted that cashflow is very thin, but Directors are aggressively seeking to close deals. Staff is reduced to 10, but the same volume of work is being carried out. CRA needs to add staff and interviewing is underway. The Finance Committee will meet next week.

*NOTE: Commissioner Ramos arrived during this portion of the meeting.*

**Executive Director's Report (cont'd)**

**PRESENTATION**

Property Asset Manager/Project Coordinator-Redevelopment Sulena Robinson-Rivera was introduced. She presented an overview of CRA's Real Estate Asset Management Program. Substantial attention was devoted to the enhanced system of tracking properties. The goal is to execute redevelopment for the entire inventory.

Ms. Torres inquired about how the program relates to the recent finding of the auditor regarding property owned by CRA and asked how staff will ensure this doesn't happen again. Finance Director Johanna Conyers stated the incident occurred in 2005; however, recording of conveyance had yet to be done and the properties transferred to the CATO school project were carried on CRA's inventory list after transactions.

Ms. Conyer advised the Commissioners that the RAMP process, now, includes going back to 2003 when the CRA was re-instated and verifying that all conveyances are recorded by coordination with the tax collector and other departments. This will reduce the likelihood of additional findings.

Ms. Torres asked who maintains the land and stated this is critical, because the land is a liability. Ms. Robinson-Rivera advised of a variety of methods: Housing Director Olivette Simson operates a Clean & Green program and the 2015 baseline tour was conducted on June 2, City of Camden Department of Public Works (DPW), neighbors, and universities are among the resources.

Commissioner Javier Ramos inquired about how often the properties are cleaned. Ms. Robinson-Rivera reported CRA needs a funding source in order to issue an RFP so service can be expanded, adding that DPW assists when its schedule allows..

Commissioner Vance Bowman stated DPW is responsive to emergencies; it also operates a Quality of Life campaign.

Considerable discussion ensued regarding the feasibility of CRA creating and operating a service to sustain vacant parcels. The prevailing sentiment was that sustainability is important, however, the cost of employees is greater than the cost to maintain the properties through independent contractors.

Ms. Torres requested clarification on the term "reserved" status of properties on CRA's website. Ms. Robinson-Rivera advised the Commissioner the term applies to properties for which Redevelopment Agreements/Targeted Projects exist.

There were no further comments or questions.

**Resolutions for Review and Action**

**06-10-15A Resolution Authorizing the Amendment of Various Remediation, Planning, and Acquisition Grants from the Camden Economic Recovery Board Relating to Scope of Work, Allocation of Funds, and Terms of the Grants**

**Motion:**

**Ayes:**

**Nays:**

**Abstentions:**

**Comments:** This resolution was presented by Ms. Simpson. She advised the Commissioners that CRA has seven remaining grants with the NJ Economic Development Agency-Economic Recovery Board, require annual re-authorization. The proposed action parallels NJEDA-ERB's procedure.

As an example, Ms. Simpson advised the Commissioners that ERB grants cover planning and acquisitions in Whitman Park for the CHOICE project. Questions were posed by Mr. Bowman and Ms. Torres regarding elimination of funding for North Camden. Ms. Simpson advised the Commissioners that an award-winning plan for North Camden has been incorporated into the City's Master Plan.

There were no further comments or questions.

**06-10-15B Resolution Authorizing a Professional Services Agreement with Environmental Resolutions, Inc. to Complete a Preliminary Assessment/ASTM Phase I Site Assessment of Property Designated as Block 1184 Lot 5, Block 1182 Lot 5 and Block 1181 Lot 1 of the City of Camden Tax Map for an Amount Not to Exceed \$8,300 (Federal Street Properties)**

**Motion:**

**Ayes:**

**Nays:**

**Abstentions:**

**Comments:** This resolution was presented by Mr. Harveson. He advised the Commissioners that a preliminary assessment is a review of existing documents. This process is essential to ensuring CRA's *innocent purchaser* status.

Mr. Bowman inquired about the location of the property. Mr. Harveson stated it is the former Borden Chemical plant.

There were no further comments or questions.

**Public Comments**

Ms. LaVerne Williams of Branch Village asked if is CRA responsible for taking care of property until it is sold and who is currently maintaining the property. Ms. Johnson affirmed and advised that in some cases they are being maintained by the Yellow Jackets street services and DPW.

Ms. Williams also asked if any funds are leftover from the ERB grants. Ms. Simpson advised that the unused funds have yet to be dispersed by ERB.

**Old Business**

Beth Marlin, representing Board Counsel Mark Asselta, stated the previously authorized **Resolution Authorizing a Professional Services Agreement with a Title Company that Will Ensure the Transaction for the Purchaser to Provide a Title Report for Known as Block 181, Lots 65, 67 and 68 on the Camden City Tax Map Located in the Lanning Square Redevelopment Area for an Amount that is Reasonable** is no longer required.

**New Business**

None.

**Chairperson's Remarks and Observations**

None.

**Executive Session**

None.

**Adjournment**

This meeting adjourned at approximately 7:04 PM.

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