

City of New Bern
Redevelopment Commission Meeting
Wednesday, August 28, 2019- 6PM
Development Services Conference Room
303 First Street

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

Ex-Officio Members Present:

Members Excused (E)/Absent (A): Leander “Robbie” Morgan Jr (E)., John Young (E)

Staff Present: Jeff Ruggieri, Director of Development Services; Amanda Ohlenschlen, Community and Economic Development Manager; D’Aja Fulmore, Community Development Coordinator; Alice Wilson, GIS Manager; Nadia Abdulhadi, Planner II

1. Welcome and Call To Order

Chair Tharesa Lee called the meeting to order at 6:01pm and began with a reading of the Commission’s guiding principles, initiated by Commissioner Tabari Wallace.

2. Approval of Minutes

The minutes of August 14, 2019 Redevelopment Commission meeting were presented for review and approval. Co-Chair Jaimee Bullock-Mosley made a motion to approve the minutes. Commissioner Kip Peregoy seconded this motion.

3. Public Comment

Chair Lee opened the floor for public comments. No comments were received.

4. Board Discussion on 8/14/2019 Request by Lovay Singleton (Veterans Employment Base Camp Organic Garden) to Purchase 1301 Main Street

Jeff Ruggieri, director of Development Services, facilitated the board discussion and began with a general overview of Ms. Lovay Singleton’s presentation from the previous meeting. Mr. Ruggieri reminded commissioners that Ms. Singleton is the executive director of Veterans Employment Base Camp Organic Garden and the organization is looking to purchase the property located at 1301 Main Street. Mr. Ruggieri explained that this property is adjacent to the organic garden that the organization currently has, and the home would be used for further training opportunities. Mr. Ruggieri told commissioners that the organization has come to the Redevelopment Commission because the Board of Aldermen has frozen all properties within the

commission's redevelopment boundary, pending the Redevelopment Commission plan that will soon be completed. Mr. Ruggieri explained that if an attempt was made to sell the property, the Commission would have to make a recommendation to the Board of Aldermen to give the property to the Commission for the conveyance to be done. Mr. Ruggieri opened the floor for commissioners to ask Ms. Singleton and her staff any questions.

Commissioner Steve Strickland asked Ms. Singleton how many veterans would be housed in the front portion of the home. Ms. Singleton responded by saying that the front portion of the house will be a single bedroom or used for a small family. Ms. Singleton explained that the house is too small to make it like transitional housing and that the house would mainly be used for emergency overflow. Ms. Singleton told commissioners that in emergency situations, many organizations usually have to pull together money to put veterans in a hotel. Ms. Singleton explained that this home would help alleviate some of that, and the back of the home would be used for training opportunities for veterans.

Commissioner Maria Cho asked Ms. Singleton how long veterans will be able to stay in the home in the case of emergency. Ms. Singleton explained that veterans will not be able to stay longer than a week and that this will give the Department of Veteran Affairs time to get things in gear to provide assistance. Co-Chair Jaimee Bullock asked Ms. Singleton if her organization has the ability to purchase the home and asked Ms. Singleton to describe the organization's plan for acquisition. Ms. Singleton responded stating that the organization had tried to purchase the property before. Ms. Singleton explained that the adjacent properties have already been purchased and were acquired by bidding 25% of the actual value of the property. Ms. Singleton told commissioners that is what the organization would be able to afford if given the opportunity to purchase. Ms. Singleton explained that Habitat for Humanity would assist in the process of renovating the home.

Commissioner Steve Strickland asked if Ms. Singleton currently has the money to begin renovations if the property was given or if it would require a money gathering process. Ms. Singleton responded that it likely would not require a money gathering process and that the organization currently has some funds that are already available. Ms. Singleton told commissioners that without having Habitat for Humanity seeing the inside of the home, it is hard to speak on the extent to which renovations would need to be done and what the cost would be. Commissioner Strickland asked if the organization had a timeline at this point and explained that he understood that it is highly unlikely to have a timeline, if Habitat for Humanity has not yet seen the inside of the home. Ms. Singleton agreed and stated that she hopes it will not be a long process.

Co-Chair Bullock told Mr. Ruggieri that others in the community had come before the Commission with similar requests. Co-Chair Bullock inquired about procedures the Commission will use when making certain conveyances to certain citizens. Mr. Ruggieri explained that he would have to review state statutes to get an answer to that question. Commissioner Kip Perogoy joined in and stated that one of the significant differences between Ms. Singleton and other requests presented to the Commission is that Ms. Singleton is actually wanting to acquire the property, not asking for it to be given to her. Commissioner Beth Walker also joined in and

emphasized that the property was previously going to be sold to the organization, but it was discovered that someone was living in the home.

Commissioner Strickland stated that he really supports the vision of the organization and what Ms. Singleton plans to do. Commissioner Strickland explained that although he supports, he does not think it is best to go to the Board of Aldermen at this time for this one parcel, when considering the requests of others that have come before the board and have not yet received responses from certain requests. Co-Chair Bullock agreed.

