

# Englewood Redevelopment Area (CRA) Advisory Board Meeting

Meeting Minutes of Thursday, February 10, 2010 1:00 p.m.

## I. Call to Order

Chairperson Mary Ellen Diez called to order the regular meeting of the Englewood Redevelopment Area (CRA) Advisory Board at 1:01 p.m. on Thursday, February 10, 2010, at the CRA Office, 101 North Orange Street, Englewood, FL 34223.

## II. Roll Call

**Present:** Mary Ellen Diez – Chairman, John Mead – Vice Chair, John Davison, Todd Tracy, Norman Caldwell, John Radkins and Don Landis.

### Sarasota County Staff Present

Debbie Marks, CRA Coordinator  
Joanne Jacobsen, Administrative Assistant

## III. Approval of Minutes from Last Meeting

Chairman Mary Ellen Diez asked for approval of the December 9, 2010 minutes.

**Motion:** To accept the December 9, 2010 minutes as written.

**Action:** Unanimously approved. **Moved by** John Mead. **Seconded by** Don Landis.

## IV. Open to the Public

**Speaker 1:** Jack Gray of Gray Matters Enterprises, gave an update on the Englewood Music Festival that he is organizing. The location – 1301 South River Road – across from the Sports Complex and near WENG Radio Station and the Paul Morris Industrial Park, provides all the necessary parking, room for facilities and the stage area. This year the festival will include a children's Fun Zone and a BBQ cook-off. A portion of the profits will go to Toys for Tots, Englewood Helping Hands and the Englewood Youth Foundation. He has some top performers committed to the festival. There will be a pre-party at Neighbor's Bar & Grill and a post-party at the Royal Palm Marina. He has also arranged for a Trolley Tour that will transport people from the festival grounds through downtown Dearborn Street and around the downtown area, with an optional spur route to Tiffany Square. He has many ideas for the future to make Englewood a tourist destination and asked the Board for assistance in bringing this festival and future events to fruition. He has also solicited support from the local merchants.

### **Board Questions:**

Mary Ellen Diez: asked Jack Gray to return with specific requests for their assistance. Gray agreed.

John Mead: asked about the distribution of the proceeds from the Music Festival. Jack Gray explained that the proceeds would be distributed amongst the three charities and used to cover the costs associated with the festival. There will also be proceeds from the sale of refreshments; those would go to the association that provided them, such as the Rotary. Any excess profit will be set aside for next year's music festival.

Todd Tracy: asked about parking for the festival and the precise location of the event. Jack Gray demonstrated on his site plan the location of the event – 13.5 acres between the site of WENG Radio Station and Paul Morris Park on River Road. He has 7 acres that will be set aside for parking. Debbie Marks explained that the CRA has assisted Jack in obtaining and paying for the necessary permits and will assist in paying for the necessary police details. She asked Jack to provide information on liability insurance; he agreed to return with specifics.

**Speaker 2:** John Bednerik, Executive Director of the Englewood – Cape Haze Area Chamber of Commerce, addressed the meeting to invite all to the Wine and Swine event to be held Friday, February 11, 2011 being held to allow the public to view the progress of the construction of the new Chamber of Commerce building.

### **V. New Business**

Chairman Mary Ellen Diez introduced the new County Commissioner, Christine Robinson, to the attending audience and thanked her for coming to the meeting. Mrs. Diez also thanked Mr. Don Platt for coming to the meeting.

### **Discussion of Proposed Events:**

- Mary Ellen Diez introduced the next speakers: William Bond and Cher Macey. Ms. Macey was seeking funding to help to defray the cost of bringing the Vietnam Moving Wall to Englewood. This event would meet the objectives of both the CRA Board the Vietnam Veterans Group to celebrate both Veteran's Day and the opening of the new Veteran's Memorial Park on Harbor Lane and would present both commemorative and educational opportunities for the community and school age children. This memorial would be on display for 5 days. Ms. Macey demonstrated the location of the memorial on a schematic plan at the site of the future Veteran's Memorial Park. She has provided full details to Debbie Marks. The Board asked questions concerning the funding, the timing/schedule, a possible alternate date, and availability of local sponsorships. Chairperson asked for a consensus for approval for funding for this event; all were in favor.

