

The Board of Directors of the Urban Redevelopment Agency met for their Regular meeting on Wednesday, March 13, 2024, at 9:00 a.m. at Harlem City Hall with Chairman John Neal presiding.

Present: BOARD: Chairman John Neal, Director Robert Culpepper, Director Renee Dean, Director Hope Hodge, and Director Steve Pokrywka; STAFF: City Manager Debra Moore, Community Development Director Robert Fields, City Clerk Leona Holley, City Attorney Adam Nelson, and City Attorney Tom Watkins; GUEST: Mayor Roxanne Whitaker.

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Neal at 9:00 a.m.

The Invocation was given by City Attorney Nelson.

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Chairman Neal.

Approval of the Agenda: Director Hodge made the motion to approve the Agenda as presented; 2nd by Director Dean. The motion carried with Directors Culpepper, Dean, Hodge, Neal, and Pokrywka voting in the affirmative.

Approval of the Minutes: Director Dean made the motion to approve the minutes of the February 14, 2024 Regular Meeting; 2nd by Director Culpepper. The motion carried with Directors Culpepper, Dean, Hodge, Neal, and Pokrywka voting in the affirmative.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Mayor Roxanne Whitaker – Mayor Whitaker reported downtown activity has picked up. The schools have been having Spirit Night at Main Street Treat and this is bringing people downtown. The Storywalk is helping with foot traffic downtown. They are working on another Storywalk for Cities Week the last week of April. Mayor Whitaker commented she appreciates all the work that Liberian Amanda Ham has done on this. This weekend the Harlem Merchants Association (HMA) is having the Shamrock & Roll. A private citizen was going to have the Small Business Expo, but this was canceled due to the weather; she is planning another festival during the summer. Mayor Whitaker reported herself, City Manager Moore, and Director Pokrywka met with an architect to discuss upgrades to the Harlem City Park.

REPORTS:

Staff Report – Robert Fields: Mr. Fields reported on the following:

- Domino's Pizza - is still interested in coming to Harlem. They are trying to find a location where they can move in and not build.
- O'Reilly's Auto Parts – In April, a variance request from O'Reilly's Auto Parts will go before the Planning Commission. O'Reilly's Auto Parts has submitted a Certificate of Appropriateness for the demolition of the historic building on the location, this will go before the Historic Preservation Commission in April as well.
- Bowdre Street Townhomes – Developer is working through drainage issues.

REPORTS (cont'd):

Staff Report – Robert Fields (cont'd):

- Heritage Ridge Townhomes – A meeting will be coming up to discuss the beginning of construction, installation of a deceleration lane and a water line that needs to be moved. They are planning to start on the commercial property.
- Harlem Mini Self Storage – The new mini self-storage building is moving ahead.
- Harlem Civic Center – The city has requested to rezone the property for the Civic Center from R-1A to B-1; this will go before the Planning Commission in April

Staff Report – Debra Moore: City Manager Moore reported Coleman Plumbing was called to try to find the source of the sewer odor at the building located at 220 N. Louisville Street, Touch of Life Massage. A smoke test was done, and they found there is a leak in the wall behind the toilet, the wall will need to be opened to access the problem area. Director Pokrywka commented probably when they did remodel in the building the pipe was cut off and vented into the wall and did not cap it off. Director Pokrywka and Public Works Director Octavious Beard are going to look at the issue to see what to do. Director Pokrywka stated he does not think the hot water heater was the issue, the tenant does not use a lot of hot water.

Director Reports: Director Hodge commented she thinks the recent Storywalk was more participation than the Christmas Storywalk and it seems to be picking up. Director Hodge thanked the Mayor and everyone that is working on this.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

Back Paddle Brewing – Update: City Manager Moore reported she sent a “gentle” reminder via email on March 11th to Kyle McCloud reminding him of the due date of March 12th for the signed Amendment and Earnest funds. Ms. Moore commented that she received a response from Mr. McCloud stating he was unable to meet the deadline. This morning Ms. Moore received an email from Queensborough Bank stating they were still working toward the approval and structure of the SBA component for Back Paddle Brewing and at this time, they do not have a closing date. There were concerns from the Board members about the process taking so long, and the deadline of March 12th was not met with the signed Amendment and Earnest Money. The Board Members would still like to see the brewery come to Harlem but need to entertain other offers. Chairman Neal stated someone else has reached out to him regarding the property. The Board would like to send a letter to Mr. McCloud to let him know they appreciate his interest in the property and are still open to him purchasing the property but, without the signed amendment and earnest money, they need to entertain other offers.

City Attorney Nelson explained legally the purchase agreement amendment expired on March 12, 2024, the URA has no obligation and Mr. McCloud obligated himself to close within 120-days which would have been in February. He is in breach of contract; the Board can waive any obligations for him, and the Board can communicate they are still open to moving forward subject to the terms in the Purchase Agreement Amendment.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS (cont'd):

Back Paddle Brewing – Update (cont'd): The Board members discussed going forward if the Board reaches an agreement with someone they will be required to put down earnest funds in order to hold the property. There was some discussion on placing the property out to potential developers.

Director Culpepper made the motion to release Kyle McCloud and Back Paddle Brewing, LLC from any existing contract obligations; 2nd by Director Pokrywka. DISCUSSION: Chairman Neal commented possibly there could be a partnership with a developer to purchase the property and lease the property back to the business. The motion carried with Directors Culpepper, Dean, Hodge, Neal, and Pokrywka voting in the affirmative. Chairman Neal stated he will contact the person that is interested in the New Street property.

Other: Mayor Whitaker asked if there were any updates on the Durst property; Director Culpepper replied the realtor reached out to the contact person for Dunkin Donuts, and the owner stated he does not think Harlem is ready for it. Director Culpepper will reach out to the realtor.

Chairman Neal asked how much cooperation the city has with the Columbia County Development Authority. Mayor Whitaker responded Former Director Robbie Bennett came and toured the San Saba property, but their idea was for the property to be industry. Mayor Whitaker stated she has not met the new Director.

NEW BUSINESS: None.

Other: None.

Executive Session: N/A

With there being no further items for discussion, Director Culpepper made the motion to adjourn the meeting; 2nd by Director Hodge. The motion carried with Directors Culpepper, Dean, Hodge, Neal, and Pokrywka voting in the affirmative. The meeting was adjourned at 10:06 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Leona H. Holley
City Clerk