

**THREE CORNERS STEERING COMMITTEE MINUTES
THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 12, 2020 1:30 P.M.
CITY HALL, COUNCIL CHAMBERS, VERO BEACH, FLORIDA**

PRESENT: Vicky Gould, Linda Moore, Mike Johansen, Harry Howle, Dr. Richard Baker, John Cotugno, Chloe Rose Schwartz, Ben Earman, Christine Pokorney-Sickterman, Sydney O’Haire, Laura Moss and Jeff Stassi
Also Present: John Turner, City Attorney; Jason Jeffries, Planning and Development Director; Monte Falls, City Manager and Tammy Bursick, City Clerk

1. CALL TO ORDER

Ms. Gould called the meeting to order at 1:32 p.m.

A) Election of Chairman

Mrs. Moore made a motion to elect Ms. Vicky Gould for Chairman. Mr. Stassi seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

B) Election of Vice Chairman

Mrs. Moore made a motion to elect Mrs. Christine Pokorney-Sickterman for Vice Chairman. Ms. Schwartz seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A) October 22, 2020

Mr. Howle made a motion to adopt the October 22, 2020 minutes. Mrs. Moore seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

3. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION:

A) Review of Project Goals & Planning Premises

Mr. Jason Jeffries, Planning and Development Director, stated that the purpose of this meeting today was to go over the project goals and planning premises. He said that this has been reviewed previously, but because the process has been going on for over a year he wanted everyone to know where they were. He then gave a Power Point presentation (attached to the original minutes).

Mr. Jeffries went through the project goals and said that they would go through each goal and discuss them.

Mr. Jeffries stated that the first goal was to pursue the best and highest use of the public property.

Mr. Stassi asked about the finances and what was the City looking to spend. He asked how this piece of property could help the City in generating revenue. He thinks that the City would want to know that to see what the potential value is in helping the City financially.

Mr. Jeffries wondered if they wanted that to be more of a goal than just an assumption. He said that there is a goal in the planning premises that somewhat addresses this. He is open to having a goal statement made in relations to it.

Mr. Howle suggested having these goals printed out in front of them so they can read them at each of the their meetings. He said that when the Council created this Committee they wanted good, clean, and quick work of the Committee. This Committee is here to choose a conceptual plan as it is presented to them by the planning process. They are not here to include the actual design or come up with the design or decide what the actual design is. They are not here to rehash the public process, just new designs. He said that the City has a track record of taking property and doing nothing with it, which in a sense it is doing nothing for anyone. The point is that they cannot continue to have these meetings over and over endlessly which will cause delays and distractions towards what their goals are. They need to do what this Committee was created to do. With regards to some of the things that they keep bringing up, what it comes down to in his mind, because they do want to make effective efforts they need to do what the market decides they are able to do. He said for example if there is a contractor or developer like Mr. Kissler who wants to develop this property into something that is great. However, they just can't sit here and wait for someone to develop the property that wants to keep Big Blue on the site. He asked the City Manager if all of the switch gear has been moved out of the building.

Mr. Monte Falls, City Manager, stated that most of it is gone. He said that Florida Power and Light (FPL) is dismantling the substation as they speak.

Mr. Howle commented that at this point this building has "zero" use. In the meantime, it is going to become old and rotten. He said if someone wants to use it then that would be great and they should go along and see what the cost aspects of that is going to be. If not they have to move on. It will be a great expense to the City if the building remains there empty and they have a hurricane that wipes the building out. All the cleanup will be at the City's expense. He said this Committee needs to stay focused and they need to do their best to come up with what they can present to the community as a choice.

Ms. Gould felt that this Committee does not want to wait for years until someone wants to come and develop that piece of property. All they were saying is can they put feelers out to companies that have saved historic buildings. She said what they were saying was let's see if we can get some creative people who may want to develop it. She doesn't want anyone to think that they are going to sit on this and just wait for some hopeful day. She said the financial part of this bothers her somewhat. She fully understands that is not up to this Committee. That is a City Council function. However, it seems a little foolish at times if they put out all these wonderful ideas without having any direction. They don't want to be titled the Committee of dreams.

