

**DRAFT
MINUTES OF THE
REDEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
OF GREENSBORO
SPECIAL MEETING
MARCH 3, 2016**

The special meeting of the Redevelopment Commission of Greensboro (RCG) was held on Thursday, March 3, 2016, at the New Hope Missionary Baptist Church, W.M. Richmond Multi-Purpose Center, commencing at 5:39 p.m. The following members were present: Robert Enochs, Chairman; Clinton Gravely; Dawn Chaney; and Angela Harris. Staff present included Dyan Arkin, Russ Clegg, and Hanna Cockburn. Also present was Jennifer Schneier, City Attorney's Office.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

a) February 3, 2016 Regular Meeting

Mr. Gravely moved approval of the February 3, 2016 regular meeting minutes as written, seconded by Ms. Chaney. The Commission voted 4-0 in favor of the motion. (Ayes: Enochs, Harris, Gravely, Chaney. Nays: None.)

APPROVAL OF REDEVELOPMENT COMMISSION ANNUAL REPORT

Members are in receipt of the final version of the Redevelopment Commission Annual Report. Ms. Arkin pointed out and explained differences between the original draft that members were given to review and the reprinted final version. If approved by the Commission, copies of the Annual Report will be distributed to City Council and the City Manager's Office and made public on the website.

Ms. Chaney moved approval of the Redevelopment Commission Annual Report for 2014-15, seconded by Ms. Harris. The Commission voted 4-0 in favor of the motion. (Ayes: Enochs, Harris, Gravely, Chaney. Nays: None.)

BROWNFIELDS AGREEMENT LAND USE RESTRICTIONS UPDATE

Ms. Arkin said that the annual update for the Brownfields Agreement for the South Elm project was emailed to RCG members for their review. Commission members emailed their responses to staff and indicated their approval for Chair Enochs to sign the document. The Commission may affirm that this action was taken by email so that it can be part of the permanent minutes.

Ms. Harris moved to affirm that it was approved through email by Commissioners for Chair Enochs to sign the document so that staff can submit the Brownfields Agreement Land Use Restrictions Update. The motion was seconded by Mr. Gravely. The Commission voted 4-0 in favor of the motion. (Ayes: Enochs, Harris, Gravely, Chaney. Nays: None.)

STAFF UPDATES

Ms. Cockburn stated that the acquisitions for Heritage House are continuing on a voluntary basis and 93 offers have been accepted for 93 units. Staff will be sending out an additional letter to all of the remaining units reminding them the offer is still valid and that they have a limited amount of time before other actions may occur. The next avenue forward after this would be to either file for eminent domain in Superior Court or to go through the Minimum Housing procedure and demolish the building. She explained that acquiring some of remaining units may be difficult and future actions by the Commission may be required.

Responding to questions, Ms. Cockburn said that the estimated demolition cost is just over \$2 million which includes repairs to the Meridian Center where the building attaches so that the building can be made whole. They will rebid the demolition at the necessary time.

Ms. Cockburn informed members that Historic Preservation staff will be conducting a Historic Tax Credit Workshop in the first week of April, 2016. Representatives from the State Historic Preservation Office will be present to talk about the new tax credits and how to effectively apply for those for projects. Staff will email additional information when details become available.

WILLOW OAKS REDEVELOPMENT AREA

- **Public Hearing on Development Proposal for English Street Properties**

Ms. Chaney moved to open the Public Hearing, seconded by Mr. Gravely. The Commission voted 4-0 in favor of the motion. (Ayes: Enochs, Harris, Gravely, Chaney. Nays: None.)

Mr. Clegg provided a brief overview of the development proposal for the English Street properties. In January, 2016, Mike Cooke, Partnership Homes, came to the Redevelopment Commission with a basic concept and sketch plan for the proposed development of English Street properties. The Commission asked Mr. Cooke to further develop the proposal and for staff to secure an appraisal to begin the process of seeking public input before considering disposition of the properties to Mr. Cooke. Mr. Cooke came back to the Commission in February with a more developed set of plans and staff informed members that an appraisal placed the value of the property at \$30,000. There were very basic terms for a sales agreement, a motion was made to hold a Public Hearing at the next meeting, and members agreed that more community input was necessary.

Mr. Clegg indicated that a community meeting was held last week at New Hope Missionary Baptist Church. The general consensus of the community was that they were not looking to have more apartments built in the neighborhood. The community appreciated work that had been done to rehab apartments that were already there; however, they were looking for home ownership and single-family homes.

Relative to the terms of the agreement, the property will be conveyed at no less than the fair market value. One appraiser has placed the property value at \$30,000 and staff is in process of acquiring two additional appraisals. The plan will be built as per the site plan drawing and any changes will need to be approved by the Redevelopment Commission. The developer will also submit elevations to be approved prior to construction. The agreement to purchase property will expire in March, 2018 if by that there has not been a closing. The construction must start within six months of the closing and must be completed within 20 months.

