

**Pine Bluff Urban Renewal Agency
Public Meeting Comments Summary
May 4, 2018**

The Pine Bluff Urban Renewal Agency held four public meetings, one in each ward, to hear comments and answer questions about the Central City Urban Renewal Plan that will be used to assist in the revitalization of the central part of Pine Bluff through the elimination of blight that impedes the redevelopment and reuse of commercial and residential properties within the area.

Each meeting began with Chairman Dill introducing the members of the Pine Bluff Urban Renewal Commission, Ryan Watley and Leigh Cockrum of Go Forward Pine Bluff. He read the first two paragraphs of Section 100.A. The Central City Urban Renewal Plan – General.

Chairman Dill also announced that public comments will be limited to three (3) minutes.

Public officials present were also recognized.

Monday, April 23, 2018

Good Faith Carr United Methodist Church, 5:30 p.m.

Commissioners present: Chairman Jimmy Dill, Rita Conley, Lloyd Franklin, Sr., Travis Martin, Kirby Mouser

Annette Kline: Are the three focus areas on the City's website also?

Response: Yes, it is part of the Plan which is on the City's website.

Lenore Shoults, Arts and Science Center Curator (LS): On Page 17 at the bottom of your Urban Renewal document, "Proposed projects that are not limited to: Completing the Community Design Center's Downtown Master Plan and Vision, which will have substantial influence over the Urban Renewal Plan development." Do we have the downtown vision available as we're discussing the urban renewal document?

Jimmy Dill (JD): No.

LS: Okay. Are we going to?

JD: At some point in time when that plan becomes a final plan with them, then we will have. Just as a further note our plan is to amend this where it says substantial influence, but instead word it "that upon completion and public presentation of the downtown master plan and vision, the urban renewal agency commissioners will consider implementation of the specific related to the central city urban renewal plan."

LS: Okay, have y'all seen the vision plan?

JD: I've not seen it. No, I have not.

LS: So each commissioner has not seen the vision plan? So, whoever's running the clock on me because I'm sure my three minutes is up. Before we kick it off is basically our questions are going to be based upon that vision plan which we have seen and that do impact the Arts and Science Center.

JD: Do you have something specific in writing since you've seen the plan do you have something specific in writing that you'd like to suggest good and bad about the plan that you would bring to this group?

LS: Absolutely. On the Arts and Science Center owned Endowment owned property. So all of the property from Main to State, from Eighth over to what we our back green area is owned by the Art and

Science Center Endowment Fund that is private property, none of it is owned by the city, the work we do is a commission of the city, but that property is owned by the endowment. All of it paid for with private money over a very long time. Dr. Rachel Miller has been in contact with the designer of the CDC plan because there's housing planned for our property. So I understand and fully respect the plan. I love the idea of the neighborhoods but look at the design as it currently stands there is housing on it. Rachel, why don't you kick off because you actually had the conversation with Steve Luoni.

Rachel Miller, Arts and Science Center for Southeast Arkansas Executive Director: I have e-mailed Steve Luoni, director of the CDC, and gave him a call to get his clarification about what I'm seeing on the property. He clarified it is residential housing development. I said to him this is endowment privately owned property and I asked him if he was aware of that and he said yes and then I asked him again why was it he was assuming the CDC was assuming that the endowment would be supportive residential housing development on Arts and Science Center property. That property was purchased over several years but the intention in phase two, which unfortunately has stagnated because it costs \$6 million to do it and we're in the process, the endowment is in the process of seeking out funding to implement that phase 2. I've sent him the phase two plans. Ask him to take that into consideration as he moves forward with the draft, the draft of the master plan. But as of right now it is showing that there's residential housing to be developed on the Arts and Science Center Endowment property.

JD: and when you say residential housing, are you talking about houses, condos, apartments or all of the above.

RM: The way he described it its referred to as a pocket neighborhood, and he just says housing. It says the particular neighborhoods ancient wise in the design of cluster housing around greens. So all the houses are facing into other right next to the sidewalk and they're incorporating our green space which is all the property around the arts and science center. So I guess the green space is being considered the lawn for this neighborhood which he referred to as the Library Courts.

JD: Don't you also own a little piece on what would be the east side of State Street, that would be south of Cortinez's. Does the Arts and Science Center own that also, or is all your property just west of State Street?

LS: It's in between State and Main.

JD: So you don't you don't own any on the other side of State? There's a parking lot right beside the Bridges law firm. The one I'm talking that much. That may be the post office property, but I'm not sure.

KM: Do you actually know if their plan was drawn knowing you guys own that?

RM: I asked him on Monday. I had a phone call and he knew his private property because I thought maybe he was under the assumption that this was community property because Arts and Sciences is a commission of the city and he clarified that he knew that it was private property.

JD: And you've got something that you can submit to us in writing with all this?

