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**MINUTES
COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY MEETING
CITY OF HOLLY HILL, FLORIDA**

MAY 23, 2006

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Roland Via called the meeting to order in the Commission Chambers, 1065 Ridgewood Avenue at approximately 6:00 p.m. Attending with Mayor Via were Commissioners John Penny, Gilles Blais, Mark Reed, and Traci A. Anderson. Also attending were the following staff members: City Manager Joe Forte, Public Works Director/City Engineer Chris Hurst, Community Redevelopment Coordinator Marsha Radulovich, and City Clerk Valerie Manning.

**2. AUDIENCE PARTICPATION
Regarding items not on the agenda.**

Arthur Kowitz, Chairman of the Community Redevelopment Advisory Board, 1501 Ridgewood Avenue, handed out a letter from the CRA Board asking the Commission to consider and/or support for the creation of a commercial town center at Hollyland Park. Mr. Kowitz stated he has been on this particular advisory board for a few years and has been Chairman for the past two years. He has seen quite a few of the Commissioners but not everyone at their Board meetings, certainly everyone is invited to come and participate when the time comes. What he wanted to share is, and he speaks in great part for the entire Board, they have a consensus on this, although maybe some of the little things that he will fill in might be his own opinion, but by and large they stand in full agreement. The Board does believe and they have analyzed this sixteen ways to Sunday, he has gone personally on behalf of himself and on behalf of the Advisory Board to some State sponsored redevelopment conferences so he is not totally in the dark and does have some experience doing this. Certainly, his profession as a Commercial Real Estate Broker, gives him a good background for it. The Board believes and they feel that the City of Holly Hill really needs a downtown. There needs to be a place for the citizens and population to gather, a place to have events, a place that would give them a focus for common services like post offices and libraries and things that are community services, in addition to a concentration of private commercial services. The Board thinks that it would help focus the City. As they all know, the City evolved as a corridor of motor courts between New York and Miami and the little bit of downtown that they do have is precious little and not even on the normal beaten path. There's a lot to be gained by the City having a focus, a town center. It's been well talked about and there are a lot of different places it can be. As a group, the Advisory Board has tossed this about quite a bit and they see that is one thing that would really accelerate the redevelopment of the corridor and enhance the City. Another thing that the Board sees that could be very beneficial is uplifting the visuals that people get when they enter the City from I-95. It's no secret that the Interstate is the way people travel and when they get off the Interstate coming into our town the first few things they see need to be the best things. The salvage yard on LPGA Blvd. is not one of the best things and the Board doesn't believe that natural forces are going to take that away soon enough to suit our needs. Lastly, this is volunteer work for the Board members. They are chomping at the bit. They have money in the bank. They have strategies on

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top of strategies and they want to start breaking ground, spending money...he is speaking figuratively, they want to make things happen. They don't want the CRA as an entity to drag out any longer than it has to. They want it to be vibrant, active, effective, do its job, put their feet up and be proud of what they've done. The Board wants to move along. The one thing that he wants to...the strategy is very simple. Certainly, if they can kill more than one bird with a stone, it's the best thing to do. The Board's vision is and let him preface this by saying, he believes public spaces that have inherent value to the community like the beach or City Island or something that's special belongs to the citizens and needs to stay with the citizens. He personally, doesn't want to see condos on City Island. He thinks it should be a library and a ball park. To talk about Holly Hill, they have ball fields and so forth on a piece of land across the street, Hollyland Park. That location is not inherently special. The only thing that makes it special are the ball fields and the library. It's valuable from a Commerce perspective but it's not necessarily a magical place to be in of itself. Taking advantage of the location across the street at Hollyland Park, the proximity to LPGA Blvd. and all of the other things and putting a town center across from City Hall would give them the focus, they could relocate the ball fields and recreational fields to the LPGA Blvd. salvage yard area. That would make the salvage yard go away faster than natural commerce and forces will make it go away. It will solve two or three of the big things that they are trying to do. Make the corridor prettier, give the City a focus, they can concentrate their services and very little negativity other than it's a lot of work. Mr. Kowitz wanted to share with the Commission one little ism that is always quoted when you go to redevelopment seminars and it's something that the City needs to consider. He knows they have a 7+ acre piece cleared and approved for development on the corner of 3rd Street and Ridgewood Avenue but no one has stepped to the plate with a shovel yet and there's a lot of talk of various other places being put into play also. But the common wisdom in redevelopment is that *private investment follows public commitment*. If the City does this, relocates the fields, upgrades the fields to the public, puts in a City center downtown, the developers of this world would know that Holly Hill is serious and they will get off their wallet and get themselves in town.

