

**City of New Bern
Redevelopment Commission Meeting
April 10, 2019 – 6:00 P.M.
Development Services Conference Room
303 First Street**

Members Present: Chair Tharesa Lee, Leander “Robbie” Morgan Jr., John Young, Beth Walker, Co-Chair Jaimee Bullock-Mosley, Steve Strickland, Maria Cho, Tabari Wallace

Members Absent: Kip Peregoy

Ex-Officio Members Present: Alderman Sabrina Bengel

Staff Present: Jeff Ruggieri, Executive Director of Development Services; Bradleigh Sceviour, Land and Community Administrator; Nadia Abdulhadi, Planner II; D’Aja Fulmore, Community Development Coordinator; Alice Wilson, GIS

Others Present: Jennifer Campbell, Recording Secretary

1. WELCOME AND ROLL CALL BY THARESA LEE, BOARD CHAIR

Chair Tharesa Lee called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes from the March 27, 2019 Redevelopment Commission meeting were presented for approval. Commissioner Kip Peregoy requested an amendment to line 294 through line 298 which stated, “Commissioner Peregoy inserted that the Commission agrees that they will never solve a Hurricane Florence issue, but have the assurance to tell residents that even if it rains three days their feet will stay dry. He also wanted to have the confidence to look those residents in eye and say they are being treated the same as those in Carolina Colors. They will have the same plan and protection as those in other neighborhoods of the city.” They were amended to read, “Commissioner Peregoy stated, and the Commission agreed, that they will never solve a Hurricane Florence issue, but need to be able to assure residents that even if it rains three days their feet will stay dry and have the confidence to look those residents in eye and say they will have the same plan and protection as those in other neighborhoods of the city, including Carolina Colors.”

Co-Chair Jaimee Bullock-Mosley made a motion to approve the minutes as amended, which was seconded by Commissioner Steve Strickland. The motion passed unanimously.

3. PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment at this time.

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43 4. MISSION STATEMENT EXERCISE
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45 The Commission then transitioned to discussion over the proposed mission statement that had been
46 discussed at the March 27, 2019 meeting. Staff Member Bardleigh Sceviour introduced the two
47 suggestions given at the previous meeting and then presented a draft of the proposed mission
48 statement. It reads as follows,
49

50 **“New Bern Redevelopment Commission: Leading the way for community transformation and**
51 **improvement. Taking ownership of and addressing directly community needs in the areas of**
52 **public health, infrastructure, housing and economic development. We approach our task with**
53 **an eye towards accountability, transparency and public engagement. “**
54

55 Suggestions were made by Commissioner John Young to some of the wording of statement. He
56 suggested to remove the period at the end of the first sentence, behind improvement and replace
57 it with the word “by”. He also suggested to remove “We approach” and replace it with “The
58 Commission will approach”. Also, he thought to removed “with an eye towards” and replace it
59 with “through”, in the very last sentence.
60

61 There was some discussion amongst the Commission as to whether or not the verse “taking
62 ownership” should be removed. Some thought the word might be misconstrued by the
63 community. When asked for his opinion, Commissioner Leander Morgan Jr. did not think the
64 community would take issue with it. Mr. Jeff Ruggieri inserted that the reason the wording is
65 included in the statement is due to the fact that the Commission is effectively taking ownership
66 of a lot of the issues especially with the rental housing. He went on to explain that the
67 Commission will be owners of rental housing in the effort to take ownership of the problems and
68 be an example to the community of what housing stock should be, how it should look and how it
69 should function. (looks like a lot of repeated words)
70

71 Commissioner Tabari Wallace was in agreement with Commissioner Morgan and added that the
72 wording “addressing directly” should be transposed to read “directly addressing” in the second
73 sentence. Commissioner Maria Cho commented that the wording “bridge between the
74 Commission and its’ Citizens needed to be included somewhere within the statement. She also
75 thought to replace “through”, Commissioner Young’s suggestion, and replacing it with “by
76 applying”. Commissioner Cho also suggested including the word “vital” before the word “areas”
77 in the first sentence.
78

79 Co-Chair Bullock-Mosley agreed with Commissioner Cho’s assertion that the word “citizens” is
80 essential to the mission and should be considered. Chair Lee concluded the discussion that staff
81 would take all suggestion and present a final product at the next meeting.
82

83 5. VACANT LOT DISCUSSION
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Before Mr. Ruggieri began his presentation, Chair Lee presented some statistics regarding vacant abandoned land. She stated that Charlotte had 32,000 acres of abandoned vacant land, which comprised 21.4% of the total land area. She went on to state that Durham held 3,052 acres of abandoned vacant land which comprised 13.4% of the total land area. She then gave Mr. Ruggieri the floor.

