



COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY  
MINUTES  
**FEBRUARY 19, 2019**  
**5:30 P.M.**

**PRESENT:** Chairman Theo Washington, Director, Eddie Cole, Director, Marilyn Davis Sconions, Director Tarus Mack, Director, Brent Gardner, Vice Chairman Rodney Daniels, and Director Clarese Hopkins.

**Also, in attendance:** CRA Attorney Greg Jackson, Cathlene Williams, Town Clerk, Jasmyne Reese, Community Coordinator, and CRA Director, James Benderson.

Chairman Washington called the CRA Meeting to order at 5:30 PM, Chairman Washington led the Prayer, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

- I. CALL TO ORDER AND VERIFICATION OF QUORUM**
- II. INVOCATION & PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**
- III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES- January 15, 2019 Regular Minutes.** Motion by Director Cole, the motion was seconded by Director Sconions; **AYE: Director Sconions, Director Cole, Chairman Washington, Vice Chairman Daniels, Director Mack, and Director Gardner; NAYE: Director Hopkins; MOTION PASSES.** Director Hopkins requested to have her comments during this meeting to be verbatim.
- IV. APPROVAL of the January 22, 2019 Special Session Minutes.** Motion by Director Cole, the motion was seconded by Director Sconions; **AYE: ALL, MOTION PASSES.**
- V. HEARINGS**
  - A. Old Business**
    - I. Street Paving Update- Fitzgerald Drive and West Avenue- beginning on 2/25/2019, approximately three (3) days to complete.** The Town of Eatonville has contracted Hubbard Construction Orlando Paving to pave North West and South West

Avenue, as well as Fitzgerald Street as stated by Cody Montgomery, this project will take 2-3 days. The focus of this project is resurfacing, the asphalt will be removed, when this project is finished, it will look a lot nicer, the roads will be a smoother ride, this will also enhance the look of the neighborhoods. The work will start on 2/25/2018, from 7:00 AM to 5:00 PM. With this project, safety is number one, the equipment is very large, there will also be dump trucks, 18 wheelers, and clean-up operations, the dump trucks are subcontractors, but they follow our safety practices as well. The material coming through the machines are 300 +/- degrees, this material is very hot, we will have personnel there on site. We try to maintain as much as possible the traffic flow to the residents with this project, once the last roller goes through, cars will be able to drive on the new asphalt. Director Gardner asked how would the kids from the school be handled regarding the paving? There will be a Certified MOT supervisor in the area constantly checking cones, if the kids need to cross the road, we will have certified flaggers there to assist them. We are piggyback from Orange County with this project, there is a one (1) year warranty, but will last longer than that. Director Hopkins asked will the Town do a mass mailing to the residents regarding this project? Mr. Benderson replied that a mailing was sent out last week to the residents in this area.

- II. **Lockbox Update-** Deputy Jenkins has received the lock boxes, CRA staff has drafted an application to apply for the program, which will be facilitated by the police department; this is a CRA funded program and piloted by the police department. We have approximately 30 boxes, this is for homeowners only. If someone lives in a rental property, they would need to get permission from the owner of the property. Vice Chairman Daniels asked could these boxes be moved from one location to another? Mr. Benderson replied they can be moved to another location.

**B. New Business**

- i. **Beautiful Yard Award March- 119 West. Street,** Charity Robinson.
- ii. **Approval of Cherry Bekaert-** Chairman Washington request is to have a separate Auditor for the CRA, this is my position, I don't know how the board feels. Mr. Benderson replied that finance

has started to look at other companies for financial services. Whatever auditing service that the Town goes with, they will Audit the CRA also, as part of the Annual Financial reporting. Director Mack asked Chairman Washington has the Town had any discrepancies with this company; Chairman Washington replied NO, I just think the CRA needs a separate auditing company. Motion by Director Cole, the motion was seconded by Director Daniels; **AYE:** Director Cole, Daniels, Mack, Hopkins and Sconions; **NAYE:** Chairman Washington and Director Gardner; **MOTION PASSES.**

- iii. **Eatonville Daycare Nursery Status- 140 S. West Street-** Chairman Washington asked when did this process start, Mr. Benderson replied this was requested by Director Gardner. This property has back taxes owed for over several years. We recently met with Scott Randolph's office to have a discussion on this property, taxes, a total of \$130,000. This property is going to take some extensive legal review in working with the tax collector and property appraiser, they have agreed to working with the Town. Director Gardner stated this was brought to the Town a while ago, if the Town owns this property then we should receive it, I don't want someone paying the taxes on this property and then they own it. **NO ACTION TAKEN.**
- iv. **Executive Director Employment-** Chairman Washington stated that since he has become the Chair of the CRA Board he has done a lot of homework, I didn't just get this position and come to meetings. I had issues with this agenda, I provided everyone a copy of the job description for the CRA Director, last month I recommended that we terminate the contract of the CRA Director for the CRA Board. The CRA Director this week didn't meet with the Chair of the CRA Board, I didn't know what was on the Agenda, over the past year and half we have had very little in return. There are a lot of things in the CRA plan that has not been implemented, only 25% of the things that we are doing, we need more programs implementing small grant programs; educational programs. I put a motion on the floor to terminate

James Benderson CRA Director, effective immediately for non-cause, and pay all entitlements listed in the contract, including severance pay, (60) day written notice in advance, the motion was seconded by Director Sconions; Vice Chairman Daniels asked Chairman Washington has he given those plans to Mr. Benderson to see if he could accomplish any of them. Chairman Washington replied that this is all included in the CRA Plan. Director Cole asked Chairman Washington to see the letter to Mr. Benderson regarding the (60) day notice. Attorney Jackson stated that within Mr. Benderson contract it specifically addresses issues termination without cause at any time with this agency upon (6) days written notice to the employee. If this is not followed, this Board will be in breach of the contract. **AYE:** Chairman Washington, Directors; Mack, Sconions, and Gardner; **NAYE:** Directors Eddie Cole, Clarese Hopkins and Vice Chairman Daniels; **MOTION PASSES.**

**Chairman Washington's comments regarding employment of Mr. Benderson are added to the minutes. "INSERT COMMENTS"**

Last month I recommended that we terminate the contract between the CRA Director and the CRA Board. Today I'm even more convinced that we need to move this organization in a different direction.

