Minutes of the Community Redevelopment Agency of the City of Auburndale held on January 23, 2023, at 7:58 p.m. in the Commission Room of City Hall, after having been properly advertised, with the following members present: Vice Chair Tim Pospichal, Dr. Dorothea Taylor Bogert, Keith Cowie, Richard Hamann, Jack Myers, and Bill Sterling. Absent was Chair Ellie Harper. Also present: Assistant City Manager Amy Palmer and City Clerk Brandon Henry.

**Motion** by Keith Cowie, seconded by Dorothea Taylor Bogert, to approve the Community Redevelopment Agency Minutes of the November 7, 2022 meeting. Upon vote, all ayes.

Assistant City Manager Amy Palmer announced that we had a great Community Redevelopment Agency Board training on Friday provided by the Florida Redevelopment Association and Jeff Burton. Jeff Burton was a former president of the Florida Redevelopment Association. She said she just received the PowerPoint from that training session, so she will print it out or email it to the Board. She wanted to call to the Board's attention several projects that City staff has been working on. First is PK Avenue, it has been five years since all of the landscaping went in and the project finished. Some of the plants did really well, some of them did not do so well. So there were a lot of bare areas along PK Avenue. So we are identifying what used to be planted in those areas, changing up some of the plant species and planting new species.

Assistant City Manager Palmer presented photographs comparing before and after the plantings. She thanked the Community Redevelopment Agency service workers for their hard work on this project, as well as Street Superintendent Caleb Gabany.

Board Member Taylor Bogert asked if they are going to replenish the rocks at the bottom, for drainage purposes? They used to be completely covered. I know they float away.

Assistant City Manager Palmer answered they do need to be maintained, and at some point it is very labor intensive. Over time, it gets dirt built into the rocks. So they take the rocks out and rinse them. At some point, yes, we will need to do some stormwater maintenance along PK Avenue.

Board Member Myers asked could they just pressure wash them?

Board Member Taylor Bogert said she is talking about the small rocks.

Assistant City Manager Palmer added they are talking about the rocks down the middle in the bottom. She is not sure. Perhaps.

Board Member Hamann asked would it be better to just add a little more rock on the top of it, and do away with some of this labor-intensive stuff?

Assistant City Manager Palmer answered she does not know if you can add over the top of it, because you would be losing capacity over time.

Public Works / Public Utilities Director John Dickson said potentially it would probably have to be replaced. For example, our sand filters at the wastewater plant eventually cannot be cleaned anymore. Ultimately, we would have to do the same thing here.

Assistant City Manager Palmer said the other project she wanted to call to the Board's attention to is the crosswalk on Main Street at the end of the park by Shake Shoppe and the Brazilian Jiu Jitsu gym. That crosswalk gets used quite frequently, and it was a great Community Redevelopment Agency project that we were able to accomplish.

Board Member Myers said unfortunately someone got hit there the other day.

Board Member Taylor Bogert stated they still do not stop, just like the one at the Auburndale Main Street Diner. So many people do not see it until it is too late.

Board Member Myers said he does not know if the person turned the light on. She was in a wheelchair.

Assistant City Manager Palmer said she actually did hear about that.

Board Member Myers asked if we are still working to get one down by Lake Avenue and Main Street. There are more people that cross there.

Assistant City Manager Palmer said the issue close to that corner was that there was no where to install the pole at the moment. When we do the streetscape for Main Street, there will be a better opportunity to get the pole installed there. We had looked at putting a second crosswalk with flashing lights there at that location.

Board Member Taylor Bogert asked in front of the dance studio?

Board Member Myers clarified the location. There is one on both sides of Lake Avenue. It is heavily traveled.

Assistant City Manager Palmer said it is difficult to see even if you are in a car, turning left or right at that intersection. It is on our list when we get to doing the streetscape.

Board Member Myers asked when we do the streetscape, can we look at putting more lights down around Wiley Drive and in the park and coming out of the tennis courts? He almost hit someone there at night.

Assistant City Manager Palmer said we can look into that.

Board Member Taylor Bogert said there is some lighting around the corner but there is none going down Wiley Drive.

Parks and Recreation Director Cody McGhee added at least until the tennis complex.

Board Members Taylor Bogert and Myers agreed.