Commissioner Reed stated Mr. Kowitz alluded to the 7+ acres on 3rd Street and Ridgewood Avenue, there's been a lot of talk but Mr. Kowitz didn't say what the talk is.

Mr. Kowitz stated not about that. There's talk about assembling this...

Commissioner Reed asked what was he alluding to.

Mr. Kowitz stated he knows as a Real Estate Broker that there are people that have talked about assembling parcels in the Family Renew area, across from the Marina Grande, there's been a lot of people poking around the edges of assembling, buying, permitting and building. But he doesn't see it all happening and he believes that they would be *more* aggressive in helping the private money and investors would be more likely to invest their fortunes in the City once they've seen that the City has made a commitment.

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Commissioner Blais stated the City center would be their hub and then they would develop either side of the CRA zone on Ridgewood?

Mr. Kowitz stated, yes. He used the term town center, there are walkable communities, there are city centers. There are all kinds of spins on the same type of thing. It is a Planned Urban Development (PUD) of mixed use which would have...this is a vision, it's certainly easier to talk about than to do it, this would be a mixture of public buildings, like the library, the Chamber of Commerce, the Post Office; City center things. The kind of things they would find in downtown Jacksonville. Then there would be commercial endeavors, service providers – hair salons, shoe stores, cafés and so forth and maybe a fountain in the middle, a gazebo, a Bandshell where there can be events for seniors. They already have things that they are focusing on the lawn of City Hall. They might be focused across the street in the future instead of the lawn. They are using the lawn because that's their only choice. If they design this intelligently, they can have a venue for these things as well. The typical town center, when you get away from the center and the hub, as Commissioner Blais put it, they start to see residential. Typically, the residential that is abutting or near the Commerce are more dense, maybe two, three, four stories high, flats and the farther they get away from the hub, the higher the value per unit goes and the density thins out. Sometimes they have seen this in PUDs that are built up on a highway where there is retail on the street then service oriented right behind it then apartments then single-family homes. It's the same kind of concept but in a semi-circle maybe instead of a linear setup.

Commissioner Anderson stated Mr. Kowitz mentioned the salvage yard, what would be the incentive for that guy to move?

Mr. Kowitz stated, cash.

Commissioner Anderson stated, okay.

Mr. Kowitz stated he has not negotiated or talked to him or anything.

Commissioner Anderson asked how much acreage is there.

Mr. Kowitz stated he doesn't know. The salvage yard is there and there is the old auto parts place there and then there is the bus depot down the street.

Commissioner Anderson stated so there would be a lot of businesses, basically, that they would have to...

Mr. Kowitz stated there are two bigger businesses and they are both unsightly businesses to have on an entrance corridor.

Commissioner Reed stated he believes it would take eminent domain, probably, plus the cash to get somebody to move out of the salvage yard business. Obviously, they are making money or they wouldn't be there.

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Mayor Via stated to clarify what Commissioner Anderson was talking about, is Mr. Kowitz envisioning that the CRA would want to purchase that land to then put out an RFP for developers or is he talking about private development would probably follow that to get contiguous to the other success?

Mr. Kowitz stated he sees a private public partnership in the town center and the recreational fields on LPGA Blvd. as public property.

Commissioner Penny stated Mr. Forte, have you shared the environmental concerns with the eagle's nest with the Advisory Board?

Mr. Forte stated, yes.

Mr. Kowitz stated the Board talked about that and only scratched the surface of it. He doesn't know the specifics, the numbers of acres, he is not armed with a specific plan, don't get him wrong. The Board wants to move forward. They want to encourage the Commission to develop a viable strategy to make this happen because the Board has talked this to death. They have heard it from enough people and enough visitors and consultants and people coming and going on the Board that it's time to come up with a strategy and move forward or they will go nowhere. One of the discussions that came up regarding the ecology is take advantage of it and make part of the park a bird watching area and leave the birds right where they are and enjoy them. Without the will to do this, they can come up with countless reasons why it won't work. The Board is advising the Commission to maybe charge the appropriate people with coming up with a viable plan and see if they can't make it work.

Commissioner Reed stated just to answer a question for him Mr. Kowitz is talking about a creation of a commercial town center at the current Hollyland Park site.

Mr. Kowitz stated, correct. Yes, and it could be expanded past that to little motels or whatever might be adjacent to that.

Commissioner Reed stated Mr. Kowitz, in your mind, what percentage of that 13 or 15 acres, would you consider to be commercial and how much would you think, in your plan, would be a good amount for public?

