

MINUTES - ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY BOARD

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The Economic Development Advisory Board of the City of Fort Myers, Florida, met in regular session at Oscar M. Corbin, Jr. City Hall, 2200 Second Street, a meeting place in the City of Fort Myers, Florida, on Thursday, August 4, 2022, at 2:00 p.m. Present were: Chair Dennis Landfried, presiding, Vice Chair Jerome Miller, Regular Board Members Ori Lee Ford, John Kakatsch, Herb Strong, Ken Pariser, and Alternate Board Member Nannette Maxson. Also present were: Grant Alley, City Attorney, Steven Belden, Community Development Director, Gwen Carlisle, City Clerk (arrived at 2:26 p.m.), and Jennifer Myers, Recording Specialist. Absent: Regular Board Member Roy Kennix and Alternate Board Member Duane Dyar

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Landfried called the meeting to order at 2:01 p.m.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chair Landfried led the Pledge of Allegiance.

OATH OF OFFICE: Herb Strong (Ward 6)

Jennifer Myers, Recording Specialist administered the Oath of Office to Herb Strong and Board Member Strong introduced himself.

PUBLIC COMMENT - None

1. PRESENTATIONS

1.1. Update on revising the Parks and Recreation Master Plan *Elgin Hicks, Parks and Recreation Director*

Elgin Hicks, Parks and Recreation Director stated that the Board questioned if the revision of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan could be done internally and after discussions with his team and administration, it was determined that it would not be feasible. Staff is currently creating a scope of accomplishments for the next 10-15 years which will go into an RFP to revise the Parks and Recreation Master Plan which is scheduled to be put out on October 1, 2022 for 30 days.

Board Member Maxson arrived at 2:16 p.m.

Board Member Pariser inquired if the Beautification Advisory Board is actively meeting. Mr. Hicks replied that they meet monthly with Jose Parrilla, Parks Manager as their liaison. Vice Chair Miller inquired if there is funding in the upcoming fiscal year budget for the Master Plan. Mr. Hicks replied yes that it is a priority for management and the Parks and Recreation Department. Vice Chair Miller mentioned that he is a proponent of getting the City of Palms Park evaluated by a recreation consultant. Mr. Hicks replied that the City of Palms Park RFP will give some ideas of its best use. Vice Chair Miller felt that the City needs revenue sources dedicated to Parks and Recreation such as with a penny tax or a General Obligation (GO) Bond like the City of Cape Coral has in place. Mr. Hicks replied that once the Master Plan is finished, they will have a better idea of the amount of funds needed and will be looking into funding sources. Chair Landfried noted that the Board recommended to Council that they request to seek an extension on the deadline from the County for the \$1 million in escrow.

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Mr. Hicks replied that the City Manager reached out to the County Manager a couple months ago regarding an extension. Vice Chair Miller noted that he has previously volunteered in the Parks and Recreation Department with marketing wherein they produced a Parks and Recreation television show although it has not run in many years and suggested that the City could do a better job in marketing the park assets that they currently. Mr. Hicks replied that the City is in the middle of a new branding, and marketing the existing parks is being explored at this time. Board Member Ford asked that the Board review the scope for the RFP before it goes out to the public and that Mr. Hicks come to that meeting as well. Mr. Hicks replied that he will provide the RFP scope to the Board in September and will attend the meeting if possible.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

2.1. Approve Minutes of the July 7, 2022 meeting

MOTION: Board Member Kakatsch moved to approve the Minutes of the July 7, 2022 Regular Meeting; seconded by Board Member Strong; motion carried unanimously.

3. STAFF REPORTS

3.1. Phyllis Calloway, Southwest Florida Enterprise Center Director

Chair Landfried announced that Phyllis Calloway, Southwest Florida Enterprise Center Director was not present to give a report.

3.2. Steven Belden, Community Development Department Director

1. Monthly Development Activity Report

Steven Belden, Community Development Department Director reported that the permits issued over \$25,000.00 in value were approximately \$10 million in July, June totaled over \$32 million, May totaled approximately \$8 million, and April totaled approximately \$12 million showing a fluctuating trend.

Mr. Belden conveyed that the vacant Sears property at the Edison Mall was sold, there is a preapplication meeting today, and he showed 2 renderings of site plan proposals for development of that property that were being presented at the preapplication meeting. Discussion ensued regarding the site plan proposals.

Mr. Belden advised that there were several Zoom interviews for the Economic Development Director position and three candidates were selected for in-person interviews. Chair Landfried mentioned that he was invited to participate in the interviews and will report back to the Board at the next meeting.