Mr. Ruggieri began by presenting data that has been accumulated by Development Services staff.

Rehab, Conservation, and Reconditioning Area Justification

- The Redevelopment Area consists of 1,888 parcels, 1,047 of which are developed. This is an astonishing **45.54% vacancy rate** for a once fully developed area.
- Building conditions are variable. There are **96 active minimum building cases** in the area. Contrast that to around 70 for the City at large.
- Over a 1 year period we received **157 nuisance abatement complaints**. This compares to 286 for the rest of the city. (55%)
- **20.49% of all crimes** committed in last 5 years have occurred within proposed boundary
- All of this takes place in an area that constitutes only **2.1% of the total land area and 10.1% of the population of the City.**

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A question was posed as to whether the data should be included on the web-site so the public is aware of why the Commission is committed to changing the statistics. Co-Chair Bullock-Mosley stated that her concern in placing these statistics online without further context is the message could be lost and have a negative impact of people's perception of the area.

Chair Lee added that when an individual is looking for context or the full picture of a conversation, they can find it in minutes when they go to read them. Commissioner Morgan stated that he would be interesting revisiting the data in another twelve months. He explained that if introduced right now, it would raise questions as to why this is the case. He also stated that the data startled him and what really stood out to him was that 10% of the population were having to deal with 20% of the crime.

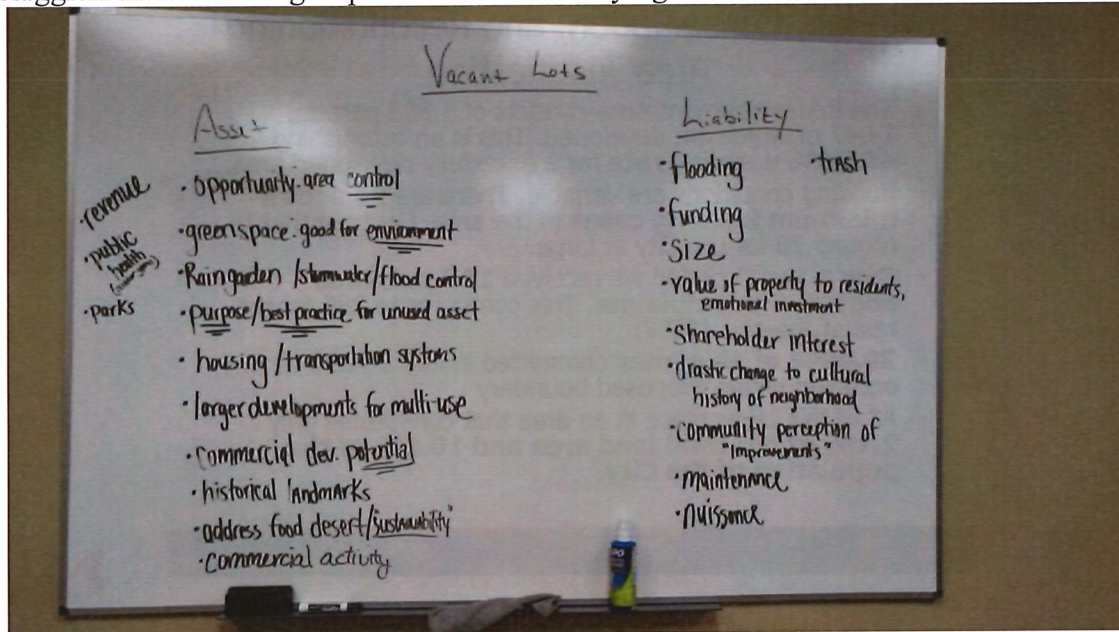
Co-Chair Bullock-Mosley asked what type of crimes the crime statistic pertained to. It was clarified stating that the statistic reflected actual cases that generated a report. It was also clarified that these reports have not been adjudicated. Commissioner Wallace emphasized that the Commission would want to be careful as to the view point that is shared and how the shareholders are being educated on what the data actually mean.