Vice Mayor Moss mentioned that this City has a long history of preserving Parks. She referred to Section 5.05 in the City Charter, which requires a referendum to take any of the Parks out of the Charter and now they are only talking about one (1) piece of property. They need to be careful in moving forward and always consider the City's history and love of its Parks and green space.

Mr. Howle agreed, but at the same time lets not drag our feet.

Mr. Jeffries will report to the Committee at their next meeting the conversations that he has had with different developers. He said that the first step is coming up with a community plan.

Mr. Johansen asked if they as a Committee are charged with selecting the plan and that plan will be presented to go on as a referendum or to the developer.

Mr. Jeffries explained that the plan they select will go to the City Council.

Mr. Johansen understood that it was not the Committee's responsibility to get the job done.

Ms. Schwartz commented that a lot of the community is in favor of saving Big Blue. She said their goal should be to continue saving some of these structures. She did not see any reason why they could not do that.

Mr. Howle commented that if they did decide that they were going to push this thing a long for a few years and wait and see if it is going to be developed and they focus on Big Blue then nothing happens on the east side of the property, which in his opinion is the best part of the property. He said how would they develop that piece of property for future use when you have to get around what could become a hazardous area depending on how bad that building becomes over time. They have to come up with a concept for the entire property in a timely manner. They need to come up with a plan that they are going to present to the community so they can make a decision.

Mr. Howle recalled the original plan was to tear Big Blue down and they were going to receive around \$300,000 for the scraps. He wants this project done in a timely manner. He doesn't want the building to just sit there.

Mr. Jeffries commented that the cost has changed since then. He said that it may cost the City to dismantle the property now or they could breakeven and have zero cost, but scrap material is not worth what it was a couple of years ago.

Mr. Stassi said that it could be time for the City Manager to start meeting with developers. He said that developers have relationships with hotels, etc. He said they don't start building something in hopes to fill up the space. They already have contacts.

Mrs. Sickterman asked if Mr. Duany had any resources that he could recommend.

Mr. Jeffries said that Mr. Duany has mentioned developers that he knows who are interested in the property, but they have not contacted the City. He said the developers that the City has talked to are Mr. Kissler who developed the Savanna, Georgia project, and also the developer that is doing a project in Ft. Pierce. He said that the developer in Ft. Pierce is more of a residential developer.

Mrs. Sickterman suggested actively pursuing that conversation with Mr. Duany.

Mr. Stassi recalled that the City of Clearwater is redeveloping their waterfront. They put an RFQ out and had up to 50 developers interested in the project. He said that the City might want to talk to them and add them to their list.

Mr. Falls explained that once the Committee has come up with a plan and it has been adopted by the Council then staff will move forward in seeing if there is a serious developer out there. They will put out an RFQ to see which developers are really interested. Then they will make decisions on what structures the developers think can be saved. If they want to save Big Blue and the developer can't make that work

then he is going to do what he wants to. He said that the worst case scenario is going to be for the City to be revenue neutral. They may have to have an operating cost if they have to manage public spaces on this property, or maybe they can work out a deal with the developer to manage those public spaces in exchange for cheaper rent. They have a once in a lifetime chance to do this and get it right. The City needs the Committee's help in coming up with the right plan.

Ms. Gould asked do they work with the developer before taking the plan to referendum.

Mr. Falls answered yes. He said they only have one (1) chance to take this to referendum and they need to make sure that the plan is concrete before taking it to referendum because they want to make sure that it is going to pass.

Ms. Gould agreed that they could not sit back on their heels and do nothing.

Mr. Jeffries added that is why they want the Steering Committee to choose a plan so that it gives staff the time to work with the developer. He said their deadline is in August to have the wording ready to go to referendum.

Mrs. Moore asked if no developer wants to do it then does it come back to the Committee for another plan.

Mr. Jeffries did not think that was going to happen. He said the feedback that he has received from some of the developers that he has talked to has been good.

Mrs. Sickterman questioned why staff wanted to wait until their next meeting before revealing the discussions that they have had with developers.

Mr. Jeffries said that he was still working on finalizing those things.

Mr. Jeffries went back to putting financial feasibility in as one (1) of their goals.