- John Davison proposed a new idea for New Year's Eve 2012: The Mullet Drop. Since neighboring cities of Venice and Sarasota have ball/pineapple drops on New Year's Eve, he proposed having a Mullet Drop. This event would appeal to Englewood residents to come downtown to celebrate the holiday. Mullet fish would be dropped by crane into the bay. The drop would be held at the family-friendly hour of 9:00 p.m., that would be immediately followed by fireworks. The attending crowd would then be free to move the celebration up to the Dearborn Street restaurants. Out of town guests would be encouraged to stay at the local hotels and spend the evening. He asked for the support of the CRA Board for this event. The audience and the Board were solicited for feedback. Several members of the audience and Board expressed concern for the fish, but many thought it was a good idea. Comments from the audience included the possibility of a coconut drop or a lemon drop or using plastic fish in place of live. Chairman Diez asked the Board for a consensus to fund the project; all were in favor.
- Community Garden Project: Mr. Gary Nieskes, representing the Englewood Center for Sustainability, addressed the Board and audience on the activities and need for financial assistance to continue their work. They have applied for the Neighborhood Services Grant, which will be used for fencing, storage shed, 2 cisterns and to build the garden beds and a raised bed for handicapped persons. Debbie Marks recommended to the Board that they approve transfer of \$10,000 from the Arts project, that was not going to be used this year, to the Center for Sustainability for their use. Chairperson Diez asked about the history of the project. Mr. Nieskes explained that he and Tom Minnick have been working on this project for a long time, the community has been polled, from which they have obtained volunteers. The project would be built on Olde Englewood Road at the Del Tec Buildings and would have an educational component, with classes on various gardening topics, such as hydroponics, and address topics such as soil testing and insect control. Todd Tracy commented that he has attended several of their meetings and that their costs have been driven up due to county environmental requirements, but felt that this was certainly a worthwhile cause and worthy of the Board's consideration. Debbie Marks added that she has obtained some recycled fencing for them from other areas and money has from other benefactors had been obtained for a roof. They were the asking the Board for up to \$10,000 for this project with a small portion of that money approximately \$50 per month to be slated for utilities for the next six months. A motion for acceptance was made by Todd Tracy. However, a motion was not deemed necessary. Chairman Diez polled the Board for a consensus for this expenditure; all were in favor.

## VI. Old Business:

### Comments/Reports

- Marketing Budget:
  - Debbie Marks presented the budget update. There is \$6,300 remaining. The CRA is working with the Merchants' Marketing Committee for advertising. The largest portion of the advertising budget was designated to two magazines, but proved to be the best as far as results, with feedback of the effectiveness from the merchants. The merchants have been given a log sheet to keep track of their buyers and where they have seen the advertising. Todd Tracy inquired about the expenditures for one line item, which Debbie explained was for website updates, and how merchants paid their portion of the advertising. Mr. Tracy asked if the CRA was getting the cooperation of the local newspapers. Ms. Marks responded affirmatively, especially with articles in the Herald Sun. Also based on feedback from the merchants that business had increased recently and they attributed that to the increased advertising. Mr. Tracy also asked how she got the merchants to pay their share of the co-op ads. Ms. Marks responded that two of the magazines billed the merchants individually and the CRA collected their checks for one magazine ad. Comment from Janet Landis in the audience: she asked whether the merchants were actually staying open longer and whether they realized how much advertising has been done on their behalf. Debbie responded that yes, the merchants had been told face-to-face exactly what advertising has been placed and they have been solicited to get feedback from their customers as to where they came from and how they may have heard about Englewood or that particular business. There was discussion amongst the Board inquiring if the merchants were indeed staying open for extended hours and if not, how that could be addressed. Ms. Marks added that the merchants were dealing with that issue themselves and putting some pressure on other merchants to stay open within reasonable hours.
- Updates:
  - Rezoning on Dearborn Street: she has applied for three grants for the two new parking lots and was waiting to hear the results. The rezoning petition of the 200 block of Dearborn Street is in process. Regarding Harbor Lane: she is waiting for the revision of the site plan; the plan is being modified based on the feedback from the neighbors, as solicited in November, 2010 meeting. She is working with the architect and the county engineer to apply those changes to the plan and then present that modified plan to the Board of County Commissioners in March.
  - LID Project: There was good news from Southwest Florida Water Management District in the form of approved funding and that is expected

to be in hand by October. That would allow construction to start on the two parking lots before that time, using the first of the \$750,000 funding that has already been obtained. During the construction phase, she would meet with the construction manager on a daily basis and keep the merchants and public informed on a weekly basis regarding the project status.