LS: Sure. Yes, absolutely. And in fact, Dr. Miller went down to the courthouse to actually confirm (undecipherable), we assume we may have learned, they say, and they're found all the deeds everything. There's five deeds over the course of lots of time that actually shows the Art and Science Center Endowment owns the property.

William D. Moss (WM): What has been presented tonight is the Pine Bluff Urban Renewal Agency Central City Plan. What has not been presented tonight is a portion of the go forward community Design Center's Downtown Master Plan and if you look in this document, you will find out, as they said, there's a public housing project proposed on private property. And so we have a scenario, whereby the public is only being allowed to examine one document and not being allowed to see this document and won't live to opine on what they think about this document. In this document, it says property to be acquired,

at the time this plan was prepared no properties were identified for acquisition. You look at this plan there is a public housing project identified to go on private property so how can you say that no plan exists to acquire property?

You didn't consider the filing for the March 28, 2018 minutes for this commission. Commissioner Dill asked comments on the central city urban new plan that had been drafted. Dr. Watley stated the plan had been enhanced by the contributions of other people and thanked them for their assistance. Examples in the plan are only examples. Specific projects are not being submitted yet as the plan must maintain some flexibility. Which is it, have properties been acquired been identified or not? The public document presented this evening says not. The plan prepared by Go Forward Pine Bluff clearly shows some private property be acquired and the CEO for Go Forward Pine Bluff has directly told these commissioners in fact quote, specific targets are not being submitted yet.

This is a major inconsistency that significant concern for me. From the information currently available, I can only conclude that there is a demonstrated intent that private properties that is neither blighted nor abandoned nor a nuisance is subject to be acquired through this commission citing the power of eminent domain.

For the record, my name is Bill Moss. I've volunteered at the Arts and Science Center for 25 years, served as board member, Treasurer, and unpaid financial tax consultant. As have many others here, I have also emptied the trash, clean, strip and wax and polished the floors. (undecipherable). The Arts and Science Center serves as an institution of public trust, serves as an education in this community and also had an impact on all of southeast Arkansas. When you've been downtown the last 24 years and driven past the Arts and Science Center, you may be wondering why these people are concerned. The Arts and Science Center not blighted, their buildings are impeccably maintained, their Annex building at 623 Main which was purchased in 1999 have been....

Leigh Cockrum (LC): You're time is up.

JD: Your three minutes are up. We very much appreciate your comments.

WM: I will continue tomorrow night.

JD: Remember where you left off. And one of the things I'll tell you the plan which I still have not seen again that my understanding is always a work in process and it's not a finalized plan, but I welcome the comments you've got because, again, I don't know what's in there some of what you're saying to me. I'm glad to hear it. I want to hear those things. And I think that's what these meetings are for so that things can be brought up that are concerned to citizens all across Pine Bluff that's why we're having it for four different places, so we can hear from lots of people.

Martin Carty (MC): My name is Martin Carty and I've been a volunteer at the Arts and Science Center for about 23 years. Like Mr. Moss, I've done just about everything down there and I've seen the effect it has on people. The lives it has changed and how it's influenced young people in a lot of ways. Anyway, I have a couple questions about property acquisition procedures and its on page 18 and it has condemnation powers and down to the last paragraph, if the urban renewal agency intends to acquire unimproved real property pursuant to the power condemnation, the acquisition of property described above, by direct negotiation or by the exercise of power eminent domain granted by law is only applicable where the Commissioner of the Pine Bluff Urban Renewal Agency makes one of the following findings and it goes that property is necessary for public use, including projects for the City or the that the owner of the property has not agreed to use and develop such property. So does that mean that this commission is going to decide whether we're using that land profitably or not?

JD: It could decide whether we let that that the Commission decides if it's necessary for public use including projects for the city and that the owner has not agreed to use and developed such property. But before this commission can exercise its power of eminent domain, if you'll go over to the next page, under A.1., it tells you that such acquisition shall be undertaken only following completion of an amendment to this plan as set forth in Section 900.C of this plan. The city council shall ratify the amendment to this plan by resolution. So the city council would have to ratify anything that we did in that forum, of eminent domain.

MC: So you're, you're not going to be the agency that says y'all are underutilizing your property?

JD: Yes, we could be Yes, absolutely. We could make that recommendation, go before the City Council and recommend that that the power of eminent domain is necessary in this situation because just blighted or nuisance or something like that.

MC: If its not blighted or a nuisance, that's my problem and you know we've got housing on this property in this plan. But anyway, and also I'm the president of the Endowment Board. I'm sorry. I didn't make that clear. I received this Downtown Streetscape project and it asked, we want to know what you plan on doing with your property and you know we're doing with our property. What we're going to do you know and like Rachel said we have plans for the Annex on the existing building that we're working toward a second phase. So, you know, it makes me a little nervous when it says What are you doing with that.

