

MINUTES

URBAN RENEWAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MEETING

5:30 P. M., JUNE 13, 2019

A/V CONFERENCE ROOM

Naomi Bays, Committee Member, called the meeting of the Charleston City Council Committee on Urban Renewal and Economic Development to order at 5:30p.m., JUNE 13, 2019, in the Audio/Visual Room in City Hall.

Committee Members Present:

Naomi Bays
Ben Adams
Caitlin Cook
Jennifer Pharr
Bobby Reishman (left 6:29)

1. Approval of Previous Minutes – Councilmember Pharr moved to approve the minutes of the previous meeting on 5-9-2019. Councilmember Cook seconded. There was no objection and the minutes were approved.

2. Ron Butlin, CURA – Councilmember Bays introduced Ron Butlin, Executive Director of Charleston Urban Renewal Authority (CURA), who addressed the Committee. Highlights of the presentation included:

- 3 Renewal Districts – East End, Downtown and West Side
- CURA's goal is the elimination of blight. Their current focus is a more holistic approach compared to the past.
- 2 rehabilitation programs/loans: to promote stability in the West Side, currently available to homes in a small, select area. Their hope is that the program will be successful, attracting investors that will allow the program to expand.
- Landlord to First Watch, Black Sheep and Subway. Their goal is to liquidate some of their other assets.
- In the past, their focus has been primarily commercial, however the past few years have seen a slight shift toward residential as well.

Councilmember Pharr asked Butlin to explain the makeup of the ownership of the mall. Butlin replied that the main building and retail spaces (except for the anchor stores) were developed by a Forest City entity. In the mid-1990s, it was refinanced which bifurcated the ownership of the mall and the parking garage. CURA owns the land under the parking garages, which is owned separately from the mall. From a previous agreement, they receive a small percentage of revenue from the mall's tenants. The

owners of the parking garage also owns the former Macy's building. The mall is currently owned by a bank, which is a trustee for several other banks.

Councilmember Adams asked what other sources of revenue they receive. Butlin answered that they have issued a few small loans to aid in the purchases of historic buildings. The bulk of CURA funding comes from the mall parking buildings.

Councilmembers Bays confirmed with Butlin that the new West Side Plan is an amendment as opposed to a new document. Councilmember Pharr confirmed that the plan will come to the Committee before final approval from Council. Councilmember Pharr asked how many people have taken advantage of the home ownership/rehab program. Butlin answered that they have received about 10 applications for rehab and around 11 for home ownership.

Councilmember Adams asked if there were grants available to CURA. Butlin answered that there were hopefully grants available for project-specific activities, but not for general funding.

Councilmember Pharr asked if they have encountered in issues in regard to rehab loan applications. Butlin answered yes, specifically, there are issues of how much money is required to get a home to a livable status and at what amount is it not worth doing so. Butlin explained that a Housing Inspector will visit the home for an inspection. If the homeowner meets the requirements, CURA will put the work out for bid, the contractors do the work and CURA processes the payment. Councilmember Bays asked how many houses were considered un-livable but had people living in them. Butlin said he didn't know a specific number, but he would guess that it is a lot. They are working on a holistic approach with other agencies to try to address this issue.

3. Tonya Cotton, City Collector's Office – The Department Head for the City Collector's Office, Tonya Cotton, addressed the Committee with an overview of her department and its responsibilities. Highlights of the presentation were:

