

**MINUTES
EMPORIA REDEVELOPMENT & HOUSING AUTHORITY
CITY OF EMPORIA MUNICIPAL BUILDING
SPECIAL MEETING
MARCH 11, 2009**

Note to Reader: Although the printed agenda document for this Redevelopment and Housing Authority meeting is not part of these minutes, the agenda document provides background information on most all of the items discussed by the Board at this meeting. The Clerk of the Redevelopment and Housing Authority maintains the agenda document. One may see a copy of the agenda for this meeting by contacting the Clerk.

The Emporia Redevelopment and Housing Authority held a Special Meeting on Wednesday, March 11, 2009 at 5:30 p.m. in the Council Chamber of the Municipal Building, 201 South Main Street, Emporia, Virginia. Steven Hall, Executive Director, presided over the meeting.

ROLL CALL

Upon roll call, the following Emporia Redevelopment and Housing Authority members indicated their presence:

Ms. Veronica Leach
Ms. Brenda Harrell
Ms. Sandra Skinner

Mr. Dave Thomas
Ms. Marva Dunn
Ms. Carolyn Carey – *left early*
Mr. Mark Owen

Others present: Brian S. Thrower, Executive Director
 Steven B. Hall, Assistant City Manager
 Sheila Cutrell, Fiscal Agent

NEW BUSINESS

A. *Fiscal Year 2009-10 Operating Budget*

Mr. Hall stated that at the December 11, 2008, special “brainstorming” meeting, many ideas were discussed relating to potential new projects and initiatives for the ERHA to pursue. He also stated that it was his recommendation that as Commissioners, discuss and prioritize these new initiatives for the upcoming fiscal year while still realizing the limited amount of available funds. He further stated that as such, this item is for your determination as to the exact line items to be added for the FY 09-10 Operating Budget.

He advised that it is intended that the budget will be adopted at your April 1, 2009 Regular Meeting.

Ms. Cutrell reviewed the ERHA’s FY08-09 budget. Ms. Dunn asked Ms. Cutrell to review line item expenditures

Mr. Thrower stated that over the last several years the ERHA has been exploring initiatives aimed at improving housing conditions and redeveloping properties in our older residential and commercial areas. He also stated that with that said, the City of Emporia has also been discussing similar initiatives and ways to improve quality of life in Emporia. He further stated that in particular, City Council has directed staff to increase its code enforcement activities, particularly as it relates to the improvement of our existing housing stock.

He advised that in addition, City Council will be considering the adoption of a drug blight ordinance at its upcoming March 17th meeting. He also advised that moreover, the City recently adopted its updated 2008-2028 Comprehensive Plan which discusses overall beautification of the city, as well as improvement of residential neighborhoods through code enforcement, crime deterrence, aesthetic appearance, code updates, and drainage improvements. He further advised that the Comprehensive Plan also discusses partnering with the ERHA to seek funding sources for the improvement of those neighborhoods most in need of rehabilitation and revitalization.

He stated that in an effort for both the City of Emporia and ERHA to pursue common interests.

He asked that the ERHA consider the following projects in developing its FY10 budget. He stated that funding for these initiatives would come out of the ERHA's unreserved fund balance:

- 1) **W. Atlantic Neighborhood Improvement Project** – Adopt an ordinance committing \$60,000 in funding to this project. The City is planning to submit a Community Improvement Grant (CIG) application to DHCD in early April 2009. The ERHA adopted a similar resolution last year allocating the same funding. The goal of this project is to leverage \$1.4 million in CDBG funding to improve the housing stock, infrastructure, and quality of life in this neighborhood.
- 2) **NEAT Grants** – City staff is currently in the process of developing a NEAT (Neighborhood Enhancement Action Team) Program aimed at promoting cross departmental collaboration as it relates to property maintenance, code enforcement, crime deterrence, and aesthetic appearance. Neighborhood residents and groups could apply for NEAT grants to address landscaping and other general improvements to neighborhoods.
- 3) **Home Repair Grants** – As stated above, the City of Emporia is revamping its code enforcement and property maintenance program. In many instances, those individuals who have been cited do not have adequate income to make the required repairs. This program would assist low income individuals with making those required repairs.
- 4) **Façade Improvement Grants** – These funds would assist downtown business owners with improving the appearance of their individual storefronts.

He made note that should the ERHA decide to pursue any of the aforementioned initiatives, specific guidelines would need to be developed in terms of application process,

eligibility requirements, funding availability, and funding disbursement. He also noted that administering these programs will require extensive City staff time. He thanked them for their consideration of these ideas.

Ms. Dunn asked whether any of these proposed programs would generate any income. Mr. Thrower stated the proposed programs would not be income generating programs.