Mr. Kowitz stated he would say it would need to be about $\frac{1}{4}$ available for public events and so forth which would be a plaza with a fountain, park.

Commissioner Reed stated so Mr. Kowitz is suggesting $\frac{3}{4}$ of that area would be commercial development.

Mr. Kowitz stated commercial development and some would be public services.

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Mayor Via stated he would never accept less than what they have now in Hollyland Park. For instance, they have ball fields there and there are parking areas there. What is the residential component in this?

Commissioner Reed stated Mr. Kowitz didn't have anything about residential.

Mr. Kowitz stated the parcel across the street, Hollyland Park, would be subject to development where the City might come up with a mix of residential public space and so forth and then send out for bids to developers to see who would be interested in taking on such a project.

Mayor Via stated there are some of these town centers which feature first floor retail or commercial, second floor perhaps office/business space but two to three floors of different types of housing. Is that part of this at all?

Mr. Kowitz stated yes, that's part of it. There are quite a few concepts to come from and he is not here advising the Commission which concept to do. What the Board is trying to do is solve two or three big burning issues at the same time and have a strategy that they can work on today that would really ignite the redevelopment area.

Commissioner Penny stated Mr. Kowitz, on their regular agenda this evening they will be discussing their 2006 goals and all of these goals have equal priorities. It sounds like they are in line with the Board and that the Commission will be working with them in the future in getting their input on these issues regarding Hollyland Park. It sounds like the Board and the Commissioner's goals are talking about the same things.

Mr. Kowitz stated after the Board discussed this at their most recent meeting and he wrote the letter and everyone asked for him to come and speak on this subject, the Board received the Commissioner's packet and he, just this morning, sat down with his highlighter and their goals... it seems like 60% of their goals could be addressed with this one move if it was done in a prudent manner.

Mayor Via stated there is still a lot of discussion among the Commission about how they would do that. They are concerned about how much commercial do they put in there in what was a public area before and if that public area is becoming more private. His thought is, if they can bring in more people into a downtown center area and get them together more often that way than they can by just holding ball games or relay's for life. There are a lot of components to this that they have to look at.

Commissioner Anderson stated they also have to take into account what the citizens want because none of this is wrote in stone and not all of us agree for this project. Basically, the biggest thing is going to be what the citizens want and if they want to do this.

Mr. Kowitz stated if they are concerned about taking public space away, by utilizing the land across the street as commercial with some public space also, and developing new recreation fields, it's not just comparing the old space across the street with the new space, it's comparing the old space to the new space and the new recreation fields.

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Mayor Via stated that's understood but they only get one chance to do it the right way so they are probably going to move forward in a cautious manner. He thinks everybody can see that there's some viability of what the Board is asking for. He sits here and he supports it but he knows that this Commission and the CRA Board has to move forward cautiously because they only get one time to do this thing right. This is the next 50 years.

Commissioner Reed stated they all want to make the City better and moving the ball fields, in his mind, doesn't mean that he wants commercial development in a park. This isn't Mark Reed's idea. This is what, literally, hundreds of people have told him, is to protect the park. It's his belief that if the ball fields were moved, that park could be remade into a really nice place that would be inherently special and that the commercial area, that is now surrounding that inherently special park after it has been made special by changing it around, bringing in culture, bringing in different things, that they don't have the ability to do now because of the ball fields. When he says a goal is to move the ball fields and he says one of his goals would be to develop a town center, his goal has *never* been to betray the trust of the people that express to him that they want that park to remain a public park. He believes there is a lot to be said for their ideas of commercial development immediately surrounding an inherently special place and he thinks it would happen. He thinks that all those properties that are around the park are going to turn into very valuable assets for commercial and residential.

Mr. Kowitz stated the thing that he sees missing from Commissioner Reed's proposal is the spark that will encourage the commercial development. If they made the beautiful park across the street, he is not sure what would make the Ranch Motel any different. That park being a park and being beautiful is not going to invite developers and redevelopers to change the surrounding area. It is likely to stay the way it is for a bit longer.

Commissioner Reed stated that's where they may have a difference of opinion.

Mayor Via stated they may have to take this issue to referendum because with this big pot of redevelopment money they want to make sure that everything is being done in the proper sequence and that everybody wants it and that they are going to move forward. They will have to put it out to the people.

Mr. Kowitz stated a good plan that makes sense that folks buy into.

Mayor Via stated and the plan that they may buy into is just to leave it alone. It's up to the citizens, it really is. Mr. Kowitz has just defined what is the epitome of a CRA plan. He wants people to be able to shop here in town.