Assistant City Manager Palmer said we can take a look at that.

Board Member Myers said the lights are prettier, but he does not know if they put out as much light.

Assistant City Manager Palmer said that completes her announcements. She does have a request once we get into the agenda, that we flip Agenda Items 1 and 2 and do the Finance Report first.

Vice Chair Pospichal asked if there were any requests to add additional items to the agenda. There was none.

He asked if there was public comment on any item not on the agenda. There was no public comment.

Vice Chair Pospichal asked if we needed a motion to switch Agenda Items 1 and 2. He asked if there was consensus to switch Agenda Items 1 and 2.

There was consensus to switch Agenda Items 1 and 2.

## 1. FINANCE REPORT

Finance Director Christopher Reeder passed out the Detail Summary Report for December 2022. This encompasses the first quarter of the fiscal year of the Community Redevelopment Agency. For the first quarter, he will focus on revenue to begin. Our collections for the fiscal year to date is \$1.91 million. This was a 15% increase over what had been budgeted. You can recall from our budget process earlier last year that we always budget the prior year's collections with an anticipation that property values and collections will increase. As we

have seen throughout the City, growth and increases in property values is one of the big reasons in the Community Redevelopment Area that our collections from the City and County portion was much larger than our historical three to four percent growth we normally would have seen. So in Fiscal Year 2023, we are looking at a 15 to 16 percent increase over our budgeted revenues.

Board Member Myers asked why - because this was for last year's?

Finance Director Reeder said we budgeted our prior year collections, it is the most conservative approach. So our actual collections each year, we do not have an understanding of what it will come in to - through our budget process we came in much greater.

Board Member Myers responded to Mr. Reeder, so you are saying next year's budget – because this 15 percent above, we are doing 15 percent? We are not budgeting another 15 percent in anticipation?

Finance Director Reeder answered no.

He said the middle section of the Detail Summary Report is our expenses. So far year-to-date, we have expended \$87,884. Our budget for the year was \$1,651,400. Within our year-to-date, our first quarter expenses, he would like to draw attention to our "Agricultural and Horticultural Supplies" – which has a total cost so far of \$7,092. This is a little bit elevated given that we are only three months into the fiscal year and we have spent roughly 71 percent of the budget. Those are our Community Redevelopment Agency staff. We have some new staff on the team – they are focused on improving some of our sprinkler systems in conjunction with the contractors, moving away from microjets and putting in new sprinkler heads. Overall, expenses are up a little bit from where we would normally think they are, but it is for the betterment of the Community Redevelopment Area.

In addition, we have our "City Reimbursement Labor", this is a 1/12 cost that gets sent back to the General Fund for those administrative services that the General Fund is supplying to the Community Redevelopment Agency. On streetscaping, we have spent \$24,624 for the first three months. As Ms. Palmer talked about before, we are doing a lot of things down PK Avenue to update it. We also did some spraying of Potassium Copper on a lot of our oak trees in the Community Redevelopment Area to remove moss.

At the bottom is where we sit with cash totals. Through the first three months of the year, taking into account revenue we did not collect in December, we have total cash of \$5,446,000. Prior year budgets, we had already allocated \$2.5 million towards the Civic Center project, that will be expended later this year and into next fiscal year. We also have unspent loan proceeds at \$455,000 from prior year budgets. We are working with just under \$2.5 million which will cover operations for this year and some of our bigger projects that are coming along.

Board Member Sterling asked how are the palm trees doing?

Assistant City Manager Palmer answered the palms would be included in the streetscape line item. The palms are not doing so well. There is lethal bronzing that has hit a lot of the palms and it seems like we are replacing a lot of the same palms in the same locations. She said she is working with a landscape architect who is doing the two streetscape projects in our Capital Improvement Plan for Palmetto and Howard Streets. The architect is creating a "plant palate" – looking at what trees we can replace those palms with. So he will make some recommendations for us for different types of palms and trees. We may just move away from the palms altogether and go with Live Oaks.

Board Member Myers said you do that and you will have to do a new logo and paint all the cars again.

Assistant City Manager Palmer said she does not think we will get rid of the Queen Palms ever, but we do want to put the right tree in the right location too.

Board Member Sterling asked how will the palms be susceptible to the same problems as the ones we are taking out?

