

**BOARD OF MAYOR AND COMMISSIONERS
SPECIAL CALLED JOINT WORK SESSION WITH
DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY**

April 1, 2009
6:00 p.m.

MINUTES

Members Present: Ed Rieker, Mayor
Michael Payne, Commissioner
Lyda Steadman, Commissioner
David Milliron, Commissioner

Members Absent: Sandra Varian, Mayor Pro tem

Staff Present: Clai Brown, City Manager
Juliette Sims, City Clerk

Downtown Development Members Present: Jill Joyner-Bush
Allan Kirwan
Bart Webb
Steve Grubenhoff
George Kennedy
Don Connelly

Item No. 1 Meeting called to order at 6:11 p.m. by Mayor Rieker.

Item No. 2 Adoption of Agenda

A motion to adopt the agenda as presented was made by Commissioner Steadman, seconded by Commissioner Payne, passed with all ayes (4-0).

Item No. 3 MARTA Property

Commissioner Payne stated that he does not know where the City is with the two properties that MARTA has no use for at least relating to their operations. Commissioner Payne noted that MARTA is under intense financial pressure and they want to do something to raise more revenue. Commissioner Payne and Commissioner Milliron voiced at some point it would be a good time to revisit that issue to see if the City could somehow garner control over that property whether that is an outright purchase or some type of options. Commissioner Payne stated that the fair market value

has probably diminished. Commissioner Payne noted that the board is unsure whether it is a good time for the City financially to extend finances but it is worth a look to see if the City can somehow get this property.

Steve Grubenhoff noted that at one of their meetings they were tossing around the idea because of the topography that it might be a good place for a future public parking deck because of the development in the CBDZ and the City would need more public parking. Mr. Grubenhoff noted that he had met with the guy from MARTA when they first had targeted these for the Charter School and he obviously said the City could do something better with the lot than what they are currently doing and they would be more inclined to do something if they could dispose of all their parcels with one transaction.

Commissioner Steadman asked Laura Leckband how many acres is the property?

Laura Leckband stated that it is almost 6 acres.

Mayor Rieker noted that the whole deal might be \$500,000 or so.

It was the consensus of the board that the City should inquire about cost of the parcels. Steve Grubenhoff will draft a letter to MARTA which will come from Clai which identifies the parcels the City is interested in, noting that the City wants MARTA to pay for the appraisal.

Mayor Rieker thanked the DDA for their work for all the work they do for the downtown development.

Item No. 4

Making AE Business Friendly

Mayor Rieker stated that it is their desire as a board that we figure out a way as a City, as a community and as authorities to make it easier for people to start businesses in Avondale and stay in town and support the businesses that are already here. Mayor Rieker noted that he knows the DDA is doing things currently on this and the board just wanted an update.

Jill Joyner-Bush stated that she, Karen Holmes, Bonnie Kallenberg and Rusty Bowers are working on a welcome kit that tells a potential business owner how to start a business in Avondale which will be ready in the next month. These packets will be available at City Hall also. Ms. Bush noted

that they are also working on a flowchart for the packets on how to get a sign permit, building permit, etc. to make it easier for the businesses. They have also assigned two ambassadors Allan Kirwan and Bonnie Kallenberg to assist businesses. Ms. Bush noted that they are developing labels to put on vacant buildings that would say “Welcome to our City, if you are thinking of doing business here please call Karen Holmes at City Hall.”

The board thought those are excellent ideas.

Steve Grubenhoff spoke about what he has seen other communities do such as provide façade grants to people who improve the look of their property. Mr. Grubenhoff also spoke of the City possibly in the future getting a part-time liaison to assist as a coordinator to assist the businesses one on one and also recruit new business.

Mayor Rieker stated to the DDA if there are specific things they would like the board to consider for the downtown area that requires some type of funding, change of law, etc. to please draft a list and submit it to them.

Don Connelly noted that Bonnie Kallenberg is doing a great job with the business association and making everyone fill at home.

Allan Kirwan noted that the DDA is working closely with the business association.

Jill Joyner-Bush has stated in a previous work session that one of their requests is that if the annexation goes through next year that part of the taxes that are raised from those businesses goes to fund a part-time Economic Development person.

Mayor Rieker again encouraged the board to draft a list for the BOMC of everything they would like to see for the downtown development which would include cost for the part-time person, job description, etc.

George Kennedy spoke about the rebranding committee. Mr. Kennedy encouraged all entities in our City to promote the brand name. Thanked City Manager Brown for using it in the newsletter.

Commissioner Milliron noted that there are other stimulus packages coming out that the DDA can look into and he will provide them with some information.

Jill Joyner-Bush spoke about a project that is done in Philadelphia where artists can rent out vacant spaces for free and they only pay utilities. Ms. Bush noted that they would like to try to get something like that started in Avondale. The DDA will talk to landlords of the empty buildings to see what can be done. DDA suggested maybe two months of free rent then month to month. DDA will work on this project and get back with the board at the next meeting.

George Kennedy noted that the Hariston Building is almost complete and should be done in 8-10 weeks. Mr. Kennedy noted that there will be a grand opening and everyone in the City will be invited.

Item No. 5

Sign Ordinance Input

Jill Joyner-Bush noted that with the efforts of Julie Feely the City received a grant from the Atlanta Regional Commission to assist with revising the City's sign ordinance and that process will begin soon.

Item No. 6

Annexation Update

Mayor Rieker noted that the City put a bill together for the annexation and gave it to Rep. Stephanie Stuckey-Benfield. Ms. Benfield only received 5-6 signatures of the 10 signatures needed in order to pass the annexation bill. The City will do the annexation again next year to try to get passed. Mayor Rieker noted that in the meantime the City needs to look at how they can work with individual property owners to see what we can do to encourage them to come into the City on the 100% method.

It was the consensus of the board to start the annexation process again in October/November of this year.

Item No. 7

Mill Zoning Discussion

Mayor Rieker noted that the Planning and Zoning Board is looking at the Mill District after they have reviewed it will go to the Downtown Development for review and then back to the BOMC.

Jill Joyner-Bush invited the board to their April 21st meeting which will be held at the DJJ building.

Item No. 8

Public Comment

Carl Fite, asked if he could get a copy of the annexation bill. City Manager Brown stated yes.

Julie Feely, 2 Dartmouth Avenue noted that the next priority for the Planning and Zoning board is to look at the Comprehensive Plan and Downtown Master Plan this year.

Allan Kirwan, 12 Clarendon Avenue noted that the 2nd Annual Art-B-Que will be held in June.

Item No. 9

Adjournment

There being no further business, a motion to adjourn at 6:10 p.m. was made by Mayor Pro tem Varian, seconded by Commissioner Steadman, passed with all ayes (4-0).