



**MIAMI-DADE COUNTY
FINAL OFFICIAL MINUTES
Naranja Lakes Community Redevelopment
Agency (CRA)
Special Workshop**

Naranja Neighborhood Center
13955 S.W. 264 Street
Miami, Florida

July 12, 2007
As Advertised

Harvey Ruvin, Clerk
Board of County Commissioners

Kay Madry Sullivan, Director
Clerk of the Board Division

Jill Thornton, Commission Reporter
(305) 375-2505



**CLERK'S SUMMARY AND OFFICIAL MINUTES
NARANJA LAKES
COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY (CRA)
JULY 12, 2007**

The Naranja Lakes Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) Board convened in a special workshop session at the Naranja Neighborhood Center, 13955 S.W. 264th Street, Miami, Florida, at 6:00 p.m. on July 12, 2007; there being present upon roll call: Mr. Stuart Archer, Mr. Rene Infante and Mr. Kenneth Forbes; (Chairperson Nina Betancourt, Mr. Moe Hakssa, Mr. Parsuram Ramkissoon, Mr. Daniel Lipe and Ms. Volkert were absent); Mr. Alberto Gonzalez, CRA Analyst, Office of Strategic Business Management (OSBM); and Jill Thornton.

I. Start of Special Workshop Meeting Call to Order

Mr. Forbes called the CRA Special Workshop to order at 6:41 p.m.

II. Roll Call

Upon roll call, the Board proceeded to consider tonight's agenda.

III. Introductions

Mr. Forbes recognized the following County staff member(s): Mr. Alberto Gonzalez, CRA Analyst, Office of Strategic Business Management (OSBM)

Mr. Forbes stated the purpose of tonight's workshop was to discuss the concerns of business owners, whose businesses were located within the NLCRA district. He noted the CRA's mission was to eliminate slum and blight in the area, and the CRA needed to hear from different community segments so that everyone could become involved in the plan.

IV. Open Forum for Public Comments

Mr. Forbes opened the public hearing and the following persons appeared before the CRA Board and stated their concerns:

1. Mr. Phillip Murray, 13248 SW 256th Street, questioned the status of issues discussed at the workshop regarding the Villages of Naranja and the Hidden Grove Apartments and whether the documents requested by CRA members at that workshop were submitted.

In response to Mr. Murray's question, Mr. Forbes noted the CRA had not received a report yet, but the County was working diligently with the neighborhood and the appropriate agencies to generate a comprehensive report as requested by the CRA members.

Mr. Murray stated he hoped the CRA would not drop the ball; that some residents had become disenfranchised and felt the issues were not being taken seriously.

Mr. Archer stated he believed Channel 4 and The Miami Herald were continuing to investigate the issues to ensure that County agencies would fulfill their commitments to the CRA and that nothing was swept under the rug.

Responding to Mr. Infante's question concerning the status of the eviction policies and whether anything had changed, Mr. Forbes noted a workshop would be scheduled in the near future to discuss the issues involving tenant rights and evictions.

Mr. Alberto Gonzalez, CRA Analyst, OSBM, noted he contacted the Legal Services of Greater Miami and invited them to attend a workshop in July or August.

Mr. Archer suggested the workshop be scheduled in August before school starts.

Mr. Forbes concurred that August would be a better date, which would allow the CRA sufficient time to better understand the issues before finalizing the CRAs FY2007-08 budget. He noted the CRA wanted a better understanding of the Maintenance and Health issues before tenants were evicted.

Following further discussion, it was agreed by those CRA members present that the workshop would be scheduled for August 7, 2007.

2. Mr. Neil Patrick, 14015 SW 278th Street, appeared before the CRA and questioned whether the CRA had any oversight over the tenant/eviction issues and whether criminal background checks were conducted on the tenants. .

Mr. Stuart responded to Mr. Patrick's question, noting the CRA's oversight was limited to identifying problems so that action could be taken by the appropriate agencies,

Mr. Forbes expounded, noting the CRA anticipated bringing the new Management Company, and the County agencies and departments together in an effort to resolve those issues, and to clean up the area and prevent future issues.

Concerning Mr. Patrick's question concerning criminal background checks, Mr. Infante noted a process was followed to eliminate problem tenants and the CRA hired additional policing to patrol the areas to identify the perpetrators. He noted the police have put a lot of effort into this area.

Mr. Patrick commented that he had noticed increased policing in the area. He questioned whether security had been increased in the Mandarin Lakes Community as well.

Mr. Forbes noted additional police was hired for the entire district but the Mandarin Lakes Homeowners Association (HOA) also hired additional security.

Mr. Archer noted the homeowners, the HOA and D.R. Horton Builders entered into an agreement to increase maintenance fees and contracted with the police department for additional security. He noted according to the police reports presented to the CRA, much of the crime had declined. Mr. Archer also noted the CRA was encouraging the Mandarin Lakes Community to establish a Crime Watch program.

Mr. Infante noted the CRA initiated the process to increase security, but he agreed that more could be done. He noted he pays a significant amount per month for security at his place of business and felt that D.R. Horton could contribute more for the community.