Assistant City Manager Palmer answered she thinks all the palms have some type of issue. It may not be the same issue, but they all have their bugs or fungi.

Board Member Sterling said he understands by the Library, we replaced the Sabal Palms there.

Assistant City Manager Palmer answered yes, we replaced the palms at the Library with Queen Palms, which you see on the Bridgers Avenue entrance, we put them on the Lake Avenue side. That was a good substitution in that area.

Board Member Myers asked how long ago did we originally plant those palm trees?

Board Member Cowie said he thinks before him, that was in 2008.

Assistant City Manager Palmer said she wants to say Shawn Sherrouse may have been the Assistant when those were planted.

Board Member Myers said so we got them probably 15 to 20 years ago.

Board Member Taylor Bogert said she thinks it is great that we are working with a landscape architect because they will be significantly more knowledgeable than us.

Board Member Myers said the Community Redevelopment Area is doing pretty well. He does not know if we should consider taking them all out. When they went in, they made a statement in his opinion. They really look good.

Vice Chair Pospichal said that when we have our northern visitors down here, that is their vision of Florida. They do not have much of a root base, they do not tear up your sidewalks or streets.

Assistant City Manager Palmer said we just had our quick kickoff meeting with the landscape architect. The architect is Bruce Hall. He said several things. She said what she heard is that you could use the palms for those key accent areas. Pick a really special palm and use them in those areas. Like the "Welcome to" signs, street corners, or special buildings – to draw attention to those palm trees. The other thing he said is to make sure to plant root balls in the right area – with the right soil, etc. There are several products that he talked about, almost like a chamber that you can plant the root ball in. There are different options out there, and he will make several suggestions along with the landscape palate. She said she can bring it back to the Board if there is consensus about the palm trees, about maybe replacing some of them with other species, keeping palm trees in key areas. That would be the direction she recommends us taking within the Community Redevelopment Area.

Board Member Taylor Bogert said the consensus she is hearing is that we like palm trees all the way down the road. She asked if that is accurate. When you say other species, are you talking about other species of palms? She thinks a lot of the palms were Medjool Palms, which were very expensive and not doing well at all, versus Queen Palms. Maybe when we talk to him, ask him what he can do to help provide for those palm trees to survive down through Main Street. Is that what I am understanding?

Board Member Myers said personally he would like to replace them all with Medjool Palms again, if we have a container to give them a second chance and see if they do better.

Assistant City Manager Palmer said the palm trees do receive injections twice a year. The Community Redevelopment Agency pays for that. They get fertilized, they get insecticides. We are doing everything we can for the trees. We could keep replacing the Medjool Palms, we could keep doing the injections, we could find a

replacement for them like the Cabbage Palm or Queen Palm – something that is more native versus the Medjool Palms which are grown in a completely different environment and shipped to Florida.

Board Member Hamann said they are very expensive too.

Assistant City Manager Palmer agreed.

Board Member Sterling said they go about \$3,500 a piece, for a total of approximately \$180,000.

Board Member Taylor Bogert said have the landscape architect come up with the closest palm tree that has the height we want. Since they started, landscape architecture has grown by leaps and bounds and there are changes they could do. It may cost us on the front end.

Board Member Myers said had the horticulturist started the fertilizer and the injections from day one, that could have kept that plant healthy. We are fighting an uphill battle.

Board Member Taylor Bogert said they replaced a number of those Medjool Palms since they started those injections, how are those doing?

Board Member Hamann asked if they replaced the palms from Bridgers to 92 with a different palm altogether?

Public Works / Public Utilities Director Dickson answered they were the Medjool Palms.

Assistant City Manager Palmer said the other type of palm we used was the Sylvester Palms. We did those down Orange Street during its re-streetscaping.

Board Member Sterling asked if those are expensive?

Assistant City Manager Palmer answered she does not think they are as expensive. They are doing okay. They make a statement like the Medjool Palms.

Board Member Hamann said they look similar to Medjools but are cheaper.

Board Member Cowie said they are the "knock-offs".

Vice Chair Pospichal thanked Finance Director Reeder. He asked for public comment. There was no public comment.

