

Charleston Land Reuse Agency

March 9, 2021 2:00 pm

Meeting Held Via Zoom Meeting

Meeting Minutes

Board Members

Amy Shuler Goodwin	Mayor (or designee)
Jonathan Storage, Treasurer	City Manager (or designee)
Kevin Baker, Chair	City Attorney (or designee)
Ben Adams	City Councilmember
Will Laird, Secretary	City Councilmember
Chris Campbell	Citizen Member
Marylin McKeown, Vice Chair	Citizen Member

Ex-Officio Members

Dan Vriendt	Planning Department Director
Tony Harmon	Building Commission
Andrew Backus	MOECD Director

1. Welcome and silent roll call

All members being present, Chairman Baker recognized the presence of a quorum and called the meeting to order. Also, in attendance was City Planner John Butterworth.

2. Adoption of Minutes from February 9, 2021, meeting

Chris Campbell moved the adoption of the minutes from the February 9, 2021 meeting. The motion was adopted upon a voice vote.

3. Public Comment

Chairman Baker offered the opportunity for public comment. No public comments were heard.

4. Reports of Treasurer, Vice Chair, Chair

Jonathan Storage offered a report from the Treasurer at which time it was indicated that there had been a couple of property redemptions since the last meeting resulting in revenue totaling \$3,004.87. The only recent expenditure was \$675 for the quarterly insurance payment to BRIM. Treasurer Storage indicated a current balance in the CLRA fund of \$245,954.69. Treasurer Storage further indicated the CLRA could expect interest earned to post shortly.

Kevin Baker offered a report from the Chair regarding the Vacant Property Leadership Institute. In conversations with the Institute they were not interested in having several representatives

from numerous cities, rather they wanted a group of 6 to 8 individuals from each city. The decision has been made to not put forward an application for the program at this time.

Chairman Baker further indicated that the administrations proposal to city council for the FY2022 budget included an additional position for the Planning Department that would be a dedicated staff person for the CLRA.

Chairman Baker then introduced Andy Backus who as the new Director of MOECD.

5. Report of Redevelopment Division

There was none.

6. Report of Conservation Division

There was none.

7. Unfinished Business

2019 County Tax Sale properties

There are 2 remaining properties that have not yet been redeemed. Chairman Baker indicated that one is a property on Hendrix St. that is adjacent to RCCR. Chairman Baker proposed reaching out to RCCR to see if they would be interested in the CLRA conveying title to them if the CLRA eventually ends up with the property. The other property is a vacant lot for which we will move forward with acquiring the title to the property if it is not redeemed.

2020 County Tax Sale properties

Chairman Baker recognized John Butterworth for an update. John indicated that he had not had any additional contact with property owners at this time. A discussion was had regarding the work of the CLRA intern.

Marylin McKeown suggested that the CLRA needs to take a closer look at the strategy of acquiring properties at the county tax sale to determine whether it is producing viable properties in relation to the amount of time spent on looking at and working to acquire these properties. A discussion was had regarding frustrations with the tax sale process at the county level and the difficulty of acquiring properties from the Auditor's Office. Chairman Baker suggested targeting the next legislative session to improve the process. If the goal of the CLRA is to acquire properties that no one else wants it might make more sense to focus on properties once they end up with the state, but the process with the Auditor's Office needs to be improved.

Bids on Property at WV State Auditor's Office

Chairman Baker informed the CLRA that, regarding the two properties the CLRA paid for posting of the sale, the person who was supposed to post them failed to do so. Instead, they went out to look for a person and notified the CLRA that they failed to serve notice. They were told by the CLRA that they were not supposed to serve notice to an individual, they were supposed to post the properties. They acknowledged their error and will now post the properties. The CLRA discussed how this is yet another example of inefficiencies in the process.

739 Central Avenue EOI

There were no proposals submitted during the EOI period. In a conversation with RCCR they indicated that they are more interested in building new housing rather than rehabilitating ~~new~~ old structures. There has been no indication as to why no other proposals were submitted. Chairman Baker the idea of spending a small amount of CLRA funds to get an architectural design that would give the board and developers an idea of what the building could look like which might help attract more and better estimates from contractors regarding building rehabilitation. Chris Campbell suggested that the CLRA should reach out to more developers to determine why no responses were submitted. Chris Campbell suggested that developers might be concerned that the EOI was too open ended or that the timing was not right. Chris Campbell further suggested that he would be willing to contact developers to have those conversations. John Butterworth sent contact information for developers from the developers' roundtable meeting. A decision was made to hold off on getting the architects' proposals until we get a better idea of why no EOI responses were submitted. Additional discussion was had regarding the value of an architectural design and feedback from developers.

Marilyn McKeown suggested that because this property is in an opportunity zone, it might make sense to look at the larger market and the possibility of listing it with a realtor that knows how to market properties in opportunity zones.

Chris Campbell further suggested that developers are currently pulling back due to the escalating costs of building materials. Uncertainty in the market and in the materials/supply chain has some developers afraid to commit to projects at this time.

John Butterworth indicated that the EOI heavily weighted "social good" categories and that many of the folks doing that type of work in town are not builders, but rather are focused on programmatic work and may not have the expertise to renovate a building to suit their needs.

Tony Harmon suggested that if the board could acknowledge what types of grants might be available for particular types of projects it might help attract contractors.

30th Street and 2nd Avenue

Chairman Baker indicated that the EOI is still open for another week and that there has been at least one submission. The review committee includes Chris Campbell, Jonathan Storage, Will Laird, Dan Vriendt, Tony Harmon, and Mayor Goodwin. Proposals will be circulated, and a zoom meeting will be scheduled to discuss the proposals. The meeting will need to be posted but will be conducted in executive session due to the nature of the evaluation process.

1726 Kemp Avenue

Kevin Baker indicated that the previous owner still may have some expectation or hope that he can own the property again. John Butterworth discussed conversations he has had with Mr. Dean. In a recent conversation, Mr. Dean indicated that he has obtained legal counsel to explore his options for regaining ownership. John Butterworth indicated that he reiterated that Mr. Dean's personal property needs to be removed from the property by April 1. Chairman Baker indicated that Joe Baldwin in the City Attorney's office would attempt to contact Mr.

Dean's legal counsel. State law gives LRAs the right to an expedited quiet title which may end up being the best option in this situation. Throughout the process it has been and will be a priority to ensure that Mr. Dean has the opportunity to retrieve his items from the property.

8. New Business

Concept: Bulk lot acquisition

Chairman Baker pointed out to the CLRA that there are a handful of individuals in the city that own multiple vacant lots, but have no real interest in developing them. One owner has reached out with the idea that they would come to the CLRA with multiple lots for the CLRA to consider acquiring in bulk for an amount below what would be considered the assessed value of the property. If this looks like something that might make sense, the CLRA may consider reaching out to other individuals that have multiple properties. If there is interest from the board, Chairman Baker will work to get more information on the potential acquisition. This could provide a model to use in approaching additional property owners. A discussion was held regarding the property evaluation process. The CLRA agreed that it was interested in acquiring more information about the proposal.

9. Adjournment

Councilmember Adams moved to adjourn until April 13th at 2:00 pm. The motion was adopted upon a voice vote.