- Cherokee Park: Debbie has a meeting with West Coast Inland Navigation District the following week to obtain their consent and support to restore the docking facilities at the location.
- 10 Harbor Lane: the paver walkway has been installed and plantings have been put in to stabilize the soil in place through the construction phase. The area around the house has been cleaned up. The pilings at the seawall have been trimmed and an application for docking for three boats is in the works. A sign will be placed on the property to alert residents that docking is available and post the hours and restrictions of this park. After the project is completed, the Parks and Recreation Department will take charge of maintaining the property. Until then, the CRA staff will pitch in to clear trash and oversee the property.
- Herald Sun article: Debbie showed the Board two recent newspaper articles entitled “Playing in the Dirt” and “Open Studio”. She spent several weeks helping some residents get permits for starting businesses in the Arts Overlay District. There had been a glitch, but this has been resolved: as long as the owner maintains 50% or more of the property as residential, they can use the remainder for business interests, get their occupational license and apply for sign permits. The Board agreed that the residential component was the intent of the redistricting.
- Roberts Rules seminar: was very informative and well attended. Todd Tracy commented that it was very educational and thanked her for the invitation to attend.
- Cedar Street parking lot expansion: the abutting neighbor was concerned about the close proximity to their property, so working with the County engineers, Debbie was able to make an adjustment to the plan to give the neighbors greater space from the parking areas by giving them an easement by eliminating two and a half parking spaces and the site plan has been modified. Todd Tracy demonstrated his concern about the design of the new lot, because he had been approached by an abutting restaurant owner who was concerned about the positioning of the parking lot and access to his property. Debbie pointed out that out on the site plan, stating that brick walkway from the parking lot to the street will go right by the restaurant, and the extra parking in the new lot would allow them to free up their parking lot and making room to possibly expand their dining area. Copies of the new plan were made available to the Board.

- Events:

Debbie Marks gave an update on the upcoming events for this month, which include:

- History Week which is currently underway culminating with the Cracker Fair scheduled for the following Saturday, February 12. They are expecting a large crowd. All permits are in place.
- 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Wine Walk: this event, which is to benefit the Arts Alliance of Lemon Bay, is now a sold-out event, with only 10 tickets remaining for the day of the event. Permits are in place, restrooms will be in place. Todd Tracy asked about the number of tickets for the event and if the street was going to be closed. Ms. Marks responded that there are 350 tickets this year, up from 300 2 years ago and the block from the corner of Dearborn and Elm, up to Coconut Street will be closed off.
- The Englewood Music Festival is scheduled for March 5.

## **VII. Open to Public**

- Jack Gray spoke about the return of another event: the Gasparilla Pirate Festival. He has obtained a grant from the Sarasota Visitor's Bureau to help to present this festival. Members of the Board expressed concern about the firing of the cannons that occurred at last year's event, which had generated complaints from the neighbors around Cherokee Park and asked if that could be eliminated or redirected away from the neighborhood. Mr. Gray responded that the canons were the highlight of the event and that they were directed out into the bay. He offered to speak with the neighbors to address their concerns. Mr. Gray also asked for assistance from the Board in permitting and advertising for the event. Chairman Diez asked about last year's attendance. Mr. Gray responded that there were several hundred people in attendance despite the rain that day.
- From the audience, Betty Nugent, asked about this year's Dearborn Street Book Festival. Debbie Marks of the CRA replied that no one has come forth with the event program, so the status of the event was not clear.
- Don Platt addressed the meeting and gave the history of Buchan's Airport.

## **Board Comments**

- a) Todd Tracy: thanked everyone for attending the meeting and asked the audience to please introduce themselves when addressing the meeting. He also thanked Jack Gray for his efforts. He asked about the status of the Southwind Street property. Debbie Marks responded that it was currently rented and there were no plans to sell the property until the market conditions improved.

- b) Don Landis: explained to the audience and Board that though many people complain about the County's regulations, many of these regulations are actually federal regulations and are applicable to the entire country.
- c) Norman Caldwell: expressed that he was very happy with all the events and progress of the plans. He thanked Debbie Marks for all her hard work. He has been trying to get in touch with Jeff Maultsby of the Sarasota Economic Development to meet with a renowned business developer in Alabama so he could share his expertise, but without success. Mr. Caldwell expressed that he was discouraged with the lack of progress with the Economic Development office.
- d) Vice Chair: John Mead: was very excited about the Vietnam Traveling Wall coming to Englewood and the Mullet Drop was intriguing idea. Speaking on behalf of the Rotary, he asked Debbie Marks about the feasibility of getting a sign at entrance of South River Road. Ms. Marks responded that she would check with the FDOT about that. He also invited the public to the Chamber's Wine and Swine event to be held on Friday, February 11, 2011.
- e) John Davison: invited the members of the Board and the audience to come down to Harbor Lane after the meeting to view the progress of the project and the new public landing.
- f) John Radkins: asked if Debbie Marks would write an article and provide a photo of the new public landing, also mentioning the amenities of Dearborn Street, to be published in a local boating magazine.
- g) Chairperson Mary Ellen Diez: thanked everyone for coming to the meeting and expressed how excited she was about the Vietnam Traveling Wall coming to Englewood. She asked that anyone who had items for the next agenda to be passed to Debbie Marks.

### **Adjournment**

Chairperson Diez adjourned the meeting at 2:20 p.m.

Non-Board member sign-in attendance count: 16