Ms. Schwartz said if it is not one (1) of their goals then it should not be there. She questioned coming up with a plan and not worrying about finances.

Mr. Falls said that they could use goal revenue neutral as a minimum in the plan. It is more about qualitative than quantitative.

Mr. Jeffries added that the overall financial feasibility will be done by the City Council.

Mr. Howle commented that if they have this plan that they recommend that has been approved by City Council and it has gone to RFQ and the developer wants to include some things in the plan and not everything that has been proposed then would they bring that to Council and ask if it is doable.

Mr. Falls said the developer might say if the community wants all of these things then they are going to have to pay for them. If they want it to be revenue neutral then either things have to be taken out or maybe another restaurant has to be built on the property. There will need to be a balancing act that levels it up.

Mr. Falls brought up the tourists that Savanna attracts compared to the number of tourists that Vero Beach attracts. He said it is about four (4) times less. He said when they talked to the Kissler group and they loved the site and saw it as a two (2) part project. They would start where Big Blue is and see how it worked out then move to the south part of the property. They said the biggest drawback is the beach. They would compete with the ocean so there would need to be something on the property that is really spectacular to attract people. The other drawback was the amount of foot traffic that would come to this property.

Ms. Gould loved the conversation that was taking place, but said that they needed to complete talking about their goals.

Mr. Jeffries felt that this discussion was important.

Mrs. Moore felt that they needed stronger wording in their goals concerning being environmental friendly.

Dr. Baker agreed and said that they should put native landscape in there.

Mr. Jeffries said that they could strengthen the language. He said that “best practices” means going beyond.

Ms. O’Haire felt that the word sustainable should be in there.

Mr. Jeffries explained that there are Florida friendly plants that are not always specific.

Ms. Gould reminded the Committee that the goals are broad.

Mr. Jeffries wanted to make sure that they have a consensus of the Committee in what they are recommending to City Council. He is hearing that the Committee wants to tweak goal #6.

Mrs. Sickterman felt that there needed to be some language included about the cultural community.

Mr. Jeffries said in goal #2 they could add something about cultural and in goal #1 something about financial sustainability.

Ms. Gould reported on a trip that she recently took to Savanna and said that it is so amazing as to what can be done. She said that the City of Vero Beach could never attract that many people nor would they want to. There is such good foot traffic there and how would that translate to Vero Beach. They have to have something that will draw people here such as having more walkable space around the river. She said they should explore the river more. She said that everything in Savanna is on the river. She said if they were to retain Big Blue they would have some amazing views from the roof top then they would not have to compete with the beach.

Mr. Falls expressed that this property is 33 acres so there is plenty of room to get what they want.

Ms. Gould said that Savanna was packed, but everyone wore their masks. She said at some point they will get back to a normal life.

Ms. Schwartz commented that having the Three Corners project will grow tourism in this area. They will have more than just a beach to attract people.

Mr. Earman talked about Riverwalk in Tampa where their Convention Center is located in the downtown area. He said that there is a calmness about the river as opposed to the beach.

Dr. Baker said that education should be one of their goals. They need to educate people about the Lagoon, etc. Also, people getting some sort of exercising should be an education process included in their goals.

Ms. Gould commented that in Ashville, North Carolina, there are a lot of things along the French Broad River. She said that one (1) park they went to had so much green space, but still a lot of things for families to do.

Dr. Baker expressed the need to educate people on the history of Vero Beach. He doesn't see that in their goals.

Mr. Howle commented that they have limited access to the water in this community unless you are a member of a private club. He said there is only one (1) restaurant on the river and that is Riverside. They need people to boat to the property, ride their bikes and walk to the property. If there is a hotel on the site they could shuttle people back and forth to the beach and downtown. He felt it would work in conjunction with the restaurants located on 14th Avenue and the shops on Ocean Drive. At the very least they should have something in place to give people the access and what they don't need is to have a piece of property that no one has access to. He said on this piece of property there is enough space to put all kinds of things that they enjoy on the property and still have a lot of green space.

Ms. O'Haire said that she was not seeing something in creating a space for everyone. She feels that is something that they have talked about, which is creating a space for all ages, demographics, all ethnics, and all cultural backgrounds inclusion.