Mr. Belden reported that the Council approved the RFP to analyze Midtown and market City owned property in and around Midtown. Vice Chair Miller inquired if there is a concurrent plan with The Collaboratory. Mr. Belden replied that The Collaboratory is contracting with a real estate consultant group to perform an analysis and provide a best use report as far as The Collaboratory's efforts are concerned. Board Member Ford inquired if the City is sending out the RFP and piggybacking on The Collaboratory's contract with the real estate

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consultants. Mr. Belden replied that after the RFP proposals come back, Council will then decide how to proceed.

Mr. Belden advised that Councilperson Bochette requested the City Manager and the City Attorney investigate micro-mobility opportunities wherein he was asked by the City Manager to assemble a group of staff members to investigate all components and issues that could exist with micro-mobility systems. The assembled group is researching all aspects of this matter and will bring it to this Board once the information is gathered. They are scheduled to have a meeting with a micro-mobility transportation company named Veo that is in use in Sarasota and other cities. Discussion ensued regarding micro-mobility.

Vice Chair Miller inquired about the status of the implementation process of the Florida International University (FIU) Community Economic Development Plan. Mr. Belden replied that he had a strategy meeting with Ned Murray, Florida International University (FIU) and John Talmage, Lee County Economic Development Director to formulate a core group to work on the implementation process of recommendations. At this time, corridor committees are being assembled and will coordinate with the Community Redevelopment Agenda (CRA). He is also working on updating the East Fort Myers District Plan with the CRA. Board Member Ford stated that his company has a contract with Lee County Economic Development Office to assist with their American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Workforce Training and Certification Program, and Small Business Technical Assistance Program. They are meeting with businesses to assess where it is and where it wants to go so that it can be more sustainable going forward. It was suggested that they coordinate efforts with the FIU implementation group. Mr. Belden replied that his group is planning on reaching out to coordinate efforts with the Lee County Economic Development Office as well.

Chair Landfried asked for an update on the Yacht Basin RFP. Mr. Belden replied that Suntex was selected, the City did its due diligence, and the City Manager is negotiating a contract with them at this time. Vice Chair Miller felt that patrons using the Yacht Basin for temporary dockage to visit Downtown should not be charged an expensive fee. Vice Chair Miller noted that the parking at the Oxbow Restaurant used to be public parking and is now changed to private Oxbow parking and when the restaurant is closed there is unused parking in which he will be looking into this parking change. Discussion ensued regarding the waterfront activation.

ADDITIONAL ITEM

Councilperson Burson presented each Board Member with a plaque as a token of appreciation for everything the Board does. He noted that a budget request has been made for \$25,000.00 for this Board to attend seminars and conferences to support furthering its work on behalf of the City. He thanked the Board for their invaluable work.

Chair Landfried thanked Councilperson Burson for being a great liaison to this Board and for meeting with him monthly to discuss pertinent issues.

4. CHAIR'S REPORT

Chair Landfried reported that he, Vice Chair Miller, and Board Member Kennix presented the Board's recommendations to Council at the August 1, 2022 City Council Meeting. He conveyed that a lot of what the Board is discussing and recommending gets movement. Chair

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Landfried gave a brief overview of the list of recommendations presented to the Council and discussion ensued.

City Clerk Carlisle stated that she is investigating a strategy to put the Planning Board and the Economic Development Advisory Board on the Granicus System so that the meetings can be viewed on the City website. Board Member Ford suggested that the City Manager or the Mayor invite the Committee Chairs to have a meeting and it may be more likely to happen. Chair Landfried stated that he has spoken to the Mayor about inviting the Committee Chairs to a meeting and the Mayor agreed to work on scheduling the meeting. He noted that the overlapping and communication with other Boards will get better once an Economic Development Director is hired.

Vice Chair Miller mentioned that at the Council meeting he was not able to expound upon his recommended Water Conservation Plan and would like to bring it back to Council with his recommended elements for the Water Conservation plan. He handed out elements for the Water Conservation Plan and discussion ensued. Chair Landfried stated that the Water Conservation Plan and Elements go back on the list of recommendations to Council. Board Member Ford inquired if the Environmental Advisory Board allows ex-officio members to sit on the Board. City Clerk Carlisle stated that there is an allowance for one ex-officio member on the Environmental Advisory Board. Board Member Ford suggested that someone from this Board, possibly the Vice Chair, could be the ex-officio member on the Environmental Advisory Board to represent this Board and can carry the information back and forth between the Boards. Chair Landfried stated that he will explore this and bring it back to the Board.

Vice Chair Miller left the meeting at 3:22 p.m.

Chair Landfried requested that the Board Members give some thought to their focus area perspectives and provide suggestions of adding or eliminating any of the current focus areas at the next meeting.

