

Pine Bluff Urban Renewal Agency
Annual and Regular Meeting Minutes
July 20, 2020

The Pine Bluff Urban Renewal Agency (PBURA) held its Annual Meeting and Regular Monthly Meeting on July 20, 2020, 5:30 p.m., at the Pine Bluff Convention Center.

The following commissioners were in attendance:

Jimmy Dill, chair
Lloyd Franklin, Sr.
Travis Martin
Kirby Mouser

Commissioners absent:

Rita Conley

Others in attendance:

Leigh Cockrum
Dale Ellis, Arkansas Democrat-Gazette
Maurice Taggart, Executive Director (ED)

Commissioner Dill called the meeting to order.

The Annual Meeting Agenda included the election of officers.

Commissioner Franklin made a MOTION to continue the same slate of officers currently serving, on the condition Mayor Washington reappoints Commissioner Mouser*:

Jimmy Dill, Chairman
Rita Conley, Vice Chair
Lloyd Franklin, Sr., Treasurer
Kirby Mouser, Secretary

Commissioner Martin seconded the motion, and it was APPROVED.

*Commissioner Mouser reported his term expires September 2020. He has informed Mayor Washington that he would be willing to continue to serve on the PBURA provided she was willing to reappoint him.

The meeting moved to the regular meeting agenda.

Commissioner Mouser made a MOTION to approve the June 16, 2020, minutes as presented. Commissioner Martin seconded the motion, and it was APPROVED.

Commissioner Franklin reviewed the June financial statements.

Commissioner Mouser made a MOTION to approve the June 2020 financial statements as presented. Commissioner Martin seconded the motion, and it was APPROVED.

ED Taggart presented a budget adjustment of \$3,000 to cover tuition costs for Leadership Arkansas. This amount is to come from Repair & Maintenance Heavy Auto Equipment to Training Expense.

ED Taggart's participation in this program will benefit the taxpayers through the contacts he will make, as well as the knowledge he will gain.

Commissioner Franklin made the MOTION to approve a budget adjustment for \$3,000 from Repair & Maintenance Heavy Auto Equipment to Training Expense to cover tuition expenses to Leadership Arkansas for ED Taggart. Commissioner Martin seconded the motion, and it was APPROVED.

ED Taggart also plans to attend the National Code Enforcement/Urban Development Conference in Florida at the end of the month, provided it will still be held due to the pandemic.

ED Taggart presented the PBURA Employee Handbook for approval. He has had outside counsel, and the city attorney's office, review it as requested last month. There were no changes other than grammatical changes and redundancy.

Commissioner Mouser would like to see the final version of the Handbook as well as what changes were made to the version initially reviewed by the commissioners.

Commissioner Franklin made a MOTION to obtain a letter from the City Attorney's office, stating they have reviewed and approve the Handbook. Commissioner Martin seconded the motion, and it was APPROVED.

ED Taggart presented a resolution to purchase four properties on Main Street. A map of the area was distributed with the proposed properties to purchase marked. The purchase price is within his budget.

ED Taggart does not know the cost of revitalizing the buildings. If the purchase is successful, he will come back to the commissioners to ask for funds to approve an assessment of the buildings. He believes the buildings can be repaired.

ED Taggart stated that having the properties in the possession of PBURA is in the best interest of the city and the revitalization of downtown. This fits in our plan.

The end result of purchasing these buildings is to have tax-paying businesses in there. We are not in a position to know the cost of renovating the buildings at this time.

Commissioner Martin asked at what point is rehabilitation cost-prohibitive.

Leigh Cockrum, Pine Bluff Downtown Historical District Commissioner, stated there are criteria for an owner to meet for rehabilitating a property. It depends on the owner's capacity to rehab and will vary from one owner to another. The buildings are contributing buildings and need to be saved. She has been told that although the buildings are in bad shape, they can be rehabilitated.

ED Taggart stated that if the buildings remain in the state they are in and continue to deteriorate, we will essentially have the same situation we had at 7th and Main, where the streets were blocked with bricks a few years ago.

This is the last block that all buildings are still intact in downtown Pine Bluff.

Commissioner Martin wants to have concrete plans with dollars attached to what ED Taggart is planning to do. The PBURA will be asked for this information.

Commissioner Martin made a MOTION to approve the purchase of the four properties: 305, 309, 315, and 326 S. Main Street for \$136,447.00 and a written plan with dollars attached on the rehabilitation of the buildings. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Franklin and was APPROVED. Commissioner Dill recused himself from this item due to a conflict of interest, Commissioners Franklin, Martin, and Mouser voted For.

ED Taggart presented his Executive Director's report:

- The housing partner has submitted his information to financial institutions and is waiting for approval. August 25 is the deadline given to the partner.
- Wagner was selected as the general contractor for the downtown properties. They have 180 days to complete work, December is their deadline. An RFQ will be issued to solicit potential businesses in those three buildings. ED Taggart has drafted a contract for the tenants. The goal is not to be a landlord but for someone to purchase the building and contribute to the tax base of Pine Bluff.
- ED Taggart distributed an updated demolition list for this year. Demos have been scheduled through the end of October. Forty-one properties are on the list, started the year out slow, but now are doing two per week. Anticipates surpassing 50 demos by the end of the year, weather permitting.

There have been three ADQ inspections and were satisfactory to date.

ED Taggart has offered as a guide to the Code Enforcement Director, Phase 1 and Phase 2 of when we initially started demolitions prior to ceasing operations, which include south of 34th, east to Main Street, north to 26th, and west to Hazel. Some demos are sporadically placed. The PBURA is intentional on our approach to demolition so that the public can see a comprehensive method for the removal of blight.

Some homeowners have put a plan together for a rehabilitation plan and have been removed from the demolition list. The goal is not to demolish, but for people to become responsible homeowners.

Commissioner Mouser would like ED Taggart to devise a system to measure how we are spurring other people to rehabilitate or sell to someone who can.

- A revised RFQ was submitted for the Design, Construction, Management and Operation of a Movie Theatre and Associated Amenities. The deadline is July 27. ED Taggart has received three inquiries and one submission to date. He met with a potential investor today.

Commissioner Mouser asked if there has been any discussion about Pine Bluff or a group of cities to approach the legislature to clarify issues with the law. We need to do what we need to do so that we know precisely as possible what our duties and powers are so that we are not stuck in a holding pattern again.

Commissioner Dill commended ED Taggart regarding the three ADEQ inspections. ED Taggart gave Maurice Carlton credit for the paperwork.

No public comments were made.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

/s/ Leigh Cockrum
Leigh Cockrum
Recorder

/s/ Wm. Kirby Mouser
W. Kirby Mouser
Secretary