Mr. Jeffries suggested adding goal #8 for educational purposes. Make changes to goal #3 to talk about walkability, connection, public access. Talk about destinations could be included in goal #2. The space for all could be included in goal #3. He suggested taking public comment at this time.

Ms. Ilene Wood, who has been a resident of Indian River County for the last 15 years wanted to talk about "Rocket Kitty Cat Café." She said that they are not a rescue center and not a restaurant. They are a social environment for their community to go in and view the cats and potentially adopt them and have a snack. She said that one (1) side of the room is the café where people can sit and watch the cats through a glass mirror and then the other side is where they can go and sit with the cats in their environment. This allows them to see if they are compatible with the cat and if they might want to adopt it.

Mrs. Jan Demco commented that she lives near the Power Plant and has been looking at the smoke stacks for years. She said that Rocket Kitty Cat Café is not a rescue nor are they a restaurant. She has talked to vendors who are ready to operate the part of the facility that will be a restaurant. They will need to show a profit since they are a 501-c3 organization. This is a big help to senior citizens who want to come out and pet the cats. Cat café should at least be given a chance. Their architect is in the process of designing a building. They don't want to be on the waterfront part of the property. Their business plans show that they will meet their goals because they have to pay their bills. The key is to bring together something for all ages. This will be the first cat café on the Treasure Coast. It will be a destination.

Ms. Gould explained to Mrs. Demco that this Committee does not make the decisions as to what will go on the property. She applauded her for making this adventure known to the community.

Ms. Demco wanted to come and give a presentation to the Committee at their December meeting. She was told to contact the City Clerk, but to understand that this Committee will not vote on what goes on that piece of property.

Mr. Jay Bird thanked the Steering Committee for being here and listening to him. He will attend their next meeting and give a presentation. He referred to 14th Avenue and Vero Furniture Mart who recently painted their building baby blue. He said instead of calling the building at the Power Plant "Big Blue" they could call it "Baby Blue" and they would have a baby to take care of.

Mrs. Brooke Steinberg reminded the Committee about the regatta that would be held on Sunday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. She thought it would be a good idea for the Steering Committee to come out and see what Youth Sailing is doing for kids and families in their community. She has received a couple of phone calls about recreation and the concerns about too much development on the property. She said one (1) concern was their local economy and whether or not they could support this many new retail businesses. She was wondering about the bed tax and the idea of a hotel and whether or not it is benefiting the City to put a hotel there. She named places that don't have hotels and have retail spaces and different places for everyone.

Ms. Gould commented that it was their charge to recommend a plan and are being very cognizant not to interfere with Downtown, Oceanside and Royal Palm Pointe. They want those places to be successful and not compete with them. In the next few years those areas will be built back up and they could be working hand and hand with this new development.

Mr. Howle said that he personally would not like to see condos or a home subdivision on that property. When they had the drawbridge where Royal Palm Pointe is now located it was supposed to be businesses and mixed use and if it continues the way it is going now it will all be a private development.

Mr. Falls mentioned that with Royal Palm Pointe some of that property was private. He said that they all have a vision of what they would like to see on this property. There are tradeoffs that they have talked about. He said lets not forget how big this piece of property is.

Mr. Jeffries said to prevent what happened at Royal Palm Pointe is that they have a goal and public access is the goal.

Vice Mayor Moss said that historically what the financial approach is that Council has taken concerning this site. But she said that she does not think that they need it now as a backup plan. This property will increase in value. This is a prime piece of real estate. It belongs to the people. She said if they allow residential then they will have ownership in the property. The people of the community need to decide this and that is what will be done through the referendum process. She did not think that they needed to spend too much time talking about residential.

Ms. Schwartz commented that there are some people who want to see residential on this piece of property for several reasons. She said that doesn't mean there would be condos there, but in some places

having residential dwellings above commercial dwellings seems to work very well. This will bring young people to town and they don't mind living in that scene.

Mr. Falls said that he was not advocating for any use. He just wanted them to think about this heading through the process. If they have people living there then they have their eyes open in case something happens on the site that shouldn't be taking place.

Mr. Howle said that he would retract his statement. If a developer comes in with a deal (plan) then they should listen to it.