Mr. Jim Saunders stated that the City would be stepping up its code enforcement program and explained the benefits of the W. Atlantic project.

Mr. Thomas inquired about the details of the W. Atlantic Project and Lowground Road project funds. Mr. Hall explained the Lowground Road income producing programs.

Ms. Dunn stated that she likes the idea of community clean-up with NEAT program. Mr. Thrower and Mr. Hall further explained the NEAT program.

Ms. Dunn stated she would be willing to assist with NEAT program.

B. West Atlantic Street Neighborhood Revitalization Project Update – Ordinance

Mr. Hall stated that due to time restrictions that the ERHA needed to consider the W. Atlantic Street Neighborhood Revitalization Project Ordinance.

He stated that this past November, Mr. Brian Thrower provided the ERHA with information that the City was not awarded grant funding for the West Atlantic Street Neighborhood Revitalization Project. He also stated that as such, the City is re-applying for said grant. He further stated that as before, should the grant not be funded, the \$60,000 will remain in the account of the ERHA.

He recommended the ERHA adopt the following ordinance:

Ordinance No. 09-02

An Ordinance To Appropriate The Sum of
\$60,000 From The Fund Balance Of The Emporia
Redevelopment And Housing Authority For The
West Atlantic Street Project

BE IT ORDAINED by the Emporia Redevelopment and Housing Authority of the City of Emporia, Virginia as follows:

1. That the sum of \$60,000 from the fund balance be, and the same hereby is, appropriated into the Emporia Redevelopment and Housing Authority's Operating Budget for Fiscal Year 2009-2010.
2. Said appropriation shall be reflected in the Fiscal Year 2009-2010 Operating Budget as the sum of \$60,000 from the fund balance, and the sum of \$60,000 appropriated to

the Emporia Redevelopment and Housing Authority expenditure account for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2009 and ending June 30, 2010.

3. The Executive Director is hereby authorized and directed to do all things necessary to implement this ordinance.
4. This ordinance shall be in effect on and after its adoption

Ms. Dunn asked who was developing the grant application. Mr. Hall and Mr. Thrower explained that KW Poore & Associates developed the application. Mr. Thrower stated that furthermore, the City of Emporia is paying the consulting fees. He further stated that any ERHA monies earmarked to the project would not go towards consulting fees associated with developing the grant application.

Ms. Skinner stated that she thought the W. Atlantic project was worthwhile and is exactly the kind of project the ERHA was meant to get involved in.

Ms. Harrell also stated she thought the project was worth pursuing.

Ms. Skinner made the motion to adopt the following ordinance appropriating the sum of \$60,000 from the fund balance of the ERHA for the W. Atlantic Street project. Ms. Harrell seconded the motion.

The votes were as follows:

Ms. Veronica Leach	aye
Ms. Brenda Harrell	aye
Ms. Sandy Skinner	aye
Mr. Dave Thomas	aye
Ms. Marva Dunn	<i>did not vote</i>
Mr. Mark Owen	aye

Mr. Hall stated that he would like to go back to discussing the proposed programs.

Ms. Skinner stated that she liked the idea of Home Repair Grants as mentioned in Mr. Thrower's memo.

Ms. Dunn also stated she like the idea.

Ms. Skinner stated that it would be a good idea to start off with earmarking \$20,000 to be put towards a home repair grant program for low income persons. \$10,000 to go towards addressing cited code violations \$10,000 to go towards emergency repairs

Mr. Thrower stated that program guidelines and caps on per household grant awards would need to be devised.

Several of the members also discussed putting some money towards landscaping and beautification in neighborhoods, as referenced by NEAT grants proposed by Mr. Thrower.

Mr. Owen stated that the ERHA may want to approach Lowe's and the Rotary Club to provide cash matches for these grants.

Ms. Dunn inquired about the possibility of providing down-payment assistance for low income persons as well as providing funding to address homelessness. For example the ERHA could pay a week's rent for a homeless person.

Ms. Dunn and other board members stated that it would be a good idea to have Rev. Charles Moore with the Samaritan Kitchen and Sam Bush with Social Services to address the ERHA regarding how it may be able to assist.

Mr. Hall stated that staff would put together a proposed budget based on feedback from tonight's meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment

ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Leach made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Skinner seconded the motion, which passed as follows:

Ms. Veronica Leach	aye
Ms. Brenda Harrell	aye
Ms. Sandy Skinner	aye
Mr. Dave Thomas	aye
Ms. Marva Dunn	aye
Mr. Mark Owen	aye

Veronica Leach, Chairperson Date

Lori R. Jarratt, Clerk

Date