



REDEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MEETING
WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 27, 2021
SAM KING ROOM & ZOOM MEETING
2:30 P.M.

PRESENT:

Wendy Davis (Chair), Jim Bojo, Randy Quick, Craig McDaniel, Sammy Rich, Joe Smith

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE VIA ZOOM:

Mark Cochran, Bekki Fox, Toni Rhinehart, Ron Swinford, Bobby Jones, John Druckenmiller (Hometown Headlines), John Bailey (RNT), WRGA

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Chairperson Davis called the meeting to order. Randy Quick made a motion to approve the minutes of the December 9, 2020 Redevelopment Committee meeting which was seconded by Jim Bojo.

UPDATE - ANNEXATION:

Chairperson Davis began the discussion with a reminder that annexation is still under discussion and no decision has been made to annex any property at this time. She mentioned that the spreadsheet was available to use for any individual homeowner to see the cost or savings for their property if they were to annex into the city. Sammy Rich noted that Kelley Parker is available to run these numbers for anyone that would like to contact her with their address and property information. The group discussed several dates to possibly hold a community conversation with the residents of Celanese and the possibility of having a hybrid Zoom/in-person meeting at the City Auditorium. It was mentioned that there is a community meeting already scheduled by the residents of Celanese and Davis mentioned that she was aware of the large number of yard signs in opposition to annexing Celanese but reiterated that this was not a “done deal” but an opportunity to have a necessary conversation. Mayor Craig McDaniel added that he knew of the alarm in the Floyd County School System because of the closing of other county schools unrelated to the discussion of annexation of this county property into the city. He stated that it was not the will of the Rome City Commission to be aggressive but to inform the residents of the benefits of annexation and how it could affect the homeowners. Davis stated that she wanted her recently purchased rental property in the Celanese neighborhood to be annexed into the city but that it is not part of this annexation. Her property is around the “edge” which is adjacent to city property where owners can request to be annexed into the city. Davis also reminded all that if there is a choice to annex, children may stay in the county schools without fees or penalties and would not be forced to attend city schools. Commissioner Quick added that all facts need to be presented and that everyone involved should have the opportunity to go through the educational process so that they can be shown the benefits, the services and any costs that would be incurred.

Ron Swinford, a resident of the Riverside community who has an additional 8 rental houses in the area, stated that the annexation of his 9 properties would put him out of business. He stated that Celanese residents had already met with members of the FC School Board and that they were highly against annexation because of the loss of money their system would incur. He mentioned that although families would have the choice to keep their children in the county schools, there would be no bus service provided to get these children to the schools. He stated that the Celanese residents will meet Thursday the 28th and would be starting a petition to stop any annexation of their neighborhood. He stated that he is willing to listen but would not change his opinion. Davis suggested that Mr. Swinford let the residents know that they can contact Kelley to have their individual properties analyzed as well as his own properties to see how they would be affected (cost/savings). She assured him that it is not the intent of the Rome City Commission to put anyone out of business.

UPDATE - WEST 3RD:

Sammy Rich announced that interviews will be held on Thursday, January 28, for two proposals of the West 3rd property. He briefly described one project by Ira Levy which would be residential housing above and retail below w a possible rooftop bar or restaurant. In contrast, the other project would be a unique, mixed-use space that could utilize the levee. The interview committee will make a recommendation then schedule a called Redevelopment Committee meeting before going to the Rome City Commission for approval. Bojo and Quick both commented that they are anxious to see the possibilities.

Davis asked if there was an update on Streetscape. Rich responded by saying it is still in progress and reminded the group of the two components:

- 1 – GMC/Bryan King hired to provide the plan.
- 2 – Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) which provided grant money to go towards the water and sewer component, which will be handled in-house. Rich stated that our engineering department is working on pricing opportunities to provide the means to move forward with the implementation of Streetscape. The available SPLOST money will require this project to be implemented in phases.

UPDATE – HOUSING:

Davis introduced Bobby Jones, Interim Executive Director of South Rome Alliance, to discuss the South Meadows Project. Jones described LIHTC (Low Income Housing Tax Credit) as the most important affordable housing mechanism today and discussed how the program works. The South Meadows LIHTC Development would include 80 new units, 20 at 80% of Area Median Income, 40 at 60% of AMI, and 20 at 30% of AMI which would include 1, 2, and 3 bedroom units. The units will rent from \$394 to \$675, similar to Burrell Square. The development would include a Community Building, Healthy Living program in conjunction with The Davies Shelter Farm, and an Education program. There is also the opportunity to add 10-12 single-family lots next to the apartments for CHIP houses. Jones stated that they may be announcing a new Executive Director by March.

In further discussion of housing, Davis announced that Statesboro GA has recently received the Georgia Trend Award in part because of their innovative incentive for residential housing. She briefly provided

some detail about the Statesboro model and added that it would be a great tool to use in developing an incentive grant in the City of Rome. McDaniel mentioned that we have a retreat scheduled for February 18 & 19th and that part of that retreat would be a mini housing summit. Commissioner Davis has been asked to chair an ad hoc committee that will look at housing and the Statesboro model can be used as a template to develop the incentive needed to get more developers building houses. Rich has reached out to the planning staff in Statesboro to set up a meeting via Zoom to get more information before the Commission planning retreat.

FEDERAL OPPORTUNITY ZONES:

Davis began discussion of Federal Opportunity Zones in our area. In these zones, people who invest in these areas receive tax benefits for their investments. A map of the Federal Opportunity Zone in our area was looked at and Davis noted that although the area is very large, most people are not aware of it. She suggested that perhaps yard signs could be printed to bring attention to potential developers. There was discussion about coming up with a workable plan of how to create awareness of this zone. Davis suggested that we have a caucus presentation in the near future regarding this opportunity.

NEW TADS:

Davis inquired about the steps necessary to create a new TAD. Rich presented the current TAD areas and mentioned that the size of TAD 1 was large and that smaller areas are easier to manage. Davis suggested that a TAD be developed for a portion of North Rome, an important corridor that needs development. Bojo and Quick added their support of developing a new TAD to hopefully draw interest to this corridor. Steps to implement a new TAD were discussed by Rich, including scouting out specific areas first and then procuring Bleakly Advisory Group to study, analyze and provide a redevelopment plan. The O'Neill Manufacturing site was mentioned as a good area to possibly be included in the TAD. Rich mentioned that the Brownfields Assessment Coalition could provide grant money to clean-up the site and make it more attractive for redevelopment by investors.

UPDATE – NWGRH:

Rich reported that there has been recent discussion in the Development Authority regarding this property and reminded of the partnership with them to create a master plan for the site. Several issues still surround the property, including the amount of demolition that would be needed as well as the debt service against the property. They are keeping a close watch on the property and any new developments in order for the City to maintain an interest in what happens there.

The next scheduled meeting of the Redevelopment Committee will be February 24, 2021 at 2:00 p.m. in the Sam King Room.

With their being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kelley Parker". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Kelley Parker
Executive Assistant,
City Manager's Office