Mr. Earman agreed with incorporated use.

Ms. O'Haire commented that they need to be looking at things beyond the way that someone normally sees Vero. She said that it would not be a condo governed by a Home Owners Association (HOA).

Mr. Howle agreed that if it was done in an attractive way it would be okay.

Mr. Contugo commented that one (1) of the reasons for opening this Committee up to younger people was to get more ideas, which is what they are looking for. They need to continue having new input.

Ms. Gould wanted to make it clear that the developers wanting to develop on the property would not own the property.

Mr. Jeffries explained what banks look for in financing a project for the developer. They would prefer that the developer own the land, but it would probably be okay with a long term lease agreement.

Mr. Jeffries summarized what he sees as their goals. He said that most of the goals will have some sort of revision to them. He said with goal #1 he was going to input some information about finance sustainability. In goal #2 there will be additional language about the destination and use the word "unique." They want to create a unique destination to deal with issues so they don't have duplication in other areas of the City and also include cultural uses. In goal #3 they will add walkability, connectivity and strengthen the public access. This is to make sure what happened on Royal Palm Pointe won't happen on the Three Corners property. In goal #4 they will add some additional language about destination and pedestrian, which is what they are trying to create with the retail and restaurants along the waterfront. With goal #5 they probably want to put in the word recreation because that ties in with Youth Sailing, which is a key aspect of this plan. In goal #6 they will put in some language about environmental sustainable landscaping making sure that they have the best practices. A new goal would be about education and the Lagoon and Vero's history. In goal #9 they would include transportation and connectivity on the site. He said inclusionary would be added to goal #3.

Mr. Jeffries briefly went over the planning premises and said if there was anything that the Committee felt was missing to let him know.

Ms. Gould asked how they could make this interactive.

Mr. Jeffries explained that there were ways that they could use their website to make this more interactive.

Ms. Gould thought it would be nice to keep Speakupverobeach, but realizes that the cost would be \$5,000 a year. She asked if they could use survey monkey to get the communities input. She said that Irina would be able to help them if they needed her help.

Mr. Jeffries said that there is a function with the City's website to be able to send out surveys and that can be activated on the Three Corners page.

Mr. Howle commented on some of the things that have already been done. They have hired DPZ, done charrettes, visited the Power Plant, etc., so he thought that the idea now was to move on and come up with something to present to the City Council.

Ms. Gould understood what Mr. Howle was saying. However, it is important to allow the community to weigh in because they care about what everyone has to say.

Mr. Jeffries agreed that they don't want to go back and rehash and redo what happened in January. But there was an outcry from the people who didn't have input when the post pandemic plan was introduced.

Vice Mayor Moss felt that it was right to bring all these things up. She said that is why they have new people on the Committee and are encouraging their ideas, as well as the community's ideas. She expressed how important it was to engage in the community so they know what is going on.

Mrs. Sickterman did not think that it was very easy to navigate on the City's website. It was much easier on Speakupverobeach.

Mr. Jeffries said that they are trying to mirror the way Speakupverobeach was set up.

Mr. Stassi asked how the referendum was going to be worded.

Mr. Jeffries referred him to the website for the Three Corners site where he can review the previous wording that they were going to use. He said that they are allowed up to 75 words.

Ms. Schwartz agreed that the City's website is hard to navigate and may not achieve the results that they are looking for. She would like to see updates on the project and make sure everyone understands what is being proposed.

Vice Mayor Moss asked if there was an email list of everyone that participated in Speakupverobeach. Mr. Jeffries said that there was.

Mr. Stassi said that they need to be thinking about positive points that they need to put out in the community as they go forward.

Ms. Gould gave a shout out to Mr. Larry Reisman for writing everything that he has concerning the Three Corners project.

Mr. Jeffries said that he would update their goals and present them to the City Council at their December 1, 2020, City Council meeting.

4. PUBLIC COMMENT

This item was heard earlier in the meeting.

5. NEXT MEETING DATE

A) December 10, 2020 at 1:30 p.m.

The next meeting date for the Steering Committee will be on December 10, 2020 at 1:30 p.m.

6. ADJOURNMENT

Today's meeting adjourned at 3:20 p.m.

/tb