## 2. PRESENTATION OF REVISED DRAFT OF THE 5-YEAR CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Assistant City Manager Palmer said the current Community Redevelopment Agency Capital Improvements Program (CIP) is a long-term plan that acts as the key guiding document for the Community Redevelopment Agency Board in prioritizing redevelopment expenditures. At the last meeting of the Community Redevelopment Agency on November 7, 2022, the Community Redevelopment Agency Board entertained public and staff comments as to future projects for consideration within the Community Redevelopment Agency area. These suggestions have been incorporated into the Suggested Projects List which is considered and reviewed annually by the Community Redevelopment Agency Board. In accordance with the approved Community Redevelopment Agency Calendar, City Staff will present a proposed draft of the 5-year Capital Improvement Plan for fiscal years 2024-2028. The Capital Improvement Program will be presented to the Community Redevelopment Agency Board for final approval at the February meeting (February 20, 2023).

She presented the proposed Fiscal Year 2024-2028 Capital Improvement Plan. She said will go through the entire plan and point out some of the changes in the current projects that we have in the plan, and point out what the new project is for the fifth year.

First is the Park Street Commercial Project. We have \$1 million budgeted, as you just saw in the Finance Report, for this project right now in this fiscal year. In this fiscal year what we will be focused on is the engineering and architecture of the new Civic Center. Next fiscal year is when we will focus on actual construction of the Civic Center down at Lake Ariana Park. This is a Community Redevelopment Agency project because we are making room for economic development opportunities on the other side of the park where Parks and Recreation and the Civic Center are today. We have about five acres Downtown, stretching from Lake Avenue where we have two parking lots, down through the Senior Center adjacent to the old hotel property. We will be expending some funds this year on the engineering of the building, and then next year on the actual construction of the building at Lake Ariana Park.

The next three projects she wants to bring attention to are the streetscapes of Howard and Palmetto Street. In last year's Capital Improvement Plan, these were budgeted at \$500,000. As a result of increasing costs and the increase in revenue we received, she proposes that we increase those to \$750,000 each. She thinks that is justified in just the costs we will incur in putting the electric lines underground, and several of the other streetscape improvements on those streets. The undergrounding of electric utilities on the west side of Lake Stella we are also increasing from \$500,000 to \$750,000.

She presented photos of Palmetto Street. We had several redevelopment grants along this road. Some of the properties have a mixed-use zoning category that allows them to convert to commercial. The two redevelopment grant projects that the Community Redevelopment Agency has funded and invested in on this street have been very successful and commercial in nature. One was converted from residential, the other was converted from daycare to office.

Likewise with Howard Street. We funded a redevelopment project on the backside of Howard Street, in the Palm City Center building. There are opportunities on one side of the street for redevelopment.

She presented photos of the undergrounding of utilities around Lake Stella. There is a lot of "sky clutter" starting up near the middle school into Downtown. We are looking at undergrounding those around the second year.

She said the splash pad was a new project that was added to the suggested project list last year. We included that in the third year of the Capital Improvement Plan. We are funding that at \$1 million.

Board Member Myers asked where do we think we are locating that?

Assistant City Manager Palmer answered we think we are locating that in the Downtown Park, closer to the Beef O'Brady's side – removing the one "Fun-brella" and putting the splash pad in that area.

The streetscape project for Main Street is going to be a big project, similar to how the Civic Center is going to be a big project. We are looking at a new streetscape from Bridgers Avenue to all the way around the park and down to the Baynard House. Because it is such a large project, she is proposing we increase the reserves for this, and then also increase the construction costs for this at \$2.5 million. We have done from Bridgers Avenue south to US 92 with the brick pavers, the Medjool Palms, the islands/bump-outs – just a beautiful streetscape. North of Bridgers Avenue, we have not really touched that in a long time, and we have a really good opportunity now that 559 is no longer a truck route. There is not so much need for the wide parking spaces and wide travel lanes. There is some opportunity there to widen the sidewalks out in front of businesses and make it a really neat Main Street. It is a very big project we envision doing in phases, so that we do not disrupt all the businesses all at once.

Board Member Myers asked for clarification on the exact location of the streetscaping.

Assistant City Manager Palmer clarified the location. It is a longer stretch of road and something she thinks we need to bite off in chunks.