AGENDA REORDERED

7. OTHER BUSINESS

Board Member Ford noted that on the list of permits issued in July there are 2 that he would like to inquire about, however, the Community Development Director has left the meeting, and asked if he could address them at the next meeting. They are on City of Fort Myers properties at 3551 Shoemaker Lane for construction of commercial building and 2200 Edwards Drive for interior tenant improvement for a golf swing suite.

6. PRESENTATION TO COUNCIL

Chair Landfried requested adding the Water Conservation Plan and Elements to the list of recommendations to Council as item 1.

5. BOARD MEMBER FOCUS AREAS, COMMENTS AND CONCERNS

4.1. Report on MLK Boulevard Corridor (Board Member Maxson)

1. Update on the BCycle System progress

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Board Member Maxson reported that she has arranged for the owner of the BCycle System to visit Fort Myers and on August 16, 2022 a meeting has been scheduled at City Hall with the City Manager, Councilperson Bochette, City Attorney, City Engineer, and Public Works Director followed by a walking tour to discuss the positioning of BCycle locations.

- Report on business development/education assistance with FGCU, Enterprise Center and technical training (Board Member Pariser) – None

Board Member Pariser inquired if there can be a reach out to a Publix executive to advise them that there is no Publix from Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard (MLK) south to the city limits and explain the rationale behind their development. City Clerk Carlisle inquired what level of Publix executive would the Board like to bring to a meeting. Board member Pariser suggested inviting a real estate acquisition officer or district manager so the Board could give them ideas which could move them to evaluate the City further. Chair Landfried stated that he will speak with Councilperson Burson about inviting a Publix representative to a meeting as he may already have a connection through the Downtown Publix.

Board Member Pariser handed out and gave a brief overview of the following recommendations:

- 1: As an avid bicyclist and a visionary for new sources of income for our city my initial reaction would be to embrace the idea of E-bikes; however, after taking into account the liability of already extremely crowded sidewalks (and current bike paths) consisting of speed walkers; joggers; pedestrians; manual bicyclists and an outrageous amount of golf carts I cannot at this juncture support a license for an E-bike retailer until an infrastructure of bike only paths are established and created.
- 2: I support initiating another proposal/motion sent to Council to retain structural engineers to ascertain the soundness of City of Palms stadium facility inclusive of grandstands, offices and dugouts and that a determination on or before November 1, 2022 and/or request a six month extension from Lee County for the city to provide a definitive response regarding the structure and monies held in escrow for its status.
- 3: Invite LC Sherriff Marceno to attend/address November(?) meeting and suggest implementing a program similar to that of Sherriff Joe in Arizona utilizing inmate cleaning crews to improve maintenance of roadways and riparian areas
- 4: Recommend to Council that AT LEAST bi-annual ward meetings become mandatory.
- 5: Fully support “Ft Myers Alive” with utility pole flags, inviting public school student participation in form of contest for best slogan and art work, advertise in News Week as all citizens are not inclined to use or have access to technology.
- 6: FURTHER validate local brick and mortar businesses and work force with greater incentives/“point” credits for city projects such as McCullum Hall.

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7: Continue the effort to interact with/motivate other City Boards and formally, on a monthly basis, invite Board Chairpersons to attend our meetings.

Chair Landfried requested a schedule of the Ward meeting dates as it would be helpful for this Board's Members to attend their respective Ward meetings. Board Member Ford stated that the Ward meetings are scheduled by each individual Councilperson. City Clerk Carlisle replied that she will obtain and provide a schedule of the Ward meetings.

Chair Landfried inquired when the City's rebranding will be launched. City Clerk Carlisle replied that she has heard approximately 3 or 4 months. Board Member Ford mentioned that he previously made a recommendation to the City that there needs to be signage coming into the City which could be opening it up to the community and colleges to submit gateway signage ideas however, it was never developed. Chair Landfried noted that it could be in conjunction with the School Board as well. Board Member Pariser asked who is spearheading the City's rebranding. Chair Landfried replied that he will find out and bring it back to the Board.

Board Member Maxson stated that bike paths are being considered in conjunction with the BCycle System by positioning the docks where bike paths already exist or can be implemented.

- Report on Disadvantage Business Enterprise Program (Board Member Ford) - None
- Report on Palm Beach Boulevard corridor (Board Member Kakatsch) - None
- Report on affordable housing (Board Member Kennix) - None
- Report on water quality (Vice Chair Miller)
- Report on US 41 Corridor (Board Member Dyar) - None
- Report on Cultural, Sport, Tourism Development (Vice Chair Miller)

8. NEXT MEETING ANNOUNCEMENT – September 1, 2022

ADJOURNMENT: Board Member Pariser moved to adjourn the meeting at 3:54 p.m.; seconded by Board Member Kakatsch; motion carried unanimously.