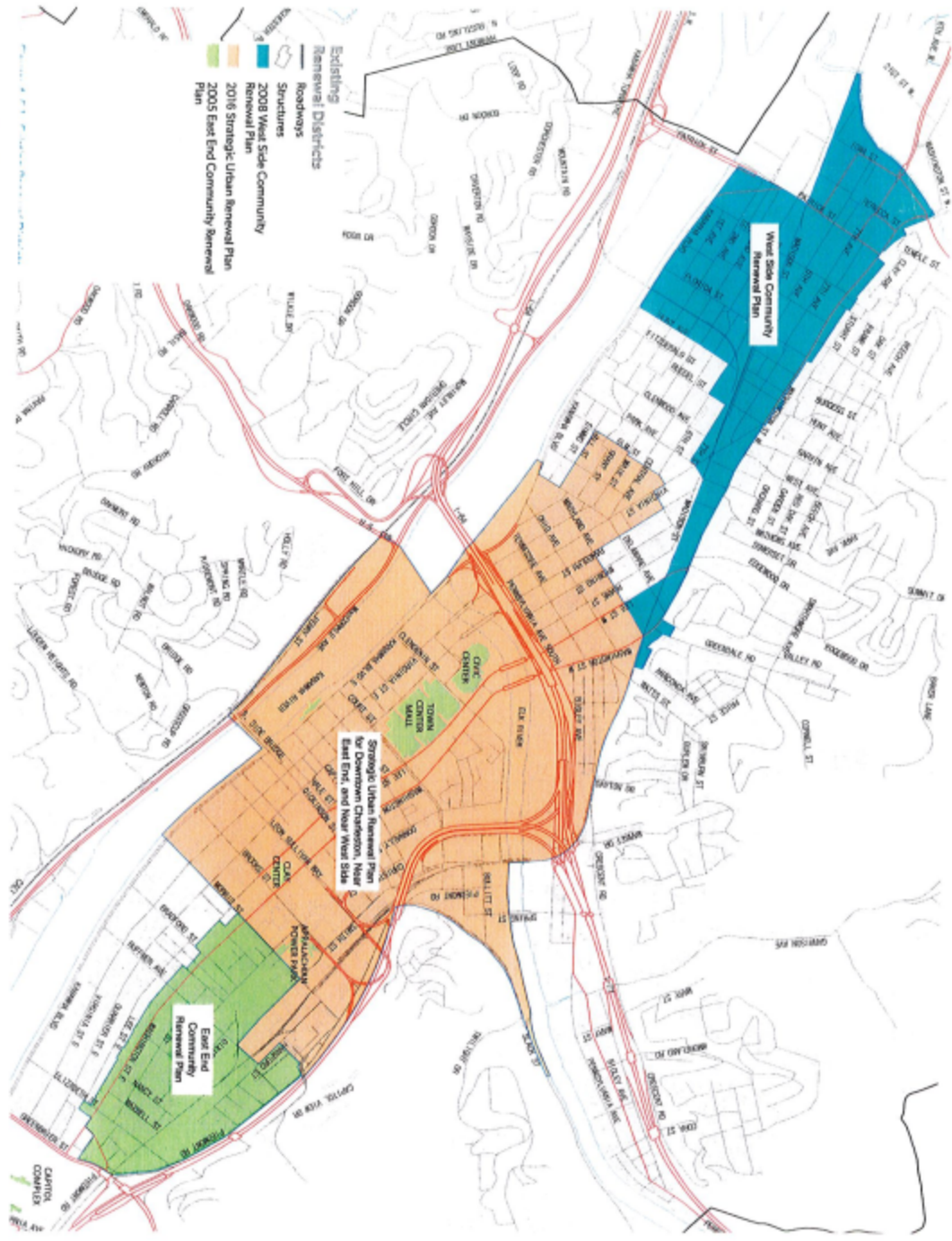
- The office's primary function is to collect all the funds that go through the City.
- They process payments for and/or monitor: parking tickets, building permits, City Service fees, sign permits, building and planning violations, Business and Occupational taxes, business licenses, solicitation permits, street closures, hotel/motel occupancy taxes, utility taxes and amusement taxes.
- They have a staff of 15 – 7 ½ auditors, 3 cashiers and 4 front of the house staff.
- In 2018, they collected \$63,278,268; \$44 million of that was B&O taxes.
- Half of the hotel/motel tax revenue is given to the CVB.
- Cotton discussed the steps of getting a business license with the Committee.

Councilmember Bays suggested having a more official welcome packet when a new business license is issued. Cotton and the Committee discussed their Revenue Tracking System, which meets the Collector's Office's needs, but they will most likely not be able to get technical support/repairs for much longer. They share the fire, refuse

and sewer billing system with the Sanitary Board, which does not fit the needs of the Collector's Office.

Councilmember Adams motioned to adjourn the meeting. Councilmember Pharr seconded.

Meeting adjourned.



Map showing the boundaries of three urban renewal plans in Charleston, South Carolina:

- West Side Community Renewal Plan (Blue):** Located in the northern part of the city, bounded by the Charleston Harbor to the north and the downtown area to the south.
- Strategic Urban Renewal Plan for Downtown Charleston, Near East End, and Near West Side (Orange):** Covers the central downtown area, including the Old Charleston Power Plant and Old Town Market.
- East End Community Renewal Plan (Green):** Located in the eastern part of the city, near the Charleston Harbor.

The map also shows existing renewal districts, roadways, and structures. Key streets include Market Street, Broad Street, and the Charleston Harbor.