

**Minutes of the New Orleans Redevelopment Authority  
Board of Commissioners Meeting**

**Date:** April 23, 2007

**Time:** 6:00 PM

**Place:** Amoco Building

1340 Poydras Street, 10<sup>th</sup> Floor Board Room

New Orleans, Louisiana 70112

**The following agenda items were considered at the meeting:**

**1. Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 PM

**2. Roll Call**

Quorum was present with Commissioners Abbott, Connor, Couhig, Gray, Major, West, and Woods. Commissioners Brown, Cowen, Lagarde, and Singleton were marked absent.

**3. Introduction of Guests**

- Janet Phillpott, Republican Orleans Parish Executive Committee
- Deborah Langhoff, District 5 Steering Committee
- Davin Boldissar, BGR
- Christopher Lund, City Attorney's Office
- Michelle Kimball, PRC
- Rev. Leon Tilton, SCLC
- Becky Bohrer, AP
- Joel Borrelo, Attorney
- Pat O'Brien, NO Property Owner
- Patty Gay, PRC
- Becca O'Brien, Mayor's Office
- Lauren Lentz
- Eric and Pamela Person, Property Owners
- Karen Gadbois, Common Knowledge
- Sarah Lewis, Common Knowledge
- Frank Donze, Times -Picayune
- Ricardo Gutierrez, CHAT and DeSaix Area Neighborhood Assoc.
- Stephanie Grace, Times Picayune
- Amy Enchelmeyer, representing Councilman Arnie Fielkow
- Harry Cantrell, Cantrell Law Firm
- Ulysses Williams, L&L Steel Builders, Inc.

**4. Review and Approval of the Agenda**

Approval Motion: West

Second: Major

Vote: Unanimous

**5. Approval of the Minutes of the Special Meeting held April 9, 2007**

Approval Motion: Gray

Second: Connor

Vote: Unanimous

**6. Committee Reports: Land Assembly and Disposition**

Commissioner West reported to the Board that the Committee had completed its work on the Policies and Procedures Manual for the acquisition and disposition of NORA property.

Commissioner Gray asked that the word Management be removed from the title of the document because there are no policies or procedures in the document dealing with management and NORA is not in the business of managing property.

Technical Amendment: Gray

Adoption Motion: West

Second: Couhig

Vote: Unanimous

In addition, Commissioner West told the Board that the roster for the Advisory Committee for Land Assembly and Disposition Committee will be available for the next Board meeting.

**7. Executive Director's Report**

**a) Philadelphia Redevelopment Authority Trip**

Mr. Williams expressed to the Board, his pleasure at having represented NORA in Philadelphia last week, where he met with the Mayor and his development staff. They have been instituting a revitalization program over the last five or six years. Some of the initiatives included:

State of the Art Management Information System

Aggressive Demolition Program (houses and cars)

Strategic Land Banking

Vacant Property Stabilization (neighborhood beautification to contribute to the value of the neighborhood)

**b) Lot Next Door Ordinance**

Last week the Council passed the Lot Next Door Ordinance, which gives property owners the ability to acquire the property adjacent to their current property. This is an important Ordinance, and NORA is currently working with the Council to develop a budget and policies and procedures in order to manage this Program. These materials will be ready in the next 90 days and given to the Council at that time for approval.

Commissioner Abbott mentioned that NORA had reviewed the proposed Ordinance and voiced concerns that were addressed before the final document was presented for adoption. One of the reservations about the Ordinance dealt with purchasers not having rights until the deposit is paid. The Council addressed that concern and also included a mapping component and when it is completed, NORA will know where every piece of property is located. Once we determine the price for the mapping component NORA will again sit down with Council to discuss funding.

The Commissioner is appreciative of the Council's willingness to work with NORA and thanks them for producing a first rate Ordinance.

Commissioner Abbott also emphasized the fact that this Ordinance is a first step and that it will not do anyone any good unless it is coupled with the delegation of authority to Quick Take. NORA is still working on getting that delegation of authority to begin implementing the program.

**c) NORA Prospectus**

Mr. Williams informed the Board that Prospectus he mentioned at the last meeting was received this morning. This Prospectus is a summary of NORA's vision and strategy, in essence a pitch book for courting foundations and other entities. It will be forwarded to the Board Chair for his review and approval before it is forwarded on to the rest of the Board.

