

MARGATE COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY BOARD

REGULAR MEETING November 8, 2023

MINUTES

Present:

Joanne Simone
Antonio V. Arserio
Arlene R. Schwartz
Anthony N. Caggiano, Vice Chair (arrived 7:04 p.m.)
Tommy Ruzzano, Chair

Also Present:

Cale Curtis, Executive Director
Larry Vignola, Assistant Executive Director
David Tolces, Weiss Serota Helfman Cole & Bierman
Paul Volan, Executive Pastor, United Pentecostal Church of Cooper City
Tracy Lewis, Campus Pastor, Pentecostal Church of Coral Springs

The regular meeting of the Margate Community Redevelopment Agency having been properly noticed was called to order at 7:01 p.m., on Wednesday, November 8, 2023, by Chair Tommy Ruzzano. Roll call was taken. There was a moment of silence followed by the Pledge of Allegiance. The meeting was held in the City Commission Chambers and was also accessible virtually through Zoom technology.

1A. MINUTES FOR APPROVAL - (10/11/2023 Regular)

After David Tolces, Board Attorney, read the item title, Ms. Schwartz made the following motion, seconded by Ms. Simone:

MOTION: SO MOVE TO APPROVE

ROLL CALL: Ms. Simone, Yes; Mr. Arserio, Yes; Ms. Schwartz, Yes; Mr. Caggiano, Absent; Mr. Ruzzano, Yes. The motion passed 4-0.

2. PUBLIC DISCUSSION

Jonathan Kraljic, resident, said the current MCRA Event Policy stated users of MCRA property should be restricted to sponsors who had a business, a non-profit organization or religious institution in the City of Margate. He said the only time that the Board made exceptions to the policy and approved non-Margate based organizations was for the carnival. He asked the Board to read their policy before casting further votes.

Chair Ruzzano stated, for the record, that Vice Chair Caggiano had arrived at the meeting at 7:04 p.m.

Richard Zucchini, resident, commended the Board on the Covered Sports Field and suggested it would benefit further from having large fans installed on the east columns blowing westwards. Additionally, he suggested installing an updated audio system on the stage for use during events.

Tracy Van Winkle, resident, recommended moving the Winter Festival from Margate Boulevard to the Covered Sports Field at Banks Road. She said there was a lot of open space when the Fall Festival was held there, and it was not crowded at all.

3A. RESOLUTION 718: AMENDING THE FISCAL YEAR 2022-2023 AND FISCAL YEAR 2023-2024 ANNUAL BUDGETS

After David Tolces, Board Attorney, read the resolution title, Ms. Schwartz made the following motion, seconded by Mr. Arserio:

MOTION: SO MOVE TO APPROVE

ROLL CALL: Ms. Simone, Yes; Mr. Arserio, Yes; Ms. Schwartz, Yes; Mr. Caggiano, Yes; Mr. Ruzzano, Yes. The motion passed 5-0.

4A. DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: APPROVAL OF A TEMPORARY USE AGREEMENT FOR USE OF MCRA PROPERTY LOCATED AT 5701 MARGATE BOULEVARD TO HOLD A JESUS TENT REVIVAL

After David Tolces, Board Attorney, read the resolution title, Chair Ruzzano made the following motion, seconded by Ms. Schwartz for discussion:

MOTION: SO MOVE TO APPROVE

Chair Ruzzano said he was happy to put the item on the agenda so the petitioners could answer any of the Board's questions. Ms. Schwartz said she noticed on the meeting backup the churches were from Cooper City and Coral Springs and she wondered why they wanted to host the event in Margate instead of Coral Springs. She also stated Mr. Kraljic would continue to point out to the Board the current event policy precluded organizations that were not from the City of Margate from using MCRA property. Lastly, she said the intersection of Margate Boulevard and US 441 was a highly trafficked roadway and was often the scene of terrible accidents. She said the distraction of a 100-foot tent on that corner caused her great concern.

Paul Volan, Executive Pastor of United Pentecostal Church of Cooper City, responded that studies showed there was an epidemic of depression, anxiety and suicidality, and they wanted to create an outdoor event where they could provide encouragement to the community. He said that Margate just so happened to be closer to the Coral Springs campus.