Over the past two years we have spent upwards of \$200,000 on salaries and benefits and have gained very little in return in the form of programs and projects that benefit the residents and business community.

This is not a bashing session of Mr. Benderson I would never support that.

Looking at the CRA plan which calls for the following to be implemented:

Development of a community Master Plan

Coordinate infrastructure sharing with elementary school

Create open space recreational amenities

Enhance landscaping along Kennedy Blvd

Design Stormwater facilities as community amenities

Adopt overall community development guidelines Continue neighborhood investments

Develop area wide stormwater system

Support low impact green streets and sidewalks

Incorporate environmentally designed parking facilities

**Establish cultural arts area within the Town**

Support cultural art and educational facilities

Support promotional of cultural history

Continue enhancements to Kennedy Blvd

Support connection of S. Lake Destiny Rd. to Lee Rd.

Establish district wide parking system

Development and East/West connector to Wymore Rd.

Design and install a gate way system enhancement

Establish cost sharing policies for infrastructure

Support job training, education, and business development programs

Provide incentives for retention and recruitment of businesses along Kennedy Blvd

Establish funding and development partnerships

Develop loan pool to support investment opportunities

As you can see over 90% of the CRA plan items for implementation as not been touched not to mentioned implemented. I wouldn't expect all these things to be done, however I would think that at least 25% would have been started and completed over the past two years.

My goal as the new CRA chairman over the next year is to at least implement at least 25% of the CRA plan that will have a positive impact of the residents and business community.

My goals other goals include the following:

Implementation of an aggressive housing rehab campaign to get applicants signed up through Orange County

Implement a housing stabilization plan to avoid the increasing rental housing market increase in

Town

Implement an incentive program for affordable housing

Create a neighborhood realization plan for Catalina Park the first year followed by the other neighborhoods in the future.

Implement paint the Town programs

Modify the process for small home grants to make the process easier to complete

Implement a grant program for small business operations

Implement and incentive program to attract and retain businesses

Aggressively seek grants to enhance development and infrastructure projects

Implement community-oriented policing to combat drugs in the community

Implement incentives to promote residential beautifications programs

In order to accomplish these goals, I believe we must change direction in order to be successful, we can no longer afford the status quo. To sit here and make no changes will be a derelict of our duty. This community deserves better and as the New Chairman it's my goal with your support and help to give the community a better.

I move that we terminate the contract between the CRA Board and James Benderson effective immediately for non-cause and pay him all the entitlements that listed within the contract to

- v. **Eatonville Cultural & Heritage Foundation-** Chairman Washington states that the CRA pays for a non-profit 501 (C) (3) that the Board has no control over, no members are on the Board.

## **VI. Board of Directors Report**

**Director Gardner-** I consider myself a fair man, I have nothing against Mr. Benderson, there were a lot of things I asked for many times, if you look at the agendas, none of this stuff came up, I hope he doesn't leave here feeling like that. I would like to come in and look at all the financials regarding the CRA account.

**Director Hopkins-** to hear a list of all the things that you have Chairman Washington has expressed, you obviously did a lot of digging to find information to terminate Mr. Benderson, without regard to those things he has accomplished. I am truly disappointed in the way this board handles its business.

**Director Cole-** the lifeline of this community whether you know it or not, you just cut your legs off, everybody in Orange County and every Grant that you have, he has gone over and above because I have no help. I would just encourage to look at what you have done, and if you all decide that this man is not the person for here, I wouldn't be surprised if we already know who we want.

**Director Mack-** NO REPORT

**Director Daniels-** total shock, a travesty, was this illegal Attorney Jackson and was it unethical regarding the cultural heritage foundation documents. Attorney Jackson responded that unless the CRA has a policy, it is not illegal. Also, I don't agree with renters having lock boxes, it should be homeowners only.

**Director Sconions-** to Mrs. Hopkins you need to go to the CRA office and look over the paperwork for the Eatonville Cultural Heritage Foundation to see if it was handled properly; we have a 501 (C)-3, that the Town does not control, this is my research that I did. We should know more about what Mr. Benderson is doing, he is the only name on the checking account.

**Chairman Washington-** I still have concerns with Resolution #2018-22, that we are not following; a lot of things we don't follow that is law, we put a motion on the floor to rescind this Resolution and we are still not following it. So, we need to be careful what we say and do; I feel a certain way about things and how they are done.

## **VII. STAFF COMMENTS**

**Attorney Jackson-** just want to caution the Board, the action taken tonight regarding Mr. Benderson's contract that I am aware of that was signed, this may result in a legal action.

**Citizens Comments- Michelle Fort-** if we work together, we all can learn, communication is key, I think there is a lot of miscommunication, but its nothing we all can't fix and work together. What is our plan for a CRA Director, what is the timeline in filling this position?

**Louissteen Cummings-** glad to see the Town working on behalf of Ms. Angela Johnson, and its nice to hear about the paving of the streets. I wear this shirt because I am proud of Eatonville; you all are not showing that you are proud of Eatonville. This is the worse board I have laid my eyes on, you all are not proud of the Town of Eatonville.

## **7. ADJOURNMENT- 7:10 PM**

**RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED BY**

**Cathlene Williams, Town Clerk**