JD: I understand. Your three minutes is up. Let me go on record saying this, as you know I'm a neighbor. I'm right across the street, Pine Bluff Title Company. I'm your neighbor, I can attest everything you're saying. The Arts and Science Center is a wonderful downtown presence and partner and I don't argue that anything you're saying. I mean, I've got the same argument with a streetscape they're going to ask me. I will admit to you, I'm not familiar with everything is streetscape I'm placing a lot of trust that what they're going to do is just from what I'm hearing that they're going to do the sidewalks, they're going to try to redo the sewer, the water and everything like that that will benefit us all. But I've got to make the same case, that what I'm going to be doing with my building, but I sure don't think the Arts and Science Center is anything but an asset to the City of Pine Bluff

Kirby Mouser (KM): Break in here if I may, nothing in here changes what's already the law, everything that's in here is already the law, the city can exercise those powers. We're not usurping any power at all. We're not creating any power. As a commission we just study and make recommendations and coordinate with other initiatives which would include the Arts Center and there's nothing, I assure you, we, the commission have absolutely no plans or have not pointed out any piece of property or studied any piece of property for a project, whether it's recommended. I don't care who's recommended by okay I'm going to vote depending on what I think this commission should do to follow the purposes in this Plan whatever the CDC, or these other people or other plans do are important because they're things going on in our urban renewal area, but we're not changing the law and we're not picking on any piece of property. The Arts Center, any other piece of property. Nobody's asked for it, and just because they ask for that doesn't mean they are going to get it.

MC: Okay, thank you.

JD: And need to clarify one thing, when we talk about there's no specific property, we do own one piece of property that was donated to us, whether it's you know something that's important this meeting or not I still want to be perfectly clear about the fact that we own a piece of property on Main Street that Eugene Hunt donated to the urban renewal agency. So I don't want anybody walk away from here thinking they weren't involved in any property because we are.

Virginia Hymes: Virginia Hymes, retired arts teacher forty years. Just want you to know that we had a wonderful meeting this morning and when I think about the kids I love so dearly, the Arts and Science Center has been an asset for kids walking right in the center of the city, you know, we're talking about

Pine Bluff that utilize that facility. I am on the board as well and I love things that is offered in this community been around a long time, I've seen it grow. I remember when it was in the library and it was absolutely amazing, and then moved over on Martin Street and then go to this facility and to utilize this community (undecipherable) because when you talk about the kids needing something to do its right in the heart of town and I really appreciate the fact that we're coming here and talking about good things. We're talking about moving forward that's why we do need to sit down at the table and work together and really get clear clarity, understanding because the kids see us working together, they understand that we are here to make the city better. I just want to say that this has been an awesome journey and I think it's going to be even better because you're sitting at the table now to talk about things that could be sure that there would not be anyone's feelings hurt but to understand that this is what was needed in this community and the Arts and Science Center has been a (undecipherable) for this community.

JD: Thank you. Thank you very much. You know, that's why. That's what I like about having this meeting and people come in and speaking their mind. Sometimes it might not be what we want to hear sometimes it might be something we're very, very glad to hear. Regardless, you need to be able to speak your mind and tell us what you like and what you don't like I think that's what's been lacking in this community in the past is we've had some people talking in a coffee shop over here at a restaurant over here at a gas station over there. Gripe and gripe and gripe but nobody comes together and tries to say what we need to do to move this city forward. Go Forward Pine Bluff, who I'm a big fan of, has put together a lot of time and effort and that's why we are glad to partner with them and we welcome partnering with them, there's the Art Center. You don't have to sell me on the Arts Center because as I see it every day. I know what a great part of this community they are. I don't want to lose them by any means because I use their parking lot right now for my car.

Ryan Watley (RW): Good evening, everyone. I would just like to say I'm the one who knows the most about the CDC plan because I've been in conversation with those who are drafting and designing the CDC plan. (undecipherable) telling what they see that the CDC plan is not in fashion form away a threat to the Arts and Science Center. I'm a board member of the Arts and Science Center. The Plan, as you all have seen, is nothing but a draft, and even that draft is a vision of what a developer sees how it could benefit all of Pine Bluff. It takes a lot of capital to see what that was presented to be implemented a significant amount. No one, not the plan or the commission is a threat to the Arts and Science Center.

LS: So they're not planning any kind of housing on that property whatsoever?

RW: They can, so there's a vision, right?

LS: Yes, there's a vision part, right.

RW: So in this developer's mind, he comes in and says hum, there's a conceptual reason why he would place housing around that. However, the implementation vehicle has the vote to say this is important is not, this is feasible this is not, if you look at that plan, you will see even in the teller's position at Simmons Bank there's housing.

LS: Yeah, I did.