David Spearin, 2 Highwood Ridge Trail, Ormond Beach, stated to re-enforce what Mr. Kowitz is saying, they will always get caught in the details but the proposal that Mr. Kowitz is asking about is look, City property – consider changing its use to something grander than the purpose that it has served for all these years. Can they open the idea of taking City property and doing something...because it's always going to be called commercial no matter what they put in it, it's just can they take what they have today, City property, which has been off the books forever, can they perhaps consider a new idea? Its time may have come.

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Maureen Monahan, 215 – 5th Street, stated she appreciates their suggestion of a referendum on a situation like this that does impact all the citizens and she doesn't think that there are just hundreds, she thinks there are thousands of people that have expressed their opinion to her and some of the other Commissioners regarding Hollyland Park. She agrees with Commissioner Reed that just because they move the ball fields doesn't mean they have to put in commercial development and they could make that an attraction in itself as a park that other cities would be proud to come to. She disagrees with some people saying that it will prohibit commercial development from coming and wanting to maybe buy up some of the properties in the surrounding area and develop those. She doesn't think that a town center with a commercial, private and public enterprise together is the answer.

Mayor Via stated they would have to go through a series of workshops and talk more.

Commissioner Blais stated they need to think beyond the box and look at this. It's time that someone takes that saber and says, "Charge!" Why wait? Let's get ahead of the other cities then they can learn from Holly Hill. Think about it. He thinks about the old timers. They had a great dream but somewhere along the line, instead of going forward, we went backwards; afraid to face the future. He is not afraid to face the future and he would like to challenge everyone of them to think beyond their little boxes or their little pads. "Be a big frog instead of a small frog and forget the snakes!"

Mayor Via stated perhaps they will commit themselves to some goal setting sessions that are going to be involved with what they are calling a Master Plan. He believes they are going to need to coordinate closer with the Redevelopment Board in their language and intents and purposes along the way.

3. COMMERCIAL PROPERTY IMPROVEMENT GRANT – REVISED

*Commissioner Reed moved **APPROVAL** of the Commercial Property Improvement Grant Revision, seconded by Commissioner Blais.*

The motion **CARRIED** 5-0 on roll call: Reed – Yes, Blais – Yes, Penny – Yes, Anderson – Yes, Mayor Via – Yes.

4. COMMERCIAL LANDSCAPE IMPROVEMENT GRANT – REVISED

*Commissioner Penny moved **APPROVAL** of the Commercial Landscape Improvement Grant Revision, seconded by Commissioner Anderson.*

The motion **CARRIED** 5-0 on roll call: Penny – Yes, Anderson – Yes, Reed – Yes, Blais – Yes, Mayor Via – Yes.

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5. PRIVATE RESIDENTIAL IMPROVEMENT GRANT – REVISED

*Commissioner Reed moved **APPROVAL** of the Private Residential Improvement Grant Revision, seconded by Commissioner Blais.*

The motion **CARRIED** 5-0 on roll call: Reed – Yes, Blais – Yes, Anderson – Yes, Penny – Yes, Mayor Via – Yes.

6. DEMOLITION GRANT – REVISED

*Commissioner Anderson moved **APPROVAL** of the Demolition Grant Revision, seconded by Commissioner Blais.*

The motion **CARRIED** 5-0 on roll call: Anderson – Yes, Blais – Yes, Reed – Yes, Penny – Yes, Mayor Via – Yes.

Mayor Via thanked Ms. Radulovich in putting these grants together and getting them ready and fitting them with the CRA Board.

Mr. Forte stated while they have a few minutes and are sitting here as the Redevelopment Agency, if they have any questions, concerns or comments, now would be a good time for that.

Mayor Via asked if they are going to schedule a workshop with the CRA Board anytime soon.

Mr. Forte stated at some point but he doesn't know exactly when. This Master Plan that they have scheduled to be developed for the CRA is going to take some time to put together especially if they do it in-house and by doing it in-house that's going to incorporate the comments and the participation of that Board as recommendations to this Agency at which point the Agency will review and make comments and changes themselves.

Mayor Via stated as a new Commission, they are going to have to make their way through their very first budget plus they are still putting together their three year contracts with their major Unions. There are a lot of things that they have on the plate right now. It's probably going to be in the fall before they get face-to-face with the CRA Board and start tackling some of the initial stages of some of these issues.