Regarding the fifth year – at November's meeting, the new project that we added to the project list is a new skate and dog park at the old Miss Auburndale Softball Fields. She is proposing we add that to our fifth year at \$1.5 million. She has done some research on some of the skate parks that have been completed recently in Winter Haven and Lakeland. They were in the \$1.7 - \$1.3 million range. So if we do not make it as large as those projects, she thinks \$1.5 million is a sound planning number to put out there in the fifth year.

Board Member Hamann said we have a dog park and a skate park we are talking about doing. How much property do we have down there?

Assistant City Manager Palmer answered just over three-and-a-half acres.

Board Member Hamann is there this idea of putting in some pickleball courts? We can condense the dog park and the skate park to open up some property for pickleball.

Board Member Myers asked if the property where the skate park is now not a big enough area?

Assistant City Manager Palmer answered no, it is not a big enough area.

Board Member Hamann said if there is a way to work that in, he would like to see that.

Assistant City Manager Palmer said we can.

Board Member Myers said or bite the bullet and give people what they want right there across from Beef O'Brady's, that first house, and expand the tennis courts.

Board Member Hamann said add pickleball in there too.

Board Member Myers said he thinks outdoor pickleball would be great with its popularity. He asked Parks and Recreation Director Cody McGhee if he thinks it is a fad or if it is here to stay.

Parks and Recreation Director Cody McGhee answered he does not think it is a fad. Television is now spreading pickleball broadcasts, so he thinks with the senior generation now being the most active we have had ever, and the generation behind them is just as active. As you start getting older, tennis players and baseball players and softball players – your joints do not allow you to play those types of sports as often, pickleball is a good alternative. The fad right now for many municipalities in Florida is killing old tennis courts and making them into pickleball courts. Pickleball is not going away anytime soon, it is only growing. It will only continue to grow the more that we have northerners migrating down here. Pickleball is very popular in the northeast, and as we have more people vacation or move here, it will only continue to grow.

Board Member Hamann asked if Margaritaville is the number one sponsor of pickleball nationwide, they started hosting national tournaments?

Parks and Recreation Director McGhee answered yes, they do a lot of stuff. But you are looking at two different types of pickleball – competitive versus recreational. We would not allow for ourselves to be in the competitive market. We have 150 people at the Community Center for over six months fighting for eight courts, for four hours a day. Having pickleball courts at a facility that we can play in the afternoon will open us to a market we cannot serve currently. That is the excitement.

Board Member Myers said you mentioned competitive pickleball. What about building something with Sports Marketing at Lake Myrtle? Or are we totally out of room out there?

Parks and Recreation Director McGhee said there are 23 acres left on the west tract, which we are designing for potentially soccer and softball fields. Once that tract is done, there will no longer be property.

Board Member Myers asked why softball fields?

Board Member Taylor Bogert answered because women need to be out there where everybody else is.

Parks and Recreation Director McGhee answered there has been an interest in the relocation of Youth Softball.

Board Member Myers said they do not like it out there where we put them?

Board Member Hamann answered they chose it, we did not put them there. They had the opportunity to go. Little League was first, and they turned it down – and the girls jumped at it. Is that correct Mr. McGhee?

Board Member Taylor Bogert said that was before Lake Myrtle.

Parks and Recreation Director McGhee said the comparable is everybody is at Lake Myrtle, or will be. There will be soccer, baseball, football soon to come – and softball is out in the outskirts. It is still our complex, and we still manage it, and they do not have a newer facility. They were the first one to get a newer facility. Right now it is in the design phase, trying to see if it is accommodating if we can actually do it. There is property right next to Polk County Sports Marketing, but it is not our property.

Board Member Myers said it is the County's.

Mr. McGhee said that is correct. It will be the only property that is left.

Board Member Hamann asked if the girls do relocate out to Lake Myrtle, could we build something out there on that property. We have a 99-year lease on that property. Maybe build pickleball courts out there?

Assistant City Manager Palmer reminded the Board that we are in a Community Redevelopment Agency meeting.

Board Member Myers said yes, we need to keep this within the Community Redevelopment Agency Area.

Parks and Recreation Director McGhee added that it would also be a hard visual to say it is ours, because it would be at a County complex.

Board Member Taylor Bogert said one of the nice things about pickleball is that it brings a lot of people down to the Community Center. If we had something by the tennis courts or in that area, it would bring more customers.