RW: So you know this is not targeting any one individual. Now I know that's your special interest and mine to, of the Arts and Science Center. But let's not paint the picture that what the CDC is going to present is going to be detrimental to the Arts and Science Center or Pine Bluff at all but is simply a vision and what is implemented will be implemented based on community support. The public will view what this gentleman brings back...

LS: Can we unvision it? Can we like get rid of the houses?

JD: Is it still not a work in progress?

RW: It is still a work in progress. And you know what, I feel like and I've felt like, anyway you will not and this board has the relationship to call me and when you saw that that doesn't need happen. We

know each other well enough to do just to call for me to call him and say hey, for you to call me okay and I call us and you all say hey, we don't even want to see that in the plan

LS: Hey, Ryan....that would be great. That would be fantastic.

JD: Let me say this. Even if that were in the final plan they came up with, again, that is not binding on this commission

LS: (undecipherable) I mean there's relationship,

JD: I understand.

LS: ... document

JD: but it's one of the things again that we as a commission are going to consider. We're gonna consider the Go Forward Plan, we are going to consider that plan, the streetscape there's a lot of them we're going to consider, but they're not binding on us, we make our own mind up and our own decision and that's why we need this public input.

I want it written, because again, we're going to submit our plan to the city council with the comments that we've had here and everything like that. But we like written, you be very specific on what your suggestions, complaints, whatever you want to call them what your concerns are, that to me makes this makes our opportunity succeed that much better.

Annette Kline: I'm talking about the north side of town, you know Section 2, University to the (undecipherable), what about the other side of University? Or Olive Street, or Cherry Street?

VH: I'm glad to see there's going to be a change that's going to take place in this City. And I want to commend Ryan and those, it is hard work, people don't realize, you can criticize to say negative things, but we have to say positive things because there is a lot of hard work. We're not going to agree on everything but when you sit down table and we always have those (undecipherable) and clarity being transparent is very important and there shouldn't be anything that we can't sit down and talk about. I'm talking about the kids, they see us. I love them and I want them to understand that we do care about them, but without they sit down and let them know that we are my I love that they're not to love and that's why it's so important for us to work together and I appreciate asking questions without feeling as though you've been attacked. So I want to continue to do this. I love my town. I was born and raised in this city. I thought I was in New York city when I was a little girl because there was a lot of things up there around things that we had, we had more then than we have now. So I want to see this take place. I commend young people for (undecipherable). When I listen to Miss Walker talk about the history. This young lady is a walking history book for this city, so I (undecipherable) and I really appreciate the opportunity to hear you share your thoughts.

Dee Herring Gatlin, Historic District Commission: How are you viewing the Historic District Commission when you're dealing with the properties downtown? One of my concerns is, I know in Little Rock Urban Renewal meant Urban Renewables. Are you guys looking at removing a lot of property down there, or are you even taking it into consideration that it affects our historic status if a lot of properties are removed. We have people that are investing down there and their incentives tax credits and I would assume would be a big problem. I just want to make sure that is part of all this. The Historic Commission is going to start sending out letters to property owners to notify them they are in the Historic District. The Historic Commission doesn't have any enforcement authority.

KM: This plan actually allows us to take a partial interest in a building, for instance, the façade and directs us to consider the historical structures as part of the things we consider in this plan. So, it's provided for in the plan for us to work your commission. Your commission is specifically named in here

that we want to partner with and the plan has actually got some pretty good flexibility toward working with land owners to help them keep historical structures for to the Urban Renewal Commission in keeping the look.

DHG: the façade

KM: It doesn't specifically state facades, but it provides for us from taking a (undecipherable) simple interest in a piece of property and supporting financially, the renovation of only a portion of a piece of property, which, you know, that could be a façade to maintain the historical character.

DHG: We have a lot of property down there that are demolition by neglect (undecipherable) the brick (undecipherable) the 300 block of (undecipherable) and I know you can take a façade; we've taken the old Matthews Hardware (undecipherable), took the roof off, cleaned it out, boarded it up to where is was no longer a nuisance or safety issue and sealed it up properly where it looks okay. We've at least saved that structure, it's a contributing structure, and (undecipherable) in the future. Most people have the mindset that most of the building has fallen in and (undecipherable) and I want to do the right thing (undecipherable) I'm tired of that. You don't get big time investors come down and invest in properties knowing that they get tax credits and then oh, we've just lost our status and now you don't have that draw of big time investors to come in to the city and we've got to circumvent that.

JD: Thanked her for her blood, sweat and tears.

Ann Smith: What about the blight in the neighborhoods? On streets travelled all the time? 31st street. 28th, 27th.

Buddy Smith: As a taxpayer, what can we see in the next 90 days?

Barrie: What happened, a year or so ago, the City worked out with the prison system to demolish. What happened to that?

