COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

MINUTES

July 14, 2015

The Committee of the Whole was called to order by Mayor Robert A. B. Reichert

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:
Mayor Robert Reichert
Commissioner Bert Bivins
Commissioner Gary Bechtel
Commissioner Ed DeFore
Commissioner Mallory Jones
Commissioner Elaine Lucas
Commissioner Larry Schlesinger
Commissioner Scotty Shepherd
Commissioner Virgil Watkins
Commissioner Al Tillman

Commissioner Absent

OTHERS PRESENT:
Dale Walker, County Manager
Charles Coney, Asst. County Manager
Judd Drake, County Attorney
Opie Bowen, Assistant County Attorney
Reggie McClendon, Assistant County Attorney
Jean Howard, Clerk of Commission
Janice Ross, Assistant Clerk of the Commission
Chris Floore, Assistant to the County Manager

VISITORS/GUESTS:
Chris Sheridan, Urban Development Authority
Alex Morrison, Urban Development Authority
Gene Dunwody, Urban Development Authority
Jan Beeland, Executive Director, Macon Arts Alliance
Beverly Blake, Knight Foundation
June Parker, Executive Director, Macon Housing Authority
Michelle Sands, Congressman Sanford Bishop's Office
Josh Rogers, Executive Director, NewTown Macon
Laura Mathis, Middle Georgia Regional Commission

NEWS MEDIA:
Stanley Dunlap, The Telegraph
Anita Oh, WMAZ-TV

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Robert Reichert.

A. Approval of Minutes

ACTION:

On motion of Commissioner DeFore, seconded by Commissioner Shepherd and carried with Commissioners Bivins, Bechtel, Jones, Tillman, Lucas, Schlesinger and Watkins voting in the affirmative, the minutes of the April 14, 2015 meeting were approved.

B. Dannenberg Bonds

Discussion

Judd Drake, County Attorney, stated that the Urban Development Authority had sent a letter to the Mayor request that the CDBG Project agreement be amended. He reviewed the resolution amending the County's CDBG Project related to the Dannenberg Building. Mr. Drake stated that in 2012 the Board of Commissioners and Macon City Council approved a revolving loan fund with $1,455,000 of CDBG Disaster Grant funds to be used to develop a 69 unit apartment complex at 476 Third Street. Mr. Drake continued that there were delays in project construction and rehabilitation of the building which made the original deadline of August 12014 for the repayment of the loan unrealistic and therefore the note remains unpaid. He continued that in the amended agreement, the borrower has agreed to pay all unpaid accrued interest in five installments. On August 1, 2015 they will pay $20,000 and then on September 1, October 1, November 1 and December 1 they will pay $5,912.50 in unpaid accruing interest. Mr. Drake continued that the borrower shall pay currently accruing interest on August 1 in the amount of $3,637.50 and then will pay the same amount on the first day of the month for October, November and December. He stated that the interest and principal shall begin amortizing on January 1, 2016 over a period of twenty years and all the outstanding principal and accrued interest shall be due on July 23, 2018.

Commissioner Lucas stated that there were several other projects that could have replaced the burned out Bibb Mill Project but that the Dannenberg Project was the only one that was presented. She stated that she thought it was not right to just consider this one project and now they could not make the payments.

Alex Morrison, Executive Director of the Urban Development Authority, stated that the Borrower could not obtain financing but believed that they would find financing in the future.

ACTION:

On motion of Commissioner Bechtel, seconded by Commissioner Jones and carried with Commissioners Bivins, DeFore, Lucas, Tillman, Shepherd, Schlesinger and Watkins voting in the affirmative, the resolution approving the Urban Development Authority's request to amend the County's CDBG Project related to the rehabilitation of the historic Dannenberg Building into a 69 unit apartment complex for the purpose of revising the loan to 476 Third Street, LLC was approved.

C. Blight Bond Funds

1. Dividing $9,000,000 Among the Nine Districts

Discussion

Mayor Reichert stated that he would like to consider item #1 (dividing the $9 million between the nine districts) and #2 (dividing the $9 m between four projects) at the same time. He stated that there are two different thoughts on how to use the blight funds; one to divide among the nine districts and the second to allocate the funds to four different projects in the Community. Commissioner Bivins stated that he believed dividing the funds up among the nine districts gave each district an opportunity to show improvement. He continued that he believed each Commissioner knew where the money needed to be spent in their district. Commissioner Bivins continued that was the reason he was supporting dividing the funds.

Commissioner Watkins stated that he believed the two different thoughts had polarized the Commission and he could see the benefits of both plans. He continued that he would lend his support to the division of the funds to the nine districts. He stated that the Commission needed a system to continue to deal with blight in the community once the funds are spent. Commissioner Watkins stated that "blexting" should continue in order to be able to recognize which structures fall into the blight category.

