

# City of Clearwater

*Main Library - Council Chambers  
100 N. Osceola Avenue  
Clearwater, FL 33755*



## Meeting Minutes

**Monday, March 15, 2021**

**8:00 AM**

**Main Library - Council Chambers**

**Community Redevelopment Agency**

## **Roll Call**

**Present** 5 - Trustee Kathleen Beckman, Trustee Mark Bunker, Chair Frank Hibbard, Trustee David Allbritton, and Trustee Hoyt Hamilton

**Also Present:** William B. Horne II – City Manager, Micah Maxwell – Assistant City Manager, Michael Delk – Assistant City Manager, Pamela K. Akin City Attorney, Rosemarie Call – City Clerk, Nicole Sprague – Deputy City Clerk, and Amanda Thompson – CRA Executive Director

***To provide continuity for research, items are listed in agenda order although not necessarily discussed in that order.***

### ***Unapproved***

#### **1. Call to Order – Chair Hibbard**

*The meeting was called to order at 8:00 a.m.*

#### **2. Approval of Minutes**

- 2.1** Approve the February 16, 2021 CRA Meeting Minutes as submitted in written summation by the City Clerk.

**Trustee Hamilton moved to approve the February 16, 2021 CRA Meeting Minutes as submitted in written summation by the City Clerk. The motion was duly seconded and carried unanimously.**

#### **3. Citizens to be Heard Regarding Items Not on the Agenda**

*Kathy Flaherty submitted an eComment regarding meeting times that was read into the record by the City Clerk (see page 10).*

*The City Clerk said the CRA meeting time was noticed and discussed at a noticed public meeting. CRA Executive Director Amanda Thompson said there is a bid out now for the construction of the streetscape phase three. The City is in the process of selecting the general contractor that will do the work this summer. She said the capital improvement project includes \$1 million of CRA funding. The CRA has prepared signage and marketing assistance for the properties directly impacted by the construction along Cleveland Street.*

## **4. New Business Items**

### **4.1 Presentation from community organizations**

The Community Redevelopment Agency has invited four non-profit organizations who participate in the revitalization of downtown to provide a brief update on their 2021 plans.

*CRA Executive Director Amanda Thompson said Jaclyn Boland from the Hispanic Outreach Center was unable to attend today due to an emergency.*

*Ruth Eckerd Hall President/CEO Susan Crocket said next week is the 100th anniversary of the Capitol Theatre's opening; the year-round celebration will include exhibits and open houses. The Capitol Theatre holds 130 events per year and approximately 12 community events annually. With COVID vaccine distribution opening up, more events will be booked; there are 13 shows booked now to September. She thanked the City for its continued support and opportunity to partner with the City and CRA.*

*Clearwater Community Garden representative Bill Poulin said the organization began in 2016. Howard Warshauer started the garden and it has transformed that part of the community. He said local individuals are growing organic foods. He said there are two master gardeners and two herbalists who assist with their education mission.*

*In response to a question, Mr. Poulin said the garden now includes a play area for the kids to access after a 15-minute class session.*

*St. Vincent De Paul Community Kitchen representative Christine Bond reviewed services provided at the facility. The facility has been providing daily nutritious meals, seven days a week, for the last 39 years. Due to COVID, the facility has implemented to-go boxes. She said volunteers have dropped by 70% during the pandemic. The Pinellas County Mobile Medical Unit comes to the facility once a week and provides medical care to clients. Staff works hard to ensure the facility is not a burden to their neighbors, checking the property several times a day for trash.*

*In response to questions, Ms. Bond said twelve volunteers have returned in the past few weeks after they received their second COVID vaccine dose. She has invited teens to complete their community service hours to fill volunteer gaps. Based on recent surveys, 10% of the homeless*

*clientele do not wish to receive work training. Recent Employment Readiness Program grads were homeless for a long time and would have been considered a lost cause, but they are not. She said some homeless individuals have good income but not enough to sustain them; they receive disability but it is not enough and if they work they lose their disability benefit. If sufficient resources were provided, a full-time case manager to assist with affordable housing would be provided. The organization started using the HIMS system when it was managed by 2-1-1; the organization was grandfathered in and not required to pay a license fee but only allowed nine licenses, requiring the data to be entered manually afterwards by a license holder.*

- 4.2** Approve the Commercial Beautification grant program for property owners and tenants to improve the visual appearance of commercial properties through exterior improvements and authorize the appropriate officials to execute same.

The Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) is recommending approval of the Commercial Beautification Grant program as part of the CRA's two-year strategy to reduce blight and encourage private investment into downtown. The CRA staff spent 18 months in conversation with tenants, property owners and other city departments to understand how to develop partnerships with the community that will improve the appearance of commercial properties in Downtown Clearwater.

The purpose of the Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) Commercial Beautification grant program is to improve the visual appearance of commercial properties through small scale exterior building and site improvements. The Commercial Beautification Program's objectives are to:

- Improve the condition and appearance of commercial buildings in Downtown Clearwater.
- Increase the number of commercial properties that can attract and accommodate tenants in the CRA District.
- Increase commercial occupancy rates and property values.

Grants may be awarded to property owners or tenants for exterior improvements to commercial property within the CRA district. This program is intended for exterior renovations and repairs that do not exceed a total project cost of \$25,000. The CRA will fund 100% of the cost of eligible improvements up to \$5,000 and provide a 50% match towards the total project cost up to a maximum of \$12,500 per application. Only one grant per property address/tenant is allowed every five years. Eligible improvements include painting, signage, lighting, doors, windows, roof, site improvements, and other minor exterior repairs. The amount of grant funds for the program will be established by the CRA Trustees on an annual basis. All grant awards are subject to budget availability. Applications will be accepted on a rolling basis. In this program, the CRA Director has the final approval authority to approve grant applications, execute grant agreements and authorize reimbursement

up to \$12,500 per project. Staff recommends allocating \$250,000 for the first year of the program which would cover 20 properties at the full grant amount.

The proposed grant program balances the legal requirements for the use of CRA funds, meets the goals of the downtown redevelopment plan and provides a partnership opportunity for property owners and tenants who wish to invest in downtown.

**APPROPRIATION CODE AND AMOUNT:**

Funds are available in CRA project code 3887552-R2003 ED-City and 3887552-R2004 ED County

*In response to questions, the City Attorney said the City has a limited list of contractors for some housing rehabilitation but she expressed a concern with CRA selecting contractors for people because the business owners then expect the CRA to be guarantors of the success or outcome of the work. The CRA wants the contractors to be licensed. CRA Executive Director Amanda Thompson said an RFQ must be issued to create a list of contractors but she believes some of the jobs will be too small for much interest. She requested the Trustees provide her additional time to meet with the Building Official to discuss the possibility of creating a list of pre-qualified contractors. The item before the Trustees does not apply to residential properties. Ms. Thompson said staff looked at other CRA grant programs across the state and noted the match is typically 25%, with a range up to 50%. She said in other instances the CRA owned the entire redevelopment project. Grant programs for exterior and interior build out are rare. The Overtown CRA in Miami limit their buildouts to \$10,000. Given the City's current market condition, staff is recommending a higher match. The two-year timeframe was identified because staff believes the market will change after Imagine Clearwater is complete.*

*One individual submitted an eComment in opposition that was read into the record by the City Clerk (see page 11).*

*Ms. Thompson said the program is available to all businesses in the CRA.*

**Trustee Hamilton moved to approve the Commercial Beautification grant program for property owners and tenants to improve the visual appearance of commercial properties through exterior improvements and authorize the appropriate officials to execute same. The motion was duly seconded and carried unanimously.**

**4.3** Approve the Whitebox grant program to assist owners and/or tenants with renovating commercial spaces to attract businesses that generate pedestrian foot traffic and authorize the appropriate officials to execute same.

The Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) is recommending approval of a Whitebox grant program as part of the CRA's two-year strategy to reduce vacancy and encourage private investment in downtown. The CRA staff spent 18 months in conversation with tenants, property owners and other city departments to understand how to develop partnerships with the community that will fill vacant, older commercial spaces.

The purpose of the Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) Whitebox grant program is to reduce vacancy in commercial properties by assisting property owners and tenants with funding to renovate vacant spaces for occupancy by long-term or short-term uses that generate significant pedestrian foot traffic in downtown.

The Whitebox grant program's *objectives* are as follows:

- Reduce the number of vacant properties in Downtown Clearwater by bringing older, vacant properties up to current building and fire codes to allow occupancy
- Increase the number of commercial spaces suitable for "pop-up" uses to create new retail and cultural destinations in downtown
- Incentivize the attraction of new businesses that generate pedestrian foot traffic to occupy vacant spaces by reducing the costs of renovation

Grants funds must be used to attract the following kinds of businesses as defined in the Downtown Zoning code:

- Retail and restaurant businesses
- Personal Services Industries (e.g., barber and beauty shops, health spas, dance studios, photography and art studios, tailoring, and other similar services)
- Galleries, theaters, other cultural and community gathering spaces

Grants may be awarded to property owners or tenants for exterior and interior improvements to commercial property within the CRA district. This program is intended for renovations and repairs that do not exceed a total project cost of \$100,000. Eligible exterior improvements include painting, signage, lighting, doors, windows, site improvements, and other minor exterior repairs. Eligible interior improvements include windows, doors, standard lighting and electrical, basic HVAC, concrete floor, ADA restrooms, fountain, and fire code improvements.