Tuesday, April 24, 2018

Family Church – Pine Bluff Campus, 5:30 p.m.

Commissioners present: Chairman Jimmy Dill, Rita Conley, Lloyd Franklin, Sr., Travis Martin, Kirby Mouser

Barrie Hardin: I live in the Sheraton Park subdivision. What kind of impact on changes how properties are condemned and how that process will work. I don't know if that's part of your function, but I know a lot of things don't get taken care of in a timely manner as far as property that needs to be condemned, once it's condemned then what's the next step and then the next thing you know someone says Oh, I'm working on it, throw something out in the yard and kick the can down the road and four years later nothing has happened.

Dee Herring Gatlin: I've been to a lot of council meetings where there has been the he said/she said. The council members that don't show up, I don't want to hear a council member say they haven't gotten input, so Win as your talking to your fellow councilmen, I just don't want to see that happen. I don't want to see it presented to the council and then all these questions are going to come up and no one will continue to meet. I think council members need to be held accountable.

Malinda Traweek: You mentioned the hotels on Harding. Is it possible if nothing is done (undecipherable).

Thursday, April 26, 2018

Pine Hill Baptist Church, 5:30 p.m.

Commissioners present: Chairman Jimmy Dill, Lloyd Franklin, Sr., Travis Martin, Kirby Mouser

Charles Girley: I came in late, what is the plan for University? When will the work start? Will you talk a little bit about downtown? It's time, we need it. Will a blueprint be available?

Jewel Steward: I live in this area and wondering what was going on from University to the west. Will there be a grant or something to get rid of blight at the old houses?

William D. Moss: With respect to Exhibit 1, only one census tract, number 10, is in the Opportunity Zone what is in the opportunity zone. What was recently announced by Governor that reported in the *Commercial*. I cannot tell from the other exhibits if census tract 5.02 and 25 is included in this plan or when will it be included in this plan because certain tax advantages, significant tax advantages, accrue in these opportunities zones and I only see census tract 10 in the Urban Renewal Plan and want to know if these other opportunities zones are going to be brought in soon, being considered, because of significant tax advantages to that development reinvestment being quick.

Senator Stephanie Flowers: I'm a member of the fourth ward. That's why I'm here. And I read the minutes of the meetings that you all have had and since you've been created in this last time for the urban renewal agency, as well as the plan and understand this plan has to go around to the all the wards and they'd be presented to the city council. I hope you have luck with that to get it adopted. I'm not sure, do you have a timeline for that after it goes to the different wards because I believe this city needs this and it needs it like last year. The thing that I appreciated most about your plan is that it allows you all to have the ability to hire a private attorney to deal with some of these properties that are blighted and we need that more than ever because, you know, when I look at how long it takes after a resolution is passed and even before the resolution is passed to declare a property a nuisance because of unsafe conditions, just blight burned out condition, whatever it is, it just seems to me like it takes too long after that resolution is passed by City Council which states that it has to be removed. Raise the condition raised or removed demolition, take place within seven no longer than 15 days even though one resolution I read, it had 15 days in one paragraph and in another paragraph it had 30, so I didn't understand that real well. But at any rate, it takes forever. Then end after the resolution to get the citation for failure to abate, and then after you issue the citation for failure to abate, it takes another long time period to get them to court. And then even when a court declares in orders it done within a certain time frame it's still not done, no motions for contempt are filed timely. I don't understand what's happening here, but it is really got me unnerved, okay. I'm really frustrated I got a building downtown that next door to a property that declared a nuisance order debated and it's still there. It has been going on now two years in August. And so I'm hoping that you all when you say in this plan. I think it was the plan that I read and allows you to hire the private attorney. We need that bad, but I want to know well even to get to that point, are you going to have to have some kind of process whereby you get the city council after they do the resolution then to turn it over to the urban renewal agency for further process. How is that going to work?

now in those resolutions that the city council passes it says that if this isn't done then the city can do it. Take a lien. If the city started following through with foreclosures on these liens. I think you will see somebody trying to buy properties neighbors that may want the vacant lot will pay at least off for bulldozer bulldozing some of these burned out houses down. I mean, there are things that can be done and even in the orders that you get from the courts on the citations, but failure to abate. Generally, the court is granting court costs to the city and I have yet to see one case where the city has asked or filed a petition to recover their costs. Costs can mean your attorneys work those billable hours.

So some of these people that have these properties that are not here in the city, they have resources have financial resources and I think you can tie up some things and get some money back into the treasury of the city short trip and there's no excuse for this except neglect on the part of the city. That's what I see.

JD: that's one of the things that, one of the charges that we have as an agency.