Commissioner Cho asked if the numbers included vacant land and buildings. Mr. Ruggieri clarified that the numbers included vacant land and no buildings. Commissioner Strickland included that

the numbers included in the data will increase or worsen before they get better, because of what the Commission is doing and plans that will put into place.

Mr. Ruggieri then gave an overview of the GIS map and the color coding that has been included to identify different pieces of property. The coding that was created included green marking vacant lots, blue outlined indicated city and county joint owned lots, red is solely City owned and anything not green indicates foreclosure.

Mr. Ruggieri then lead the group in a time of identifying assets and liabilities.



Commissioner Strickland began by stating that an asset of the vacant land is that it provides an opportunity to do something with the area without taking from the community. Mr. Ruggieri termed this as site control. Chair Lee stated that an asset was green space as they are a positive impact on the environment. Alderman Bengel referred to a presentation from Dawn Zimmer; Mayor of Hoboken, New Jersey and her idea regarding rain gardens to control rain water. Alderman Bengel added that this idea could potentially be used on the FEMA lots. Mr. Ruggieri termed this idea as "rainwater/ storm water/ flood control." Commissioner Cho inserted that when determining what should be placed in the green spaces, it should be done wisely as to ensure the space can be utilized by the shareholders who live in the community, especially when thinking of mitigation.

Commissioner Young suggested that the vacant lots were an asset in their great potential for modestly priced development for housing. He went on to say that this was an asset to utilize and will not need to go to the suburbs in order to develop. Chair Lee stated that this idea could also be deemed a liability because of the flooding potential.

Alderman Bengel about the Redevelopment Boundary line that went through five points and Trent Court and wanted to know if there were any vacant lots there. Mr. Ruggieri stated that the Commission did, but there is a lot of homeownership in that area. There was further discussion

143 around some other lots around Trent Court and which Trent Court apartments were damaged
144 during the hurricane.



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146
147 Mr. Ruggieri asked if there were any problems associated with the lots? Commissioner Cho stated
148 that funding may be issue and that the lots could be expensive. Commissioner Strickland stated
149 that since there are no an unlimited number, size will be relevant. He added that the owned lots
150 will have a high sentimental attachment with the home owners. Chair Lee asked if it were possible
151 to have multi-use commercial properties for youth and gave several examples of what might could
152 be implemented.

153
154 Co-Chair Bullock-Mosley stated that a liability she sees is the potential of drastic change to the
155 character and cultural history of the neighborhood. Chair Lee asked in regard to change and the
156 "Greater Good" can both change for the greater good and retaining the cultural history of the
157 community happen. Co-Chair Bullock-Mosley responded by saying that the tricky thing with the
158 "Greater Good" is who measures what is good, good for whom and for how long. She went on to
159 explain that one concern for the community is that if the Commission takes and makes
160 improvements on these lots and drives property values up, then the local community members will
161 no longer be able to afford their properties. She gave examples of other communities of Hilton

Head, South Carolina, and stipulated that although this is not in any way the plan of the Commission, it could be perceived that way by members of the community.

Commissioner Morgan Jr. asked if certain pieces of property could be used as historic monument space and landmarks. Mr. Ruggieri confirmed that this could happen. Alderman Bengel inserted that Craven Terrace just installed story boards telling the story of that area.

Co-Chair Bullock-Mosley sited an asset that would be the opportunity of addressing the food desert in the area in a meaningful way. There was then discussion about the community gardens located around the community. Co-Chair Bullock-Mosley included that she would also like to see some commercial property utilized to provide access to fruit and vegetables.

Commissioner Young commented on how few FEMA lots there were, which surprised him. Commissioner Morgan Jr. referenced an area between Pavey Avenue and Murray Street and asked to know who the lot belonged to or if it was vacant land. Commissioner Young also included the liability of development of this area could potentially be the animal nuisance and vermin control. Mr. Ruggieri stated that maintenance for these lots could also be a liability. They went on to identify other lots and their homeowners around Duffyfield.

A suggestion was made that nuisance abatement fines could be directed toward the Redevelopment Commission to create a funding stream, and Alderman Bengel stated she would definitely support it. Staff Member Nadia Abdulhadi made the suggestion of including outdoor gyms. Alderman Bengel included the possibility of walking paths around the community.

Commissioner Morgan Jr. asked about the ownership of a large tract of land adjacent to Garfield Street. Mr. Ruggieri stated that it was foreclosed land. Commissioner Morgan Jr. asked why it never was opened up. Mr. Ruggieri stated that it was really wet land. Commissioner Strickland stated that this location was included in a suggestion he made previously, making this a water runoff area.