The CRA will fund 100% of the cost of eligible improvements up to \$25,000 and provide a 50% match towards the total project cost up to a maximum of \$50,000 per application. The amount of grant funds for the program will be established by the CRA Trustees on an annual basis. All grant awards are

subject to budget availability. This program provides the CRA Director with the authority to approve applications, execute grant agreements and provide reimbursements up to \$50,000 for eligible grant expenses. CRA staff recommends establishing a one-year budget of \$300,000 which will cover six properties at the full grant amount.

The proposed grant program balances the legal requirements for the use of CRA funds, meets the goals of the downtown redevelopment plan and provides a partnership opportunity for property owners and/or tenants who wish to invest in downtown.

**APPROPRIATION CODE AND AMOUNT:**

Funds are available in CRA project code 3887552- R2003 ED-City and 3887552-R2004 ED-County.

*In response to questions, CRA Executive Director Amanda Thompson said the grant is a reimbursement; if a tenant is not in place, the property owner would not be reimbursed for the improvements. The grant is tied to a 2-year lease with a tenant in one of the three identified areas. She said the property owner can change but as long as the tenant remains in operation the grant agreement will not be in default. The grant program is open to the all commercial properties that attract one of the identified uses within the CRA.*

*One individual submitted an eComment in opposition that was read into the record by the City Clerk (see page 12).*

**Trustee Beckman moved to approve the Whitebox grant program to assist owners and/or tenants with renovating commercial spaces to attract businesses that generate pedestrian foot traffic and authorize the appropriate officials to execute same. The motion was duly seconded and carried unanimously.**

**4.4 Discuss future use of CRA-owned property at 701 Franklin Street.**

*CRA Executive Director Amanda Thompson said the CRA purchased the property in 2019 for \$525,000 to assist with land assemblage for a multi modal center. PSTA (Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority) is looking for letters of support on this site to build a multi modal center.*

*The City Attorney said PSTA is asking the Trustees to swap the property for the property identified as the PSTA site, which includes a portion of the site described. The procedural process for the land swap is lengthy; the CRA will have to provide notice of its intent to convey the*

*property to the City and the City will have to provide notice to convey the property to PSTA. She said appraisals are underway; one set of appraisals is back but two are needed. Staff needs direction from the Trustees regarding moving forward with conveying the property to the City. Assistant City Manager Michael Delk said he spoke with PSTA Development Officer Cassandra Borchers last week; the Notice of Funding must be advertised by February 26 and the application must be submitted within 4 to 6 weeks. Staff will present a letter of support citing the City's local match for council approval at a future meeting. Assistant City Manager Micah Maxwell said staff has reached out to Pinellas County regarding the parking lot, the County is assessing how to conduct the property transfer.*

*The Trustees recessed from 9:09 a.m. to 9:16 a.m. to meet as the City Council.*

*Discussion ensued with trustee consensus for staff to move forward to convey the Franklin Street property to the City with a purchase price of \$525,000.*

## **5. Director's Report**

*CRA Executive Director Amanda Thompson said the annual report has been published and is available online.*

## **6. Adjourn**

*The meeting adjourned at 9:18 a.m.*

Attest

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Chair  
Community Redevelopment Agency

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City Clerk



## Community Redevelopment Agency on 2021-03-15 8:00 AM

Meeting Time: 03-15-21 08:00

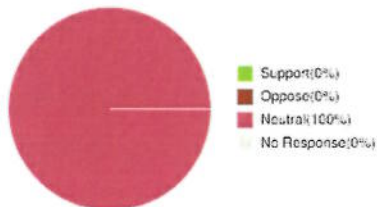
### eComments Report

Meetings	Meeting Time	Agenda Items	Comments	Support	Oppose	Neutral
Community Redevelopment Agency on 2021-03-15 8:00 AM	03-15-21 08:00	12	3	0	0	3

#### Sentiments for All Meetings

The following graphs display sentiments for comments that have location data. Only locations of users who have commented will be shown.

