

The Board of Commissioners of the City of Camden Redevelopment Agency held its Regular Monthly and Reorganizational Meeting on Wednesday, January 7, 2015, at Camden City Hall, 520 Market Street, 13th Floor Conference Room, Camden, New Jersey.

Chair Marilyn Torres called the meeting to order at 6:05 PM. Board Clerk Carla Rhodes called roll.

Present: MT, VB JR, MS, and JV
Absent: KH, MN

Attendees: Saundra Ross Johnson (via telephone), Mark Asselta, Carla Rhodes, Johanna Conyer, and Olivette Simpson, CRA; Victor Figueroa, Chuck Valentine, and Mike Mavuro of the City of Camden Housing Authority, and LaVerne Williams of Branch Village

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

Nominations & Elections

Board Counsel Mark Asselta stated the purpose of the Re-Organizational Meeting and presided over the election of the Camden Redevelopment Agency 2015 Board of Commissioners' chairperson.

Chairperson

Councilwoman Marilyn Torres

Motion: VB, JV **Ayes:** MT, VB, JR, MS, and JV
Nays: **Abstentions:**

Comments: Chair Torres thanked Commissioner Bowman and the other members of the board for their vote of confidence as well as their service. She also thanked the CRA employees for their hard work and stated it has been a pleasure working with them.

Vice Chairperson

Vance Bowman

Motion: JV, JR **Ayes:** MT, VB, JR, MS, and JV
Nays: **Abstentions:**

Comments: Commissioner Bowman thanked the commissioners for his re-election and stated he will be more accessible, now that his higher education is completed and certifications have been obtained.

Treasurer

Jose Vazquez

Motion: VB, MS **Ayes:** MT, VB, JR, MS, and JV
Nays: **Abstentions:**

Review of Minutes

Date of Meetings-December 4, 2014 and December 10, 2014

Motion: JV, VB **Ayes:** MT, VB, JR, MS, and JV

Nays: **Abstentions:**

Comments: Chairperson Torres asked if all Commissioners had an opportunity to review the minutes. There were no comments or questions.

Executive Director's Report

Date of Meeting-January 14, 2015.

Motion: JV, VB **Ayes:** MT, VB, JR, MS, and JV

Nays: **Abstentions:**

Comments:

Executive Director Sandra Ross Johnson expressed gratitude for the board's support and thanked CRA's staff for their hard work while under-staffed. She also thanked Mark Asselta for his efforts.

Two walk-on resolutions were noted.

The passing of Pastor Ron Green of New Life Ministries was announced. He played an important role in Whitman Park and was part of Mayor Redd's Choice Neighborhood Initiative Executive Leadership Team. His memorial service will be held Friday, January 16, 2015; the funeral will follow on Saturday morning. Additional details will be provided.

Ms. Johnson also reported that Commissioner Mirta Nieves is attending a class at Notre Dame, so she was not be able to participate in the meeting.

Representatives of the Housing Authority of the City of Camden (HACC)—Victor Figueroa, Chuck Valentine, and Mike Mavuro—were introduced and the Choice Neighborhood Initiative Plan was presented. HACC is the lead applicant for the \$30 million grant, the City of Camden is co-applicant, and CRA is a co-housing entity leader with the Michaels Organization, which is HACC's procured developer.

Mr. Valentine pointed to Roosevelt Manor and Westfield Acres as recent examples of HACC's success and noted HACC is the #1 housing authority in the state of New Jersey for developed properties. He also informed the commissioners that some \$400 million of activity has been executed throughout the city over the last 12 years. The Choice Neighborhood Initiative planning process has been underway for two years with 40 participants. This entailed conducting over 730 surveys and more than 30 meetings. The plan focuses on the Mt. Ephraim Neighborhood and addresses the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) investment in Branch Village. At HUD's suggestion, the plan has been streamlined to encompass a smaller geographic area. A copy of the PowerPoint was distributed.

