

City of New Bern
Redevelopment Commission Meeting
January 13, 2021
303 First Street- Development Services

Members Present: Chair Tharesa Lee, Co-Chair Kip Peregoy, Maria Cho, Steve Strickland, Beth Walker, John Young, Julian Tripp, John Young, Leander Morgan

Ex-Officio Members Present: Alderwoman Sabrina Bengel

Members Excused (E)/Absent (A): Tabari Wallace (A)

Staff Present: Jeff Ruggieri, Director of Development Services; Amanda Ohlensehlen, Community and Economic Development Manager; Alice Wilson, GIS Manager; Nadia Abdul-Hadi, Planner I

1. Welcome and Call to Order

Chair Tharesa Lee called this meeting to order at 6:02 PM and began with a reading of the Commission's guiding principles.

2. Public Comment

No public comment was received.

3. Election of Officer- Vice Chairperson

Chair Tharesa Lee asked Commissioners for nominations for a new Vice Chairperson of the Commission. Commissioner Beth Walker made a motion to nominate Commissioner Kip Peregoy as Vice Chairperson and this motion was seconded by Commissioner Steve Strickland. The motion carried unanimously.

4. Housing Subcommittee Authority to Negotiate Property Acquisition and Make Preliminary Offers on Property

Jeff Ruggieri, director of Development Services, explained that the Housing Subcommittee is seeking approval from the Commission to negotiate property acquisition and make preliminary offers on properties. Mr. Ruggieri explained that this would be beneficial with timeliness and aid in acquiring properties faster. Mr. Ruggieri stated that the Commission's regular meeting schedule does not provide the timing needed to negotiate quickly. Chair Lee responded by telling Mr. Ruggieri that she agreed it would be best to take this approach. Commissioner Maria Cho asked if there is language or written protocol regarding the negotiation process. Mr. Ruggieri responded that there is not a process or written protocol that he is aware of. Alderwoman Sabrina Bengel asked if the Subcommittee would sign the contract to purchase homes. Mr. Ruggieri stated that the subcommittee would only negotiate, and the 30-day due diligence period would provide an appropriate approval time for the Commission. Commissioner Peregoy clarified that the subcommittee would negotiate but would not sign documents, as that would be brought back to the Commission's Chairperson. Commissioner Strickland agreed that this approach would

prove to be effective in moving transactions forward. Commissioner John Young stated that the previous resolution does not state that the Chairperson will sign off on any offers made on acquiring properties and would need to be updated. Attorney Jaimee Bullock-Mosley stated that if the Commission wants that added in the resolution, it would be easy to do. Alderwoman Bengel stated that she would be in favor of the Housing Subcommittee negotiating and making an offer to purchase ahead of presenting to the entire Commission. Alderwoman Bengel expressed that this would provide legal covering for the Commission to acquire the property without risking properties being sold to other buyers who are ready to purchase. Before moving forward, the Commission agreed that all preliminary offers would be signed by the Chairperson of the Commission. Commissioner Steve Strickland made a motion to grant housing subcommittee authority to negotiate and submit preliminary offers to purchase property in the redevelopment area boundary. This motion was seconded by Commissioner Beth Walker. The motion carried unanimously.

5. Committee Updates

Commissioner Maria Cho asked Commissioner Young if he had any feedback on ethno-drama presented by North Carolina Central University. Commissioner Young stated that he enjoyed it and thought it was beneficial for the target community. Commissioner Maria Cho explained that the ethno-drama addresses COVID-19 disproportionately affecting black communities and presents best health practices to avoid contracting the virus. Commissioner Cho stated that it would be good to present the community with the importance of getting the vaccine and to actively work to address misinformation in the community. Commissioner Robbie Morgan agreed about residents in the community being misinformed and the importance of making sure residents get the right information. Local pastor, Dr. Holmes stated that his church has been providing assistance to families in the community by providing food baskets and funding to families in need. Pastor Holmes stated that this has been done alongside providing community education on vaccination. Commissioner Cho told the Commission that food insecurity remains an expressed community concern, along with the need for financial assistance. Commissioner Cho also stated that the community encourages more City involvement. Dr. Holmes stated that COVID testing sites are being selected in the community to assist those who lack transportation.

Mr. Ruggieri provided an update that the next neighborhood cleanup will take place on January 29, 2021 in the Walt Bellamy community. Mr. Ruggieri explained that litter in this area is not as bad as others. Mr. Ruggieri also told the Commission that the City's Public Works Department will still place community dumpsters and cut away overgrowth on lots. Mr. Ruggieri stated that flyers will be distributed within the community to advertise the City's Junk Car Removal Program. Mr. Ruggieri stated that he would be speaking with the City's Public Information Officer to advertise the program on the City's website. Mr. Ruggieri gave a final update, stating that the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program will be used to assist low-moderate income households in need of assistance to meet minimum housing code.

6. Old Business/New Business

No new business was presented.

Commissioner Morgan made a motion to adjourn. This motion was seconded by Commissioner Walker. This meeting adjourned at 6:45pm.

Pursuant to **NC General Statute 143-318.11(a)(5) Closed Sessions**; A motion was made by Commissioner Beth Walker to enter Closed Session. This motion was seconded by Commissioner Maria Cho.

Date approved: 4/14/2021


Theresa Lee, Chairman

Attest: 
D'Aja Fulmore, Recording Secretary