Commissioner Reed stated regarding Hollyland Park, if this Commission were of one mind, which he feels they are not, and they want to do it right now, they are going to be held up for three years or maybe longer because of the eagle's nest at Hollyland Park. In all due respect Mr. Kowitz, you can be as anxious as you can right now but even if they wanted to, they can't do anything.

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Commissioner Reed stated there has been discussion that they are not maximizing the sign in front of City Hall and he suggested to Mr. Forte perhaps that sign could be moved to the corner of LPGA Blvd. and Ridgewood Avenue. Perhaps instead of a single two-sided sign to be split into a sign that could be seen from all four directions. He hasn't heard of any kind of traffic impact on something like that and he doesn't know if they have any further report if they can even do that.

Mr. Forte stated the only thing he did at this point was ask Scott Gutauckis to contact the people who installed the sign to see what it would take and what it would cost to relocate something like that. Once he gets that information then he will introduce it to everybody. The sign would be relocated to the Northwest corner of LPGA Blvd.

Commissioner Reed stated where the little plaque sign currently is that says, "Welcome to Holly Hill." Move the sign over to that intersection because when they talk about maximizing the usage of the sign, and although a tremendous amount of money was spent on that sign, he thinks if they look up and down the street, the businesses that utilize those types of signs, they tend to put a simple red letter sign up with a much higher elevation so that the traffic could see it at a further distance away. This sign doesn't lend itself to that but he was thinking perhaps if it were a little bit higher at least when the people were sitting at the red light they would have a full 30 seconds or a minute to look at the messages on it instead of the brief six, seven, or eight seconds they now have to look at it while they're driving. Will it cause an impact? Perhaps people will be looking at the sign instead of looking at the light, he doesn't know. It's just a consideration for them to consider.

Mayor Via stated last year they took in money and dedicated \$470,000 for a \$6.3 million loan. Where are they at now with that loan and what is the timeframe that they need to have to work on or spend that money?

Mr. Forte stated they will probably see more of that as they go through the budget process and he met with the CRA Board and they took out the items that were in the old budget because they are now covered under the bond, there's about \$450,000 of money that could be spent annually. One of the things they are going to do, and they've got this list of amenities that they have drafted out of the goals and objectives of the CRA plan to try to accomplish over a period of a revolving five year plan. Things like bus benches and landscaping and lights. There are some items that they are going to try to assign dollars to that the Agency will review and hopefully approve and then they will start spending the money. The timeframe for spending the loan, there isn't one but what they are going to do is as they start to look at what some of the capital items were that they wanted to spend that money on, they will revisit that and see if they want to continue to spend the money on that. He mentioned to some of the Commissioners the issues with the waterline on U.S. 1. They need to look at under grounding the utilities and get back on focus with getting the cost estimates on that. There was some discussion about the joint parking and stormwater projects that are involved in that. Ms. Radulovich has put together a list of businesses on U.S. 1 that would be possible locations for parking and stormwater but the only comment he had about that list was that it has to be looked into by the City Engineer. Unless this Commission directs him to start on social engineering of purchasing blighted and dilapidated properties for the sake of eliminating them to have something else come in there, which he hasn't

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gotten that direction yet. Right now, if they are going to purchase for the sake of parking and stormwater, those parking and stormwater areas have to foot the bill.

Commissioner Reed stated they need to be some place where they are going to be used.

Mr. Forte stated, correct. Remember, corners are more palatable to commercial properties than the center of the block.

Mayor Via stated there is much talk about the future monies that will be brought to the City by Marina Grande. What is the timeframe that they can see redevelopment money?

Mr. Forte stated they see a little bit redevelopment money each year that the assessments go up on the properties. If they're talking about the big hit that the City is going to receive from Marina Grande, they are still several years out.

Mayor Via stated for his information, that money that would be coming, when they are looking at their Master Plan and they are working with the CRA Board, when do they start to plug the components of that money in?

Mr. Forte stated they would probably plug that in a year after anticipation. If he is estimating three years and they are putting out a five year plan, he is not going to plug that number in until the fourth year to be on the safe side. He doesn't want to plan for something and be off. This way, if the money comes in on the third year, they jump up that year in the plan.

Mayor Via asked does the Commission find it necessary to have a workshop on the specific existing redevelopment plan.

Commissioner Reed stated, no. Not at this time.

*There was **CONSENSUS** from the Commission that it was not needed at this time.*

Commissioner Blais asked if the CRA Board has a Master Plan.

Mr. Forte stated they have CRA plan but it doesn't include specific details.

7. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting officially adjourned at approximately 6:55 p.m.

Attest:

City of Holly Hill, Florida

Valerie Manning
City Clerk

Roland Via
Mayor

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