Mike Cooke, President of Partnership Homes, Inc., provided a brief history of Partnership Homes. He introduced Bob Kelly, Chairman of the Partnership Homes Board, who was present in the audience. Partnership Homes attempts to build new, energy efficient, safe and attractive housing that is affordable. They own and maintain all the properties that they have built.

Mr. Cooke explained that they approached City staff before Christmas seeking a property that could be developed as a pocket neighborhood. A pocket neighborhood is a group of small, energy efficient single-family houses that are arranged around a central green common area with a parking lot off to the side. This type of neighborhood provides amenities such as gathering space, walkways, playgrounds, community gardens, etc. The property will be heavily landscaped and will be very attractive.

During discussions with the City, property located at 213, 215, 217, and 219 South English Street was identified as suitable for a pocket neighborhood. Working with Borum-Wade Engineers, he presented a

rough sketch of the proposed project to the Commission at their January, 2016 meeting. The project will be funded by three sources. These sources are a City HOME loan, a North Carolina Housing Finance Agency Supported Development Program loan, and a Federal Home Loan Bank grant.

Mr. Cooke addressed comments made by the neighborhood at last week's community meeting. The neighborhood indicated they would like a single-family ownership project. Partnership Homes believes in home ownership and they are trying to achieve this in Ole Asheboro and other neighborhoods. He stated his opinion that there are some problems with putting single-family dwellings on this site and within the general neighborhood. The property abuts an industrial site which is typically not a site where single-family is built because it causes potential owners to worry about future home values. The property is currently zoned Multifamily and has that designation because of where it is located. It is located in a buffer between other multifamily and single-family dwellings and a truly industrial site. In addition, it is almost impossible to build an attractive, quality, energy efficient home and be able to price it at a point where it is affordable in the neighborhood.

George I. Allison, Pastor at New Hope Missionary Baptist Church, 306 South English Street, addressed Mr. Cooke's comments on the cost of building and pointed out if something affordable can be built to rent, then something can be built and sold for ownership that is affordable. He said that there are people present at this meeting who own their homes and therefore, it is not impossible to own a home in this neighborhood. In addition, he pointed out that buffer zones are in place to shield homes from the industrial site. There is no reason why single-family dwellings cannot be built next door to multifamily units and he said there is at least one person present this evening who lives in a nearby development where both types of dwellings are present. He said that economic development starts with basic home ownership and that is how the neighborhood wants to improve their properties and community. In promoting the concept of "One Greensboro", there must be home ownership in this community as well.

Verna Torain, 2323 Apache Street, is President of the Cottage Grove Neighborhood Association. She was speaking on behalf of the Cottage Grove neighborhood. They would like to see home ownership in the neighborhood because there are already enough apartments and rental properties. She owns her home on Apache Street that is located adjacent to commercial property.

Councilwoman Sharon Hightower, 6 Bells Court, is a neighborhood resident. She said that although Partnership Homes has done some good projects, the proposed project is not one that they want right now in the neighborhood. East Greensboro lacks amenities and is saturated with apartments. She pointed out that affordable housing has many meanings but does not necessarily mean low-income housing. She felt that change will not come to the neighborhood until there is a change in housing types. She commented on the low \$30,000 appraised land value for the proposed project located on 1.7 acres of land. Housing values will never increase as long as the land is cheap. She asked the Redevelopment Commission to seriously consider how they will accept this proposal. Mr. Cooke has not changed the mindset of his proposal after listening to comments that were made at the community meeting. She commented that New Hope Church has had revival on the subject land for many years and yet, nobody offered the land to them for purchase. She felt that this meeting could serve as a lesson to all to learn how to collaborate, dialogue, and work together with respect.

Chair Enochs asked Councilwoman Hightower if it would be acceptable if the proposed project was developed in the same layout for sale rather than for rent. She said one or two bedroom homes do not serve a family and family needs must be met. She pointed out that one and two bedroom dwellings do not have a good resale value. She was supportive of a developer coming with a good proposal for adequate housing, even townhomes, that is not too dense. She expressed concern with a pocket neighborhood offering parking offsite which does not serve the elderly and disabled.

Ms. Harris asked about percentages for rental versus home ownership for this area. Councilwoman Hightower said that the neighborhood is 47 percent rental versus 40 percent home ownership.

Shirley Vanstory, 4308 Belfield Drive, asked that no more apartments be built in the neighborhood. She commented that she could find no information online relative to the subject properties being for sale. She sees signs where land is for sale; however, there were only three properties for sale by the City when she went online. In addition, the Church was never given the opportunity to purchase the subject properties. She noted improvements that have been made in other zip codes and she asked the City of Greensboro to fulfill its promise to redevelopment east Greensboro. To redevelop east Greensboro, there can be no more apartments. There is not a lot of diversity in east Greensboro and the community would like to welcome others into the neighborhood who would like to live there. She reiterated that the neighborhood wants home ownership to draw residents into the area.