Vice Chair Caggiano said Coral Springs had a lot of parks that were much closer to the Coral Springs church campus, and Ms. Schwartz noted Betty Stradling Park, in particular, was very close to their Coral Springs campus. She said the park, on Wiles Road, although well-travelled, did not have the traffic concerns of Margate Boulevard and US 441. Additionally, there was still the issue of the event policy to consider.

Mr. Volan said he was not personally familiar with that park, and he did not want to speak to the validity of the event policy. However, he asked for the same consideration be given to their not-for-profit organization as was given to the recent carnival, especially as their event was for the benefit of the community.

Mr. Arserio said his concern was with the location of the event. He said he had nothing against the petitioners present that night but, in the past, they had groups who had ill intentions that wanted to use the same lot for the wrong reasons. He suggested the petitioners would be much happier to use the beautiful Covered Sports Field as a venue for their event.

Tracy Lewis, Campus Pastor, Pentecostal Church of Coral Springs, said he was also a resident of Margate. He said he was there alongside another resident, Philip Rodolph, who was also a member of his church. He said they had several members of their church that lived in Margate and that was one reason why they wanted to have the revival in Margate. The other reason was the centrality of the location on the corner of Margate Boulevard and US 441. It was on the main thoroughfare and the parking was more than adequate. It was his preference to hold the revival at that location rather than in a side neighborhood where the Covered Sports Field was located.

Mr. Arserio restated the proposed location was a prime picketing location for protests and if they got a group with ill intentions, they would have to allow them use of the property, as ugly as it sounded. So, he said, he was against the idea, for that reason.

Rich Zucchini, resident, said only religious organizations that had brick-and-mortar locations and congregations that resided in the City should be allowed to hold revivals in Margate.

Jonathan Kraljic, resident, pointed out the applicant was not a Margate based organization and did not meet the requirements of the event policy. He said he agreed with Board Member Arserio's recommendation of hosting the event at the Covered Sports Field as it was shaded, and big events had been held there previously.

ROLL CALL: Ms. Simone, No; Mr. Arserio, No; Ms. Schwartz, No; Mr. Caggiano, No; Mr. Ruzzano, Yes. The motion failed 4-1.

5. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Cale Curtis, Executive Director, provided the following capital project updates:

Chevy Chase Plaza Improvements – He said he was looking at design and cost estimates to replace the north section of the roof area. Also, the cost estimates for long-term revitalization of the plaza and parking lot improvements had been coming in but they had well exceeded the Board's intentions for that area considering the plans for redevelopment.

Therefore, he had been working on plans to provide an aesthetic improvement for the short lifespan for the plaza. As soon as they were available, he would report back to the Board.

Serino Park - The park had been completed except for the issue of the standing water in the retention area, which had been resolved. Once the area had been allowed to dry out, they would re-sod the retention area.

Margate Boulevard and Southgate Boulevard Improvement Projects were in the permitting phase. He said once permits were approved, projects would go out for bid and construction of those improvements would begin.

He reported a budget transfer to the Board in the amount of \$14,000 to cover the 2023 tax bill on Chevy Chase and Ace Plazas. He said the property taxes had increased, primarily due to an increase in property values, and the fact the tenant bays were no longer vacant which meant that the MCRA had lost exemptions which all resulted in higher tax bills.

Lastly, he wanted to report the City Center Development was now officially listed on the open market. He said the property was listed through Colliers and the Board would start to see real estate signs on sites such as long-term leases available for development opportunities.

5A. TENANT UPDATES

Vice Chair Caggiano asked if the property manager was dealing with the tenants that were late on their rent.

Jim Nardi, Advanced Asset Management, said he had been in contact with two of the four tenants and did not expect to have any issues. He said after the 10th of the month, a three-day notice would be issued to those tenants that had not yet paid and the process would go from there. He agreed there had been some tenants that habitually received three-day notices.

CHAIR RUZZANO REQUESTED A SHORT RECESS AT 7:28PM; THE MEETING RECONVENED AT 7:35PM.

After the recess there was a presentation where the Executive Director, Cale Curtis, Vice Chair Caggiano and Mr. Arserio received plaques and gifts from the Board in recognition of their recent graduation from the Florida Redevelopment Academy. Chair Ruzzano said he wanted to recognize the hard work it took to attend and pass five classes through the Academy. Vice Chair Caggiano thanked the Chair and the Board and said the classes were run through the Florida League of Cities in conjunction with Florida Atlantic University. He said in addition to the five classes, recertification took place every two years, and it was a wonderful opportunity for further education.

6. BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

David Tolces, MCRA Board Attorney, congratulated Board Member Arserio, Vice Chair Caggiano and Mr. Curtis on their awards and said they were well deserved. Additionally, he asked for a shade session to discuss the New Urban vs. Margate CRA lawsuit and the latest update in the case while the litigation was still pending, because once the legal action ended, they would not be able to have shade sessions anymore.

Chair Ruzzano asked for clarification as to who was paying for the litigation and Board Attorney Tolces replied the MCRA's insurance carrier was paying for the defense of the case. Mr. Arserio also asked if he was correct in stating a motion for attorney's fees was pending based on the outcome of the lawsuit to which Board Attorney Tolces agreed that he was correct.

Ms. Simone: She asked the Board if there was anything that could be done to stop the pig racing at the Fair. She said when the Board approved the Fair, there were no animals at the Fair and now she had heard there was going to be pig racing.

Board Attorney Tolces said the MCRA authorized use of the property only. He said it was the City Commission that approved the Temporary Use Permit (TUP) for the event; therefore, a commissioner who was on the prevailing side would have to make a motion at the City Commission meeting to reconsider that action. Ms. Simone said she hoped the City heard her loud and clearly and she expected Animal Control to be at the event every day checking up on the animals. Additionally, she said a resident had called her about the dangerous condition of the pavers on Margate Boulevard and US 441. With the upcoming Fair and Winter Festival, she was concerned about people crossing over and walking on loose and unsteady pavers and wanted to ensure the safety of the residents in the area.

Cale Curtis, Executive Director, assured her that he was aware of the condition of the paver crosswalks. He said they were a part of the Margate Boulevard Improvement Project that was currently in permitting. However, he would walk the site with staff to mitigate any sort of issue with the pavers in the meantime.

Mr. Arserio: None

Ms. Schwartz: She said the Trunk or Treat event went very well and reminded people that the Veterans Day ceremony was taking place at Veterans Park on Saturday, November 11, at 10:30 a.m. Additionally, she wanted to address the fact that several trailers had moved into the lot across the street, in advance of the permitted timeframe allowed for the Fair. Chair Ruzzano agreed with her. Mr. Curtis said he would take it up with the Fair holder and their counsel.

Vice Chair Caggiano: He said the Fall Festival had been a fabulous event and he also wanted to mention the Veterans Day event which was very important. He said he liked where the Winter Festival was located on Margate Boulevard because it showcased the City and continued to show that Margate put its best foot forward.

Chair Ruzzano: He wished his son, Thomas Jr., a happy 17th birthday. He then spoke about the animal situation and how controversial it had become. He said he had been asked by a local group if the MCRA could provide a space for an animal shelter in Margate. He said he knew the MCRA had a 3,000 square foot building that had been re-roofed recently, but which needed a complete build-out that could be suitable if the Board were agreeable to looking into the idea.

Vice Chair Caggiano said as much as he liked the idea, he would prefer the City have a program that gave out animal tags or QR readers for free so people could register their animals online and then be able to locate them if they got lost. He said it would be more cost effective for the City than what the Chair proposed. Additionally, he did not want to be put in a position to decide what to do in the case of an overflow of animals.

Chair Ruzzano clarified that the group would be running the shelter, not the City, and he wanted to see if the Board would be amenable to allowing the group to rent out the vacant space. Ms. Simone said she was in favor of looking into this group and their ability to run an organized shelter.

Mr. Curtis suggested the Chair put him in touch with the group and he would talk with them about the building that was available. He said as the building presently stood it needed a complete build-out which might not work for the group.

Vice Chair Caggiano said he would also like to know how the group planned on financing the situation.

Ms. Schwartz asked that Animal Control inspect the Fair on the first night that it opened for business and if anything was found to be improper, the animals should be sent home. The Board were all in agreement that Animal Control should walk through the Fair at least every other day.

There being no additional business, the meeting adjourned at 8:08 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Transcribed by Fiona Christmas, CRA Coordinator

Tommy Ruzzano, Chair