Chair Theresa Lee told Ms. Singleton that no decision would be made at this point by the Commission and explained that the organization will likely be invited back at a future meeting. Chair Lee explained that the remainder of the meeting would be focused on the draft redevelopment plan. Commissioners thanked Ms. Singleton and her staff for attending the meeting for the board discussion.

5. Review and Commission Recommendation of Redevelopment Plan

The commission transitioned to the review of the draft Redevelopment Plan, facilitated by Mr. Ruggieri. Mr. Ruggieri told commissioners that he had made corrections to the plan suggested by Commissioner Perego that included grammatical errors. Commissioner Cho began by discussing the concern around the interpretation of "eminent domain". Commissioner Cho asked if eminent domain had been used by the City before. Mr. Ruggieri that eminent domain is a last resort and that the idea is to never have to use it.

Co-Chair Bullock joined in and explained that she understood how eminent domain could be something that people would be sensitive about. However, Co-Chair Bullock noted that whether or not it is explicitly stated in the plan, it is still a power that the Commission has by statute. Co-Chair Bullock stated that she felt it is a good thing to have it listed in the plan to be completely transparent with community members. Commissioner Strickland asked commissioners if they feel it would be a good idea to potentially have another community meeting about the redevelopment before it goes before the Board of Aldermen. Commissioner Strickland explained that this could provide the opportunity for the community to get an understand of what the Commission is doing. Co-Chair Bullock expressed that the only concern she would have with the suggestion of a community meeting is that Planning and Zoning could change the plan. Co-Chair Bullock explained that if a change happens after the plan has been discussed with the community, it could create distrust and cause the Commission to lose some credibility. Commissioners discussed the role of Planning and Zoning and agreed with Co-Chair Bullock about potentially causing distrust.

Commissioner Perego explained that the Commission will likely receive questions about Stanley White Recreation Center at a community meeting and that would put the Commission in a place of not being able to respond because no one holds the answers at this present time. Commissioners took time to explore different feelings community members may share if a public meeting is held to discuss the Redevelopment Plan. Commissioners continued to express the importance of maintaining trust within the community and making sure all actions taken align with their guiding principles and commitment to the community.

Chair Lee led commissioners back to the focus on whether or not a community meeting would need to be held before the plan goes to Planning and Zoning. Chair Lee asked for a show of hands from commissioners who recommended having the Redevelopment Plan go to Planning and Zoning first, following a community meeting to discuss the plan with community members. All commissioners present raised their hands. Commissioner Peregoy made a motion for the plan to be submitted to the Planning and Zoning board for their October meeting. Co-Chair Bullock seconded the motion. All commissioners voted in favor of the motion.

Chair Lee moved forward to begin discussing the finance component of the plan. Chair Lee told commissioners that she would like to appoint three commissioners to set up a meeting to go speak with the Board of Aldermen about the plan. Commissioners deliberated around scheduling and made attempts to figure out the best way to get the financial component of the plan discussed with the Board of Aldermen. Chair Lee appointed Commissioner Peregoy, Co-Chair Bullock, and Commissioner Strickland to speak with City aldermen. Commissioner Cho pointed out minor corrections that needed to be made concerning parcels within the plan. Mr. Ruggieri responded by stating that he would take a closer look at parcel numbers to make sure all the information is correct. Commissioner Peregoy highlighted that the word "plan" is mentioned throughout the Redevelopment Plan, without an official name of a plan. Mr. Ruggieri responded by saying that would be changed to say the "Greater Five Points Transformation Plan". Co-Chair Bullock brought this portion of the meeting to a close by saying she thoroughly enjoyed contributed to the History section of the plan and thanking commissioners for being given the opportunity to research and contribute historical content to the plan.

6. New Business

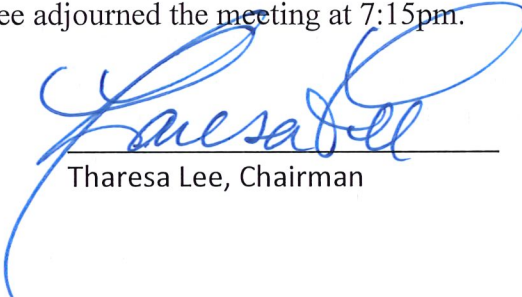
Chair Lee asked commissioners if there was any new business to share. Commissioner Cho stated that a partnership between the North Carolina Office of Recovery and Resiliency and NC Emergency Management had been formed to provide information sessions on hurricane preparedness. Commissioner Cho told commissioners that a session would take place on Thursday, August 29th, at 6pm at St Peters AME Zion Church in New Bern.

7. Adjournment

There being no future business to discuss, Chairman Lee adjourned the meeting at 7:15pm.

Date approved: 9-25-19

Attest: 
Amanda Ohlensehlen, Recording Secretary


Theresa Lee, Chairman