The first thing we want to address specifically problem is already been condemned and to try to expedite the process and getting them torn down getting the lot cleaned off. That's what we want to try to go be our first goal is try to that in these areas that we already determined that are our target areas according to our plan. So that's we're hoping to speed that process, but we got to get this plan approved. So then we can start and make sure we get a process down to hopefully expedite that. We're not looking to try to kick people houses we just want to steamroll people. We got over 100 condemned properties within that one area already condemned.

SF: The whole thing with the urban renewal plan that I understand what I read is you're only dealing with abandoned properties or properties that nobody in. Most of them are vacant.

JD: That's part of it of what we're dealing with.

SF: So, I mean, I don't get that, my question was first how long after these meetings in the wards. Is it going to take this agency to present it before the City Council for approval, what is that going to be like?

JD: Probably the last part of May is my understanding. This is our third town hall meeting we've got one more scheduled for next Thursday night and it's at the New St. Hurricane Baptist Church. That will be our fourth and final meeting after that we're going to take our plan and the comments and suggestions that we got from each of these meetings and submit that all to the city council for their review and to ask them to bless our plan and to approve our plan so we can move forward.

RW: May 21st we will try to have the plan before city council. This Agency will have a called meeting to make any amendments to the plan and then we can submit if indeed the council approves that plan on May 21st, we can begin demolishing houses the next day. What we're doing in the interim is working with Mrs. Horton, Quality of Life, to get the files on all those houses in all these areas that we are talking about and will begin requesting bids on those. So those will be ready to go once the council blesses the plan. You've read the plan and seen all the documents, we're well ahead of schedule of what we predicted to be, because a lot of people have participated for us to be where we are. We're going as fast as we can but diligent in our process because we deal with some serious matters but you are right in terms of the lull and the prosecution of those liens and foreclosures. This Agency cannot absorb all the costs, there's gotta be some type of recourse for those funds to be able to do more. And so this Agency will be pursuing those actions to make sure that they are not completely liable or can get the property to be able to dispose of it to gain the finance back that way. So we are thinking about all those matters but we are consistent basis are working.

Alderman Stephen Mays: Our Code Enforcement was just changed over from Quality of Life to Code Enforcement to better enforce these issues you're talking about. Miss Horton will be working closely

with this agency that the council voted on. There was a couple of aldermans spoke to me before I voted on it (undecipherable). I was skeptical of it, still have concerns about it, but, it is already put in place and I'm willing to work with them as they work with our Code Enforcement Miss Horton. There're not going to run over Miss Horton. She's revamped that whole department now. I understand it's been like this for a while, but it never has been organized. She will put you on your (undecipherable) right now.

SF: No she's not.

SM: Well she told me she was

SF: Well, she's not.

SM;; She's helping more

SF: You said something about this code enforcement and I know this meeting is not about Code Enforcement

SM: Yes it is. It has to do with Code Enforcement

SF: It's about the urban

SM: No, no, no.

SF: renewal agency plan, that's what I understood

SM: Let me finish that. When that comes up. I'm not gonna just get that paperwork 40 pieces of paper and rubber stamp it. I'm gonna go through it like I always do when I get the paper, highlight it, go through it, take my time and read it because a lot of this paperwork

SF: It's on-line right now, I read it the other day.

SM: Well, I didn't know

SF: It's on line, it's on the city website.

SM: I didn't...

SF: The minutes of all the meetings are on the city's website

SM: I understand that when it comes down to it the paperwork is totally different. If you word it totally different from what was said. I'm telling you from experience on the city council now

SF:

SM: well I'm about

SF: If you haven't read it online that's available to you if you read it

SF: when they finish all this is the process. We all have this, Miss Horton's got a process our process to work with them. They're not gonna run over Miss Horton and our Community Development Department. They're going to work with them solely

SF: I don't want to hog the meeting, okay

SM: I'm done

SF: you know yeah you know it was just I think last month when you moved the quality of life from the police department to a standalone agency, I guess.

SM: Department

SF: Yeah, before that it was like a year ago that it was a standalone or something else and then you put it in a police department in the year before that it switched again and its really kind of confusing to me. It's confusing to the residents of the city and it seems as though we have some type of schizophrenia or something going on here and I can tell you as a state senator I do not feel good representing the city of Pine Bluff anymore because of all this hodgepodge and just neglect and it seems like we're just incompetent down here. That's how my colleagues look at us.

JD: Senator Flowers, thank you for your comments.