Commissioner Strickland asked if consideration had been given in connecting Lincoln Street to the back of the hospital. Mr. Ruggieri and Chair Lee both said there had been discussion regarding this. After further discussion of ownership of certain lots, Chair Lee concluded the discussion of vacant lots and transitioned to new business.

6. NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Ruggieri informed the Commission that the Board of Directors for Habitat for Humanity voted against partnering with the Redevelopment Commission in building homes that were originally agreed upon. Alderman Bengel asked if there was any explanation behind their decision and Mr. Ruggieri stated that he did not receive any.

Mr. Ruggieri stated that the program is not terminal and he is continuing to move forward with the program by putting together a Request for Proposal. He continued by saying that he is working with consultants around the country who have done this and see how many houses can be built for

207 \$200,000 while including certain guidelines, such as shape, size and handicap accessibility when
208 submitting the request.

209
210 Commissioner Morgan Jr. asked if a community tour would be appropriate again since the previous
211 tour was conducted before the storm. He gave some examples of homeowners that will not be
212 returning to their homes due to extensive storm damage. He included that these homes were outside
213 the redevelopment area. Chair Lee stated that before the Commission revisits this part of the
214 Redevelopment area, there will need to be a visit to the area around Trent Court.

215
216 Chair Lee also addressed the upcoming public meeting and the need to prepare for the meeting,
217 and said she will meet with Mr. Ruggieri and pick dates that both areas can be visited. She also
218 would like to include Carolina Avenue property in the tour, since it is Trent Court replacement
219 housing. Commissioner Morgan Jr. stated that the Omega Center has been secured for the June 26,
220 2019 public meeting and discussion will be had in the near future regarding the seating
221 arrangement for the meeting.

222
223 Alderman Bengel asked that since the redevelopment boundary has been approved by the Planning
224 and Zoning Board, does it then go before the Board of Alderman. Mr. Ruggieri stated that the
225 boundary is not required to go before the Board of Alderman once approved. She followed with
226 the question asking what still needed to be presented to the Board of Alderman. Mr. Ruggieri stated
227 that the Redevelopment plan would need to go before the Board. She asked if the plan was ready
228 to go and Mr. Ruggieri stated that it was not yet ready.

229
230 Alderman Bengel then asked if the plan had to be in place before the property was transferred to
231 the Redevelopment Commission. Mr. Ruggieri stated that there would be a draft of a plan in June,
232 but the property could be moved now. She asserted that she would like to place the property on
233 the agenda for the Board of Alderman meeting while there is momentum. Mr. Ruggieri stated that
234 ideally the Commission would have a plan in place before individuals start asking about properties.

235
236 Commissioner Morgan Jr. asked when a community clean-up would be appropriate to get the
237 community engaged and the residents empowered. Chair Lee suggested that if there is interest in
238 this, Commissioner Morgan Jr. put a plan and date together and report back to the Commission.
239 Mr. Ruggieri proposed doing it before the public meeting. Commissioner Cho commented that it
240 might be positive to have a date and plan in place and announce it at the public meeting.

241
242 Chair Lee stated that it could be done either before the public meeting or announced at the meeting
243 as long as a plan and details were in place. Mr. Ruggieri added that it would be a benefit to break
244 it down into sections. With no further discussion Chair Lee announced the next meeting in two
245 weeks where the Commission would vote on the mission statement.

246
247 Mr. Ruggieri stated that the final discussion would be land use, where discussion would extend
248 through a couple of meetings and then would wrap up. Alderman Bengel commended the
249 Commission and their passion and wisdom as work through creating the plan. Commissioner
250 Young also commended the Development Services Staff for all the hard work they put into making
251 the process possible.

253 ADJOURN

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255 With no further discussion the meeting was adjourned at 7:31 p.m.

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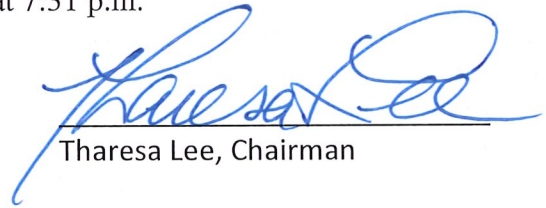
258 Date approved: 5-8-19

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261 Attest: 

262 D'Aja Fulmore, Recording Secretary


Tharesa Lee, Chairman