Geneva Headen, South English Street, commented on the large number of apartments on the street and her desire to see more single-family houses. More amenities are needed in the community and she felt the area was in need of a facelift.

Patricia MacFoy, 4401 Belfield Drive, is the Executive Director of New Hope Community Development Group. She expressed disappointment that Mr. Cooke did not contact community members following the community meeting on Monday night to ask what they wanted in their neighborhood. She expected Mr. Cooke to come to tonight's meeting with some different conversations. She stated that affordable, quality homes can be built in this neighborhood where there is plenty of available land. Something needs to be done to bring economic development into the community so that more people can buy affordable, quality homes that can be built in this neighborhood. She suggested Mr. Cooke talk to the people of the community to find out what they want before bringing in a proposal. Neighbors want affordable houses and amenities like other neighborhoods have. Ms. MacFoy said that the proposed one and two bedroom apartments would work for someone just passing through or for student housing; however, it does not work for a family.

Responding to a question from Ms. Harris, Ms. MacFoy described the function of the New Hope Community Development Group. They are a community advocacy group that is separate from the Church. They are the outreach arm for the community and they partner with other organizations within the community. Their purpose is economic development, education, and community resources. They talk to the community about predatory lending, how to buy affordable housing, etc. In addition, they partner with Mustard Seed Community Health Center and the Greensboro Housing Coalition. Ms. MacFoy indicated that they have done over 200 surveys to needs and wants of the people in the community.

Ms. Chaney asked Ms. MacFoy for a copy of the survey data to distribute to Commissioners. This will allow Commission members to review data from residents that specifically represents the needs of the neighborhood.

Bob Kelly, 707 Pebble Drive, said that Partnership Homes acquired six units on South English Street about five years ago. The renovation was completed two and a half years ago and six families were moved into the units and are still residing there. They just finished renovating 16 two-bedroom, one-bath units on Everitt Street and there have been over 60 applications to rent those units. He stated there is a need for rental units in this area. He said the proposed units that will be rented are houses, not apartments. His hope is that these units can be converted from rental to ownership at some point. Partnership Homes does not want to own apartments forever; rather, they would like the units to develop into home ownership. Relative to the proposed project, he indicated that support services will be available to assist families with whatever needs they have in budgeting, improving credit, and life skills. Mr. Kelly addressed the size of the proposed units and explained that the funding they would like to use specifically designates for one-bedroom units but there may be some latitude in the composition of the units on the site plan.

There being no other speakers, Ms. Chaney moved to close the Public Hearing, seconded by Mr. Gravely. The Commission voted 4-0 in favor of the motion. (Ayes: Enochs, Harris, Gravely, Chaney. Nays: None.)

Ms. Chaney commented that she liked the feedback received from the neighborhood reflecting a united effort. She felt that the Redevelopment Commission should find a way to let everyone in the neighborhood know what is available for sale and how those properties can be purchased from the Commission. Properties owned by the Commission are sold at a lower price than what they would be on the open market to facilitate development of the land so there can be a return on the investment for the City.

Ms. Harris stated she was sympathetic to the idea of home ownership and understood the concerns of the neighborhood. She felt the Redevelopment Commission should do a better job to let communities know what properties are available to be sold. One good way to do this might be to let the neighborhood churches know what is for sale in their community and let that information trickle down to the congregation and the community as a whole.

Ms. Harris asked if the community was willing to leave the subject property vacant versus having apartments or rentals in that space. Pastor Allison stated that if it is the will of the City through the Redevelopment Commission to have this property developed, the church family and the Community Development Group will work toward actually purchasing and developing the property for home ownership. If the City says it is the Church's option to buy the property and leave it vacant, then they will buy the property and continue to use it as they have done in the past for various outreach functions. They have no problem going ahead to purchase the property and development if the City says it must be developed.

Mr. Gravely expressed regret that the comments and concerns voiced tonight were not heard earlier in this process. It is the aim of the Commission, as well as the City, to develop available land. The Commission will take all comments and information into consideration when they take a vote.

Chair Enochs felt that the consensus of the Redevelopment Commission is to table a vote on this matter until the April, 2016 meeting.

Counsel Schneier pointed out there is still critical information needed by the Commission to be able to evaluate the best decision. Chair Enochs noted that the Commission needs to see the remaining two appraisals along with the information from the community survey.

Ms. Harris moved to table this matter until the April, 2016 Redevelopment Commission meeting, seconded by Ms. Chaney. The Commission voted 4-0 in favor of the motion. (Ayes: Enochs, Harris, Gravely, Chaney. Nays: None.)

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the Group, the meeting adjourned at 7:12 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sue Schwartz
Planning Director
SS: sm/jd