Bruce Lockett: I have one comment I would like to get entered into the record. I had a constituent call me about the possibility of some rehab funding. One of the issues we have in this town is the deterioration of houses that stop by people who own homes but are on fixed income and can't repair

homes and we only have about \$100,000 in our CDG monies for rehab and we have a list of over 300 houses on the waiting list. The problem is, we can only do ten houses a year. So when the current funding with the list is limited. You see how long it would take us to exhaust the list, but we'd like to see if there is any way to enter into the plan and I don't have a problem if we could look at negotiating something that if you have a person that takes out a grant was some type of some type of instrument to rehab their home that upon their death or upon them moving to a nursing home that that property would revert to the city or the agency to be sold or something along those lines. But we have so many people that are losing their homes and we had more people you know since we can only do ten houses a year, more people the list has been growing by more houses than just falling in than really repairing because we just don't have the budget. And that's problem we have and again and I encourage the urban renewal to work as hard as they can to remove blight but we didn't get here overnight and we (undecipherable)houses that are condemned and at the rate of 7 to 10 a house you use a whole bunch of money, use a lot of resources keep you busy all day every day for a long time. I know that's not something that you all can preoccupy yourself with all the time because there's other challenges that we have that are related to development and if you spent all your time on demoing houses, you won't have much time adding any value to (undecipherable).

Lori Walker: In terms of focusing some resources, I know you're saying the first priority is condemned houses and there is a great need for that. We also have our downtown buildings that need attention, specifically along the streetscape route and on that end. Would like to see what you allocate in the short term versus something long term for downtown development.

Charles Girley: As of now, how much money have you raised for the tax for urban renewal?

Lori Walker: The Urban Renewal Agency doesn't have the ability to do grants, but out of the appropriation we have (undecipherable) if an allocation is made from the Economic and Community development department, we do have a (undecipherable) framework in place where the tax dollars can be used as a grant or as a (undecipherable) for a downtown property set up as (undecipherable) to have the recourse (undecipherable). That is a vehicle so if you have limitations with your structure, the Economic and Community Development Department (undecipherable).

SM: Lori had a good point, like working with urban renewal my job on the council to make sure it's done right, we've got a lot of tax dollars for last 50 years being spent way before I got on the council people in the Fourth Ward know that I've working hard for them to make sure that the right things are being done. I'm not a rubber stamp anything I never have I never will I read through it and make the right decision after I read through it.

Bruce Lockett: Has the urban renewal agency looked into, now are we going to acquire the condemned properties and then demo the blighted area or are we gonna demo the blighted areas and then do a lien?

JD: We are looking at all options, because our goal is regardless of which way that takes place is to try to take that property and put it back into private hands so it gets back into taxpayers hands so it can generate some tax dollars for the city.

BL: That's my basic concern because one of the issues is that they are most element that gives us stockpiling a lot of real estate that comes off the tax rolls and one of the reasons I want the urban renewal to look at the rehab option because once you've spent \$7,000 to tear down a house on a lot that would be valued at \$2,500, you're so upside down that you know once you claim your property now you have a piece of property that's not tax bearing and you'll never get your \$7,000 back because

there's so much empty property and the problem is (undecipherable) be cautious of the implications of we go into lot clearing and things of that nature and spend a lot of money clearing lots, putting liens on lots and those types of things. I just found out that once you sell a lot at an estate auction the lien is still on the lot so the state doesn't have a mechanism that state will get their money but the state is not obligated to enforce the lien on the property so you can have a lien on a piece of property for 10 years that might change hands five times so it doesn't benefit the city any.

JD: As you know I've got a title company and I see those city liens all the time and never see anything done about it. We try to pay them whenever we get a piece of property that's being sold and see a city lien and we try to collect that. But I see so many that are just sitting there dormant and nothings being done with it and that's what you know hopefully we'll move forward and change something. We're going to try to get some of this property, put it on productive state, rather than the state it's in right now.

SM: That's what Miss Horton is doing right now she is finally getting the department up and running it never had ran the way it was supposed to to run and she's reorganizing because the people that were there in the department we moved around code enforcement I feel, we feel it went through eight zeros (undecipherable) the Councilmen and women, so that gives the right thing to do, we just ask that you all work with Miss Horton and our Community Development hand in hand and not separate. Unity will bring the city back but hostile takeovers it won't.

JD: I can assure you we mean no hostile takeovers and I can assure you we're going to work with Mrs. Horton, with Lori Walker

SM: with Mr. Matthews

JD: and with Larry Mathews. I've worked with him I've said for probably now 35 40 years, we've always had a good relationship. And I can assure you we'll have a good relationship in years to come. There's nothing, nothing in our agenda overtake any of those agencies at all or to run roughshod over Mrs. Horton or anyone. We're trying to do what we think the city wants us to do and that is we've got this blight that needs to be taken care of. We've talked about it, and we've talked about it, and we've talked about it. We've talked about it where we're so hoarse you can't hear us. It's time we do something. That's what we're trying to do.