In response to Mr. Patrick's question regarding when the CRA was established, Mr. Forbes noted the CRA was established in 2002.

Mr. Forbes pointed out that Mandarin Lakes was only a small portion of the CRA District and that crime affected the entire district. He noted the entire community should be involved in efforts to decrease crime before it spills over into neighboring communities.

Responding to Mr. Patrick's comments regarding the use of incremental tax funds, Mr. Forbes explained that those funds were used for the entire district. He pointed out the Traditional Neighborhood Concept promoted by the CRA included pedestrian-friendly neighborhoods with no walls separating the communities. Mr. Forbes noted the Police Department conducted two safety fairs, but he did not see much involvement from the Mandarin Lakes Community. He emphasized the importance for all communities to be involved.

Mr. Archer noted Miami-Dade Police Sergeant Ozzie Hernandez and his team from the Cutler Ridge District had done an outstanding job in providing extra security. He noted those officers worked overtime and were handpicked by Sergeant Hernandez to perform at a certain standard. Mr. Archer noted it would be helpful if the Mandarin Lakes Community established a Crime Watch program and educated the residents on reporting crime to the police without being afraid.

Mr. Murray emphasized the need to provide jobs and other basic needs to deter crime.

Mr. Forbes noted the CRA's responsibility was to merge an existing community with a new community and to address the issues involved. He noted it was important that these communities communicate with each other and live in harmony.

In response to Mr. Patrick's question regarding efforts to improve the economic conditions in the area, Mr. Archer noted the CRA planned to invite businesses to the area.

Mr. Gonzalez advised that he invited the Beacon Council to participate in a workshop and to provide the CRA with information on the specific programs offered.

Mr. Infante noted problems occurred following Hurricane Andrew where funds were diverted to businesses in Florida City and Naranja was left out. Consequently, recovery in Naranja had been slow. He noted the Mandarin Lakes Community was the CRA's primary development projected to generate revenues to improve the entire district. He noted businesses need to be made aware that the CRA existed, and the CRA needed to lobby for additional funding to create jobs along the US 1 Corridor.

Mr. Patrick questioned whether any efforts had been made to improve the aesthetics of businesses within the CRA District. He noted many of the businesses in this area looked as if they were just hit by a Hurricane.

Mr. Forbes noted the developer of Mandarin Lakes Community had incentives to develop that community and the CRA needed to attract other developers to develop the remaining areas. He noted if the CRA's concern was mainly one neighborhood, then businesses would lose interest.

Mr. Infante noted people needed to feel the CRA was taking action and noted the area needed to be cleaned and beautified in order to attract new businesses and in order for resources to be committed by the Beacon Council.

Mr. Forbes noted the CRA was trying to develop a comprehensive plan that would address improving multi-family complexes in the entire CRA District and promote home ownership.

Mr. Murray expressed concern that other communities within the CRA District that existed before the Mandarin Lakes Community had not been developed comparable to Mandarin Lakes. He noted people visiting neighboring communities such as Mandarin Lakes were often stopped by police patrolling the area, which was creating a problem.

Mr. Archer stated he fully understood the differences in the communities and that Mandarin Lakes was on one end of the spectrum. He pointed out that many people affected by Hurricane Andrew were not compensated by their insurance companies and were struggling to make ends meet. He noted the CRA was trying to level things out for everyone.

Mr. Infante noted the CRA still needed the support of the community residents. He noted when those numbers increased, than politicians would be more inclined to provide the resources.

3. Mr. Edward Tucker, Owner of Karate School, 27521 S. Dixie Hwy, appeared before the CRA and expressed concern with the homeless congregating in apartment complexes, at strip malls and at local gas stations, which make other people feel uncomfortable. He also noted homeless people were polluting the areas by digging through garbage cans and littering the area, which affects the property value.

Mr. Gonzalez advised that staff could contact Miami-Dade County's Homeless Trust to address this issue.

Mr. Infante noted different agencies could be contacted, but the problem was that some homeless people do not want to stay in the homeless facilities or participate in programs. Mr. Infante questioned the possibility of the CRA directing funding to Mr. Tucker's business to provide Karate lessons to children in the area.

Mr. Archer suggested efforts be made to identify opportunities such as scholarships through Dade County Public schools to fund the Karate lessons.

Mr. Infante asked Mr. Tucker to provide the CRA with his resume.

Mr. Forbes expressed appreciation to everyone present for participating in tonight's workshop. He noted he would like to schedule a meeting in the near future to further address the concerns regarding businesses within the CRA District and to discuss ways to encourage businesses to get involved.

V. Setting of Next Workshop Date

Mr. Forbes announced that the next NLCRA Special Workshop would be held on August 07, 2007 at 6:00 p.m. to discuss the legal issues involving landlord and tenants with the Legal Services of Greater Miami.

VI. Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the CRA, the Special Workshop session was adjourned at 7:35 p.m.

Kenneth Forbes, Acting Chairperson
Naranja Lakes Community Redevelopment Agency