**d) Staffing Update**

Mr. Williams announced that NORA extended an offer to an experienced controller with over 16 years of accounting experience. Just this morning that offer was accepted and his start date is Monday, 30 April 2007.

In addition, there are a number of other job postings which have started to draw resumes from interested candidates. Staff will start interviews this week for the Land Assembly and Disposition Manager. Mr. Williams asked Commissioner West, as Chair of the Land Assembly and Disposition Committee, to assist with screening candidates.

**Commissioner Abbott asked Mr. Williams to make additional reports on:**

**a) Budget:**

Mr. Williams informed the Board that the budget for 2008 and 2009 is in its final stages and that the goal is to have the spreadsheets in front of the Finance Committee by Wednesday and the rest of the Board after review and approval by Finance.

**b) Attorneys for Title Work:**

Mr. Williams announced that NORA's In-house Council, Chris Gobert, has undertaken a study of the 8 RFP responses received to date. NORA is in position now to begin working aggressively on clearing title. Based on the financial considerations underlying the clearing of title, the Executive Director will come to the Board for their pleasure in terms of how many properties to start with. Staff is currently looking at property clusters to offer as suggestion. This would enable NORA to start with a subset of the 1500 adjudicated properties.

Commissioner Abbott added that per a previous conversation with Mr. Williams, his understanding is that 1500 properties multiplied by the offer for title work equals \$3.65 million. Clearly NORA is not in a position to order title work on all the properties.

Commissioner Couhig put forth a motion to authorize the Executive Director to choose as many as 30 properties to be cleared through title work in a specific geographic area of his choosing

Second: Gray

Vote: Unanimous

Commissioner Woods offered his expertise in title work to assist with the RFP responses. Commissioner Abbott appointed him to work with the Executive Director and In-house Council on the selection of attorneys who filed bids.

#### **8. Chairman's Report: Quick Take**

Commissioner Abbott made his comments during the Executive Director's report.

#### **9. Executive Session**

Motion to go into Executive Session: Gray

Second: West

Vote: Unanimous

##### **a) Personnel Issues**

##### **b) Litigation**

Litigation Motion: Gray, move that we empower General Council Darrick LeBeouf and the Chair Herschel Abbott to take the steps necessary to evaluate and defend or otherwise dispose of the exception, including engaging other Council as they see fit.

Second: Major

Vote: Unanimous

#### **10. Public Comment**

- Request for the adopted Policies and Procedures Manual
- A representative from Councilman Fielkow's office asked a question confirming the fact that non-profits and individuals will be treated the same in the property purchasing process

- Rev. Tilton from SCLC asked general process questions. Commissioner Major asked that Staff offer community education sessions on the acquisition process and as an introduction of staff.
- Request for clarification of the definition of fair market value. Question about whether or not ICF data will be included in NORA's resources going forward. Commissioner Abbott responded that he had just begun conversations about acquiring the data.
- Question about litigation facing NORA. Commissioner Abbott responded by explaining that the litigation deals with the constitutionality of the expropriation process.
- Ricardo Gutierrez of CHAT and the DeSaix Area Neighborhood Association asked that the minutes for the year be put on the website. Mr. Williams assured him that Staff would take care of it.
- Request for clarity about the Lot Next Door Program Ordinance.
- Request for understanding about what would happen if both property owners wanted the property.
- Patty Gay also expressed concern about re-subdividing New Orleans. In addition she reminded the Board of the importance of actively advertising NORA properties.
- Pat O'Brien, a New Orleans resident and previous NORA client, gave a presentation requesting that NORA monitor the removal of blight by people purchasing property
- Joel Borrello, the original drafter of the City's blighted property program expressed concern about NORA being more transparent in its operation of the program than the City was in the past.

### **11. Old Business**

Commissioner Couhig made a motion that the Executive Director dispose of 30 NORA properties using the new Policies and Procedures. This will give NORA an opportunity to see if the document works the right way.

Second: West

Vote: Unanimous

### **12. New Business**

Commissioner West mentioned to the Board that he and Staff had participated in a conference call with the Trust for Public Land (TPL) about how they may be able to help NORA with land acquisition and assemblage. Mr. Williams explained that TPL is an entity that engages in assisting municipalities in acquiring land; they are interested in working with NORA dealing with conservation and green space and may be a potential funding source.

### **13. Adjourn**

Motion: Couhig

Second: Major

Vote: Unanimous