Clarence Davis: Thank you very much. I appreciate this meeting. (undecipherable) as I ride through (undecipherable). I see exactly what you're talking about. This house is burned down, people living in burned down houses and I think that the more we talk about it the less that gets done. It's just it's just analyzing we are paralyzed analyzing I think it's time to do something about it. And I thank you for it, for this initiative. I thank Go Forward for partnering I thank everybody who has the drive and will and the desire to move forward and get the place cleaned up. Now, I agree with Mr. Lockett about the finances one way it's gonna be upside down, however it's gonna be better than what it is now. Okay. When I chose to run, I didn't want to run what others (undecipherable) I promise you I (undecipherable) little girl, house is clean, I wanted (undecipherable) little smiling pretty and when people come shopping for property, they don't come shopping for property with a burned down hose on it. The come to see a lot a lot, that's cleaned up something where they can build it or do something. I think this is a good idea and I appreciate you guys.

JD: Thank you and I'll expand on what you said. Businesses don't come shopping for a place to locate in, they're looking for a place that doesn't have all this blight. They're looking for a place it's attractive that is appealing to them that they feel is open arms and wants them here and it just a lot of good things going. Right now in Pine Bluff, Arkansas, I've been here over 41 years, is the most exciting time since I've been here in 41 years for the positives that are on the plate to happen to Pine Bluff, Arkansas. We want to be one of those positives and we intend on it.

SM: One more thing and I'll be done. I've been, I've been here. I've been all my life. Every plan every tax money that has come through has been unblessed and that's why none of this stuff has worked. This plan before it gets any it needs to be blessed by you all (undecipherable) before it gets to the council in order for it to work all this money that's been raised, even when we go to church, anytime the money collected here is blessed you got millions of dollars that's going unblessed and you wonder why this stuff is not working? I mean, really?

JD: Thank you. Anyone else?

SF: You know I wish you all well. I'm trying to be excited about this, but you know when I hear and come to this meeting and understand that even though this plan is written in English, on the website is, 42 pages. All you have to do is go online, the City of Pine Bluff's website, and understand all of this and you would understand that it's not just about tearing down but about building up. I just, I mean it's sad to me when I hear my city council member doesn't know that, hasn't read that. The blessing comes when you start reading and take some action, working.

JD: Can I take it from your comment that you like our plan?

SF: I like the plan. I'm hoping

JD: Thank you

SF: and this thing about all this stuff has been working, with ya'll and with Quality of Life and all that kind of stuff and you know, I'm not convinced of that. Now I've got some vacant lots here. I to try to keep them clean but yet I see people (undecipherable) that just started two years I have driven by looked at it behind the church, looked like folks on that property on the corner of Barraque and Cherry Street, and just took everything out the house and trashed it (undecipherable) on the walls, everything and just put it on the slab. And you ride down Martha Mitchell freeway and you see it, you turn on Cherry Street you see it, you turn on Barraque Street you see it.

SM: I had Code Enforcement

SF: It was there two years

SM: Code Enforcement

SF: just now

SM: it's picked up

SF: Yeah, because I called Code Enforcement

JD: Need to have a private conversation.....

SF: A land owner and I get out there myself and I pick it up and when I was a kid around here, people picked up stuff on their property and all this talk about somebody needs something if you're not willing to even start yourself, why in the world do you think somebody is going to help you? And I'm getting sick of seeing my tax dollars, paid to a city employee that doesn't do their job. And I getting tired of that. I'm ready to leave here, if something doesn't happen soon, you're gonna lose more people. Pine Bluff is losing populations our schools are declining and student population something ought to register here in your head. I don't get this. And I wish more for my for my city council member to read, read what's on that website. You need to give him the website address of the website..

JD: Thank you for your comments again. Anyone else?.....

Thursday, May 3, 2018

New St. Hurricane Baptist Church, 5:30 p.m.

Commissioners present: Chairman Jimmy Dill, Rita Conley, Lloyd Franklin, Sr., Travis Martin, Kirby Mouser

The sound on this recording is distorted because of the venue.

Carolyn Jackson: I would like to ask if you had a hard copy of the plan. I can follow along better (undecipherable). *[Mrs. Jackson was provided a hard copy of the Plan at the meeting.]*

Mary Pringos: I know you have a lot on your plate. Do you have any idea (undecipherable) once you get this approved where you're going to start?

Kenny Fisher: How do I find out where the plan is? How will we be able to follow along on progress? As other places come up, will there be an update on-line?

Eric Walden, Jr.: How is the search going for a new director?

Tavante Calhoun: Have you made the plan available to our city officials so that they have the opportunity (undecipherable).

Eric Walden, Jr.: When will this go to the city council?

City Officials who attended at least one of the meetings:

Mayor Shirley Washington
Alderman Glen Brown, Jr.
Alderman Bill Brummett
Alderman Bruce Lockett
Alderman Steven Mays
Alderman Win Trafford
Alderman Thelma Walker
Larry Matthews
Lori Walker

Pine Bluff Urban Renewal Agency website: <http://www.cityofpinebluff.com/pbar/departments/pine-bluff-urban-renewal-agency/>