

MINUTES

URBAN RENEWAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MEETING

5:30 P. M., FEBRUARY 6, 2020

A/V CONFERENCE ROOM

Brent Burton, Chair, called the meeting of the Charleston City Council Committee on Urban Renewal and Economic Development to order at 5:30 p.m., FEBRUARY 6, 2020, in the Audio/Visual Room in City Hall.

Committee Members Present:

Brent Burton, Chair

Tiffany Wesley-Plear, Vice Chair (via phone)

Ben Adams

Naomi Bays

Jennifer Pharr

Bobby Reishman

1. Approval of Previous Minutes – Councilmember Bays moved to approve the minutes of the previous meeting on 1-23-2020. Councilmember Pharr seconded. There was no objection and the minutes were approved.

2. Discussion concerning downtown revitalization, housing and the new projects from the water crisis settlement funds.

Councilmember Burton asked Mayor Goodwin and Chief of Staff, Matt Sutton, to give the Committee an update. Mayor Goodwin asked if members had questions regarding the outline for the Community Participation Fund that they had been given. She reminded them that the funds have to go through a 501(c)(3). Councilmember Bays confirmed that they could buy equipment for a Community Center.

Mayor Goodwin added that the enhancements have been made to the Coliseum and Convention Center, such as the basketball/volleyball courts. She stressed that there had been no plan on how the newly renovated Convention Center was to be utilized to its maximum potential. The funds will be used to attract people/groups to the facilities.

Mayor Goodwin also stated that some of the money in the Business Economic Impact Fund will go to façade grants. Additionally, it will also go to assist businesses in creating business plans. The Administration is currently working to coordinate with the local Universities and Business Schools for an unspecified entrepreneurial project. Councilmember Bays confirmed that the façade grants will be based on similar CURA grants but for the entire City.

Mayor Goodwin stated that a long-term but very important project will be advertising and promoting the City. The Administration wants to develop strong, effective marketing strategies. The Mayor added that last May, the Convention Center and CVB had a meeting to create a strategy to work together to promote the facility. Anything spent for advertising and marketing will need to have quantitative and qualitative data attached to it, such as focus groups and surveys. It will be a national approach. As an example, Mayor Goodwin cited the colors assigned to the different neighborhoods; it was a good idea, but was executed inconsistently. She stressed that this kind of re-branding will take a lot of time and funds to do correctly and effectively. Councilmember Wesley-Plear stated that a friend from out of town was confused about the different colors, and the reasons behind them weren't obvious or meaningful. Councilmember Adams asked what the process and time frame would look like. The Mayor answered that research would come first, involving outside companies and focus groups, and future decisions would be based on the results.

Councilmember Pharr asked if there was any sort of requirement that the various groups involved (CVB, Charleston Main Streets, CAA, etc.) would have to effectively communicate with each other and the Administration if the City had provided funds to them. Mayor Goodwin answered that there was. Mayor Goodwin stated that she believed that if the City went to those various groups with any research data that had been gathered, it would be easier to get them on board. Sutton stated that, in his experience, the most successful City re-brandings are those that listened to the outside consultants. Councilmember Pharr pointed out that the City does not have any billboard in any direction that describes what they can do in Charleston. The Committee discussed that the blue travel signs are not allowed by the DOH, but they could get

creative with billboards on strategically placed buildings along the interstate. Mayor Goodwin stated that the City needs to think about what it can invest in that will attract massive amounts of people, such as sports tourism.

Mayor Goodwin updated the Committee on the installation of the kayak dock by saying that the location may need to be changed to the other side. The goal is to get it completed by Spring. The Administration is also working on relaunching the Charleston Summer Youth Professional and Career Program for 14-17-year-old kids to get experience in a career field. Councilmember Wesley-Plear suggested reaching out to West Virginia State.

Chief of Staff, Matt Sutton, stated that over the past few weeks, there had been a very large amount of business owners seeking medical marijuana permits. While the City does not reap the tax benefits of the dispensaries, they do provide 8-16 jobs at each location, with growth facilities providing more. Councilmember Adams asked if there was going to be a cap on locations per region. Sutton answered he did not think that will be the case as there are only a few cities in the state in which the businesses seem interested. Sutton added that the businesses seems most interested in Kanawha City, Downtown and the West Side.

Councilmember Pharr suggested that the Committee invite the leadership of the CVB, Charleston Main Streets, CAA, etc. to speak about updates and what the groups' commitment will be to work together.

Councilmember Pharr asked for an update on the search for a new Director for the Convention Center. Sutton answered that the consultants met with the stakeholders and will begin to write the job description based on those needs. The Convention Center Board is also looking into hiring an outside marketing and booking firm.

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

Meeting adjourned.