#### Overall Sentiment



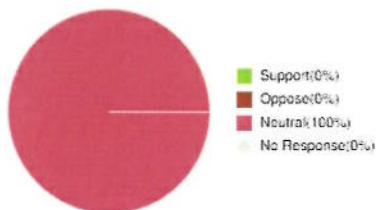
**Community Redevelopment Agency on 2021-03-15 8:00 AM**  
**03-15-21 08:00**

Agenda Name	Comments	Support	Oppose	Neutral
3. Citizens to be Heard Regarding Items Not on the Agenda	1	0	0	1
4.2 ID#21-8884 Approve the Commercial Beautification grant program for property owners and tenants to improve the visual appearance of commercial properties through exterior improvements and authorize the appropriate officials to execute same.	1	0	0	1
4.3 ID#21-8885 Approve the Whitebox grant program to assist owners and/or tenants with renovating commercial spaces to attract businesses that generate pedestrian foot traffic and authorize the appropriate officials to execute same.	1	0	0	1

### Sentiments for All Agenda Items

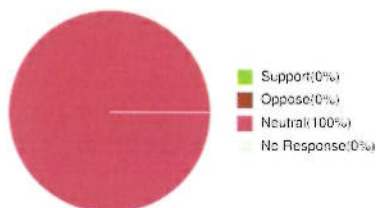
The following graphs display sentiments for comments that have location data. Only locations of users who have commented will be shown.

#### Overall Sentiment



#### Agenda Item: eComments for 3. Citizens to be Heard Regarding Items Not on the Agenda

#### Overall Sentiment



### Kathy Flaherty

Location:

Submitted At: 4:44pm 03-14-21

These meeting were supposed to be held at 9:00 am per Board vote several months ago. Please hold them at the correct time.

The City of Clearwater has a policy in place that allows properties developed prior to 1999 to have large commercial dumpsters unenclosed and even placed on right of ways. These dumpster usually have the lids open and overflow trash onto city streets, private property and eventually the trash goes down the storm water drains

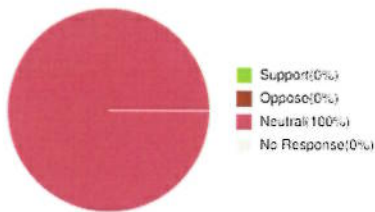
into the waterways. It is a huge problem that no one seems to want to address.  
The CRA could give grants to business to enclose the dumpsters in the CRA to at least address the issue in this small area. It is a  
City wide disgrace. Nothing Bright and Beautiful about that policy.  
Residents should not have to put up with overflowing, smelly trash dumpsters everywhere!

Also what is the status on the road construction for the Eastgate Area and Cleveland Street? This is supposed to start in June but nothing has been on any agenda for the CRA Board. Is this still on schedule?

If it is I would like to request that the Eastgate area start first. It is a residential neighborhood and crossing Gulf to Bay with no crossing walks is very dangerous. Disable persons need a cross walk put in place ASAP - residents have been asking for years for help but always told to wait for the road construction.

Agenda Item: eComments for 4.2 ID#21-8884 Approve the Commercial Beautification grant program for property owners and tenants to improve the visual appearance of commercial properties through exterior improvements and authorize the appropriate officials to execute same.

#### Overall Sentiment



#### Kathy Flaherty

Location:

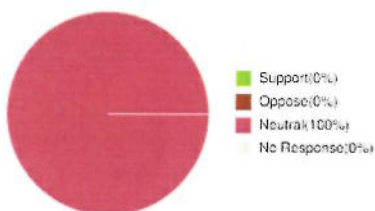
Submitted At: 4:50pm 03-14-21

These programs need to be available to all businesses within the CRA. Cleveland Street, especially the 300 - 600 block have received millions in support over the years where nothing has been done in the rest of the district. It is shameful.

Please make sure these grants are given to businesses throughout the CRA. The Trustees already give the Downtown Development Board hundreds of thousands of CRA funds to promote that area alone. The rest of the CRA funds should go to the areas outside the Downtown Development District.

Agenda Item: eComments for 4.3 ID#21-8885 Approve the Whitebox grant program to assist owners and/or tenants with renovating commercial spaces to attract businesses that generate pedestrian foot traffic and authorize the appropriate officials to execute same.

#### Overall Sentiment



**Kathy Flaherty**

Location:

Submitted At: 4:56pm 03-14-21

Once again these funds should be allocated to all in the CRA and even more so to projects outside the Downtown Development District as the CRA Council has given the CRA funds generated in that area to the Downtown Development Board. If that Board would like to use the CRA funds it received for improvements to that area great, but let the remaining CRA funds raised outside of the DDB District go to projects outside that area.