The CRA Board is being asked to approve the role of CRA in the homeownership component portion of the Housing Plan, which seeks to provide over 50 units to support anticipated workforce development activity in the area.

Executive Director's Report (cont'd)

Mr. Bowman requested clarification on the plan for workforce housing. Mr. Valentine explained that HUD doesn't want pockets of poverty, so housing authorities are encouraged to develop models that encourage mixed-income community development that provides less subsidized units.

Requirements for the grant submission include site-control as a threshold. CRA has ownership of several locations the application included in the redevelopment area.

Ms. Torres asked for details pertaining to relocation of current residents. Mr. Valentine informed the commissioners that HACC has relocated over 1,000 families. He provided background regarding the available alternatives.

If awarded the grant, CRA will build on vacant property or renovate vacant structures. Relocation will not be required.

Mr. Bowman expressed concern about the loss of tax revenues attributable to subsidized housing. Mr. Valentine explained that currently properties are not generating revenue. Redevelopment will create a tax base.

Mr. Valentine provided examples of market development resulting through mixed-income redevelopment, such as Baldwin's Run, which significantly improved property values in East Camden and lead to a thriving small business/retail infusion.

He also shared personal background regarding growing up in public housing and explained how the Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) system generates revenue.

Mr. Valentine will provide additional details regarding revenue generation. Ms. Johnson will report on the projection of Economic Opportunity Act-related jobs in February.

Resolutions for Review and Action

01-14-15A Resolution Establishing the Board of Commissioners' Meeting Schedule for 2015

Motion: VB, JV, **Ayes:** MT, VB, JR, MS, and JV

Nays: **Abstentions:**

Comments: There were no comments or questions.

01-14-15B Resolution Authorizing a Professional Services Agreement with Brownfield Redevelopment Solutions, Inc. to Provide Environmental Management Services on an Hourly Rate Basis for a Period of One Year

Motion: VB, JV **Ayes:** MT, VB, JR, MS, and JV

Nays: **Abstentions:**

Comments: There were no comments or questions.

Resolutions for Review and Action (cont'd)

01-14-15C Resolution Authorizing a Memorandum of Understanding with the City of Camden, the Housing Authority of the City of Camden, Coopers Ferry Partnership, and Center for Family Services, Inc. for the Choice Neighborhoods Implementation Grant Program (WALK-ON)

Motion: JV, VB **Ayes:** MT, VB, JR, MS, and JV

Nays: **Abstentions:**

Comments: There were no comments or questions.

01-14-15D Resolution Authorizing a Joint Venture Agreement with Michaels Development Company I, L.P. Regarding the Housing Implementation Entity for the Choice Neighborhoods Initiative Implementation Grant Program (WALK-ON)

Motion: JV, VB **Ayes:** MT, VB, JR, MS, and JV

Nays: **Abstentions:**

Comments: Mr. Bowman noted advance documentation will be required prior to voting in the future.

Public Comments

Ms. LaVerne Williams, a resident of Branch Village since 1975, objected to criticism of subsidized housing and people who live in public housing and stated the selection of tenants and poor property management are problematic.

She also pointed out problems with the voucher program and the proposed senior facility.

Ms. Williams encouraged the commissioners and HACC representatives to consider building one-bedroom apartments with front and back doors; not mid-rises. She also recommended touring Branch Village and talking with residents before plans for the grant application are finalized. Ms. Williams also asked where the jobs will come from in order to purchase a \$96,000 house.

There were no further comments or questions.

Old Business

There were no comments or questions.

New Business

There were no comments or questions.

Chairperson's Remarks and Observations

Chair Torres thanked the commissioners for their punctual attendance and encouraged them to continue in this fashion.

Executive Session

None.

Adjournment

On a Motion made by Mr. Bowman, seconded by Mr. Vazquez and affirmed by all in voice vote, this meeting adjourned at approximately 7:08 PM.

