

THE SPRINGS REDEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE (RAC)
Minutes for the Special Meeting
Tuesday, October 27, 2009
Sonoma Charter School

1. Call to Order

Chairperson Stephen Cox called the meeting of the Springs Redevelopment Advisory Committee (RAC) to order at 6:07 p.m.

2. Roll Call

Present: Stephen Cox, Ryan Lely, Richard Lee, Donna Hays, David Whiteley and Ellen Conlan. Kara Olness Reyes arrived at 6:58 p.m. Also present were Redevelopment Manager Cas Ellena, Redevelopment Associate Al Lerma, Redevelopment Assistant Jennifer Howze, and approximately ten (10) members of the public during the course of the meeting.

3. Public Comment on Non-Agenda Matters

Bob Benz
Edwin Ferran
Laurie Decker
Michael Acker

8. New Business

A. *Workshop with MIG, Inc. Regarding Project Prioritization*

Discussion

Redevelopment Associate Al Lerma explained the purpose of the meeting as going through a prioritization exercise with MIG, the firm that assisted with the development of the Sonoma Valley Redevelopment Project Area Strategic Plan ("Strategic Plan") to take stock of where we are and to figure out how to best use the remaining funds going forward. Redevelopment Manager Cas Ellena reviewed the current financial situation. She said there is currently \$1 million available for the current fiscal year and \$3.7 million through fiscal year 2013-2014 for non-housing and \$2.5 million for housing. Ms. Ellena explained that tonight we will try to get a perspective and focus on how we can best spend these remaining funds for the maximum benefit of the community. Ms. Ellena noted that not all questions would be answered tonight, as more fiscal and cost benefit analysis may be necessary, but tonight will help us determine how to move forward, and once a decision is made about what types of projects the RAC would like to focus on (i.e. business attraction, blight reduction, etc.) more analysis would then be done as to how to implement them.

Mr. Lerma introduced the meeting facilitators from MIG, Chris Beynon and Susan Hartman.

Mr. Beynon began by saying that positive change has occurred in the area and is very evident from the perspective of someone who does not see it day in and day out. He was encouraged to see the implementation of the Strategic Plan taking place. He explained that due to the state of the economy some communities are looking for a "silver bullet" but there are not a lot of those out there right now; it will need to be an incremental change process. He explained the purpose of the workshop will be to look at what has happened and what is incomplete and whether some of the priorities have changed since the Strategic

Plan was created so that the list of priorities is current. Then once the priorities are determined, we can go through and look for those specific types of projects and determine which will be most catalytic and what will give the community the most “bang for its buck”, and provide tools to assist the RAC when considering project proposals.

Steve Cox reviewed the accomplishments that have occurred within the last few years. Accomplishments included the Highway 12 improvements, El Verano Gateway entrance and landscaping, the new Teen Center building, benches and lighting for schools, and the Springs Village affordable housing project among others. He also mentioned the Las Palmas Development which is a project in process of being built that will not only provide affordable housing, but is also being built using “green” building techniques. Las Palmas will also include a community use open space area to be shared with Sonoma Charter School.

After much discussion amongst the workshop facilitators, staff, and members of the RAC, as well as comments taken from the public, the main priorities moving forward began to emerge. The priorities that were frequently mentioned were removal of blight, a community park or plaza, and removing blight through the rehabilitation of existing housing and the creation of new affordable housing. In terms of blight removal, the central Activity Hub identified within the Strategic Plan was of interest to most RAC members and particularly the area around Uncle Patty’s and the vacant gas station, as they are centrally located in the Springs. Mr. Beynon also suggested keeping up with the status of local businesses to see who is struggling and who is doing well so we can learn what works and what doesn’t. This would help with understanding business retention and the issues that face businesses so it would be easier to identify good business opportunities that will succeed.

Mr. Beynon concluded that he believes the Strategic Plan remains sound as the main actions identified in the Strategic Plan remain priorities. He suggests that the RAC use the Strategic Plan more as a tool and that we work now to “put actions to the actions”.

The workshop came to a close with the meeting facilitators agreeing to provide the RAC with recommendations and tools that will aid in moving towards the goals that were emphasized during the meeting.

9. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

10. Next Meeting

November 5, 2009, 7:00 p.m., Boys & Girls Club of Valley of the Moon, 100 Verano Ave., Sonoma.