Assistant City Manager Palmer said we could look at this property to see how many pickleball courts it could accommodate in addition to the other uses. She suggested adding pickleball courts to the suggested projects list, she thinks it would fit in nicely with the other Community Redevelopment Agency projects we accomplished. And just get it on the list for consideration in the future. If it does not fit here, or we want to add more courts – we could definitely do that.

**Motion** by Jack Myers, seconded by Dorothea Taylor Bogert, to add pickleball courts to the suggested projects list. With the emphasis on the number one spot being the tennis court where there is that other property that we always wanted to acquire but have not been able to. Does that make sense to put it right there at the tennis courts?

Vice Chair Pospichal said the one thing that Auburndale has got going for itself with its pickleball courts is that they are inside. He has spent way too much time down at those pickleball courts, and everybody would come up and say it is so nice to come inside and play pickleball. The courts they have elsewhere are outside, and they say they fry their brains. We can discuss this all night long, and these are some real good ideas that we have thrown out there. Ms. Palmer, you have your marching orders, correct?

Assistant City Manager Palmer answered yes.

Vice Chair Pospichal said these are things we need to look at too, because there are people that want to be out in the sun and play outside.

Board Member Myers said he is not in any way shape or form advocating that we do away with the indoor courts. But you have 150 people down there with eight courts, the math does not work.

Vice Chair Pospichal said there are not enough opportunities for them all to play. It has grown into that.

Board Member Taylor Bogert reminded the Board that there is a motion and a second on the table. She said that at the Florida Redevelopment Association Conference this last year, - herself, Chair Harper, and Assistant City Manager Palmer took a tour of the pickleball courts in Holly Hills, Florida. They were covered as well. It was not hot.

Assistant City Manager Palmer said we are voting on adding pickleball courts to the suggested projects list, and also considering it for the skate park and dog park project.

Board Member Myers said he wants to look at putting them right beside the tennis courts. It could be managed by the Tennis Pro Shop.

Board Member Sterling suggested we make an offer on the appraised value for property next to the tennis courts.

Board Member Myers said we did an appraisal on it and he has a copy of it. It is old so you will have to go back and adjust for inflation.

Assistant City Manager Palmer said we can re-address it, and update the appraisal. She has seen the for sale sign. She has talked to the grandson or son several years ago, and they were not interested in the appraised value. We can see what the new appraised value is, and if they would be interested in selling to us.

Board Member Myers said he thinks it would be a good time to address it.

Upon vote, all ayes.

Assistant City Manager Palmer said to wrap up the presentation on the Capital Improvement Plan, we have an incentive loan program and we have incentive loan dollars scheduled for every single year. We have \$450,000 in that right now. She proposes we freeze putting money into that account and maybe replenish it in Fiscal Year 2024-2025. That is the only other change she has for the Capital Improvement Plan.

Board Member Myers said so if we get there and we are still flush with that loan incentive, we can move it out a year?

Assistant City Manager Palmer answered yes.

Board Member Myers said he would like to come back and revisit the loan incentive program. An example is the Ariana Hotel. To do a really major renovation on something like that, that has historic value to the town. \$50,000 is not a drop in the bucket, to incentivize somebody to do that. It is under contract now, and he hopes this person really does a good job with it. He thinks instances like that, if we have them in the future, where they can come to us and ask for more, to justify the improvement.

Board Member Taylor Bogert said based on the project amount. Putting \$5 million versus \$100,000 to renovate it is distinctive.

Board Member Cowie suggested a percentage of the total.

Board Member Hamann and Taylor Bogert asked if Ms. Palmer needed a motion, or if it is informational only.

Assistant City Manager Palmer said no, it is something staff can bring back if that is the consensus. We can look at either a new incentive program or tweaking the one we have for those large investment projects. The projects that we have had so far – the investment from the private side has been in the \$250,000 to \$300,000 range. If there is a million dollars or more, or whatever the thresholds are, we can do our research on other incentive programs throughout the state and bring those recommendations back to the Board.

She said this completes the presentation on the Capital Improvements Plan. We will bring this back to the Board next month for adoption.

Vice Chair Pospichal asked for public comment. There was no public comment.

Meeting adjourned at 8:41:41 p.m.

I HEREBY CERTIFY that the foregoing Minutes are true and correct.

Brandon Henry, City Clerk

Bully