Commissioner Bechtel stated that he did not like either plan. He continued that the plan to divide the money nine ways does not have a defined plan and the four projects had no input from the Commission. He continued that he would like to delay action on allocation of any money until there is more discussion about the projects and to insure that the funds are allocated where it would have the greatest impact in the neighborhoods.

ACTION:

On motion of Commissioner Bechtel, seconded by Commissioner DeFore to table the resolution, the motion failed four to five with Commissioners Shepherd, Tillman, Watkins, Lucas and Schlesinger casting dissenting votes.

Commissioner Jones stated that he would like to see an ordinance drafted that would name two to five projects to be determined and allocate $200,000 to each district which would be guided by the blight consultant.

Commissioner Lucas stated that she would like to see the funds divided among the nine districts. She continued that she had a structure in her district that needed to come down. Commissioner Lucas stated this structure is in the 5 x 5 project area and was a danger to the community.

Commissioner Tillman thanked the Blight Ad Hoc Committee and the Blight Task Force for their work. He stated he believed that the $10 million was only a down payment for what was needed to fight blight in the community. He noted the work of Habitat for Humanity who was working to deconstruct homes instead of just demolishing the structures.

ACTION:

On motion of Commissioner Bivins, seconded by Commissioner Lucas and passed eight to one with Commissioners Bivins, DeFore, Jones, Lucas, Schlesinger, Shepherd, Tillman and Watkins casting affirmative votes while Commissioner Bechtel cast the dissenting vote, Mayor Reichert closed the discussion and called for the vote on the resolution dividing the $9 million between the nine Districts.

ACTION:

On motion of Commissioner Bivins, seconded by Commissioner Lucas the Ordinance to adopt a budget for the Blight Remediation Bond Funds appropriating $9,000,000 of said funds equally between the none Macon-Bibb County Commission Districts, appropriating $300,000 of said Blight Remediation Bond Funds to community engagement initiatives and appropriating $700,000 of the Blight Remediation bond Funds to waste disposal activates was approved seven to two with Commissioners Bivins, DeFore, Lucas, Schlesinger, Shepherd, Tillman and Watkins casting assenting vote and Commissioners Bechtel and Jones casting the dissenting votes.

2. Designating Blight Fund for Four Projects

   No Action

3. Agreement with Rum Creek Enterprises, LL and Historic Hills and Heights Development Corporation

   Discussion

   Mayor Reichert stated that he would like to move forward with the Wise Avenue Project and the Beall's Hill Project since both were designated separately in the bond fund. Commission Lucas stated that she believed that going forward with the two projects gave them an unfair advantage. Commissioner Watkins stated that he wanted to see them move forward. Commissioner Bechtel was concerned that Clay Murphey who owns Rum Creek Enterprises was an employee and he did not think it was wise to hire an employee for the project. Mayor Reichert stated that Mr. Murphey was not an employee but a contractor. Commissioner Tillman stated that he was concerned that there did not seem to be a priority list of projects. He continued that he would like to know who was choosing the projects since he knew that Bloomfield and Pleasant Hill needed a good deal of blight remediation. He commended Commissioner Watkins on wanting the two projects to move forward when his area needed work also. Mayor Reichert responded that these two projects were set by the Commission when they approved the bonds.

Commissioner Lucas stated that she continued to believe that moving Wise Avenue and Beall Hill Projects forward is not fair to other projects and would therefore like to see the item tabled.

ACTION:

On motion of Commissioner Lucas, seconded by Commissioner Bivins the motion to table the resolution to approve Rum Creek Enterprises and Historic Hills and Heights Development Corporation failed six to three with Commissioners Watkins, Shepherd, DeFore, Jones, Bechtel and Schlesinger casting dissenting vote and Commissioners Lucas, Bivins and Tillman casing affirmative votes.

ACTION:

On motion of Commissioner Bechtel, seconded by Commissioner Shepherd and carried with Commissioners Watkins, DeFore, Jones, and Tillman voting in the affirmative and Commissioners Schlesinger, Lucas and Bivins casting the dissenting votes, the resolution authorizing the Mayor to negotiate and execute an agreement with Rum Creek Enterprises, LLC to manage Blight Remediation efforts in the Wise Avenue area; to negotiate and execute an agreement with Historic Hills and Heights Development Corporation to manage Blight Remediation efforts in the Beall's Hill Area was approved.

There being no further business and on motion duly made and seconded, the meeting was adjourned.

Prepared by:

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Janice S. Ross, CCC
Assistant Clerk of the Commission

Approved by:

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Jean S. Howard, CMC
Clerk of the Commission