

The City Commission of the City of Fernandina Beach, Florida, met in a Work Session on Monday, January 11, 2011 at 5:57 pm in the City Commission Chambers. Present were Mayor Susan Steger presiding, Vice-Mayor Tim Poynter, Commissioners Jeffrey Bunch, Eric Childers, and Arlene Filkoff. Also present were City Manager Michael Czymbor and City Clerk Mary Mercer.

Mayor Steger called the meeting to order and dispensed with normal formalities.

DISCUSSION WITH CITY STAFF AND THE AMELIA ISLAND-FERNANDINA RESTORATION FOUNDATION REGARDING "FORWARD FERNANDINA", A PROPOSAL AND PROCESS TO ADDRESS THE COMMISSION'S DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION GOAL:

City Manager Czymbor explained that two years ago the City Commission had a goal to develop a five year plan for the revitalization of downtown, and in doing that staff looked a number of things including the revitalization of the infrastructure downtown. He stated that staff noted that downtown was more than just infrastructure with the waterfront, 8th Street, Centre Street, the Historic District, and adjoining neighborhoods. He pointed out that over the last few month's staff has been meeting with Mr. Kaufman, Ms. Thamm, and others to talk about a comprehensive process with a specific timetable and goals to develop this plan. He explained that the focus of this meeting was to go over the Vision 2000 plan and what has been accomplished; and go over what was proposed in the Vision 2020 plan as well as what has been accomplished or was being worked on.

Community Development Department (CDD) Director Marshall McCrary introduced Mr. Adam Kaufman the Vice-President of the Amelia Island/Fernandina Restoration Foundation; Ms. Susan Mowery the treasurer of the Restoration Foundation; and Ms. Suanne Thamm an ex-officio member of the Restoration Foundation. He provided details of the steps leading to "Forward Fernandina" which included Vision 2000, Vision 2020, Mr. Ed McMahon's visit, and meetings with staff and members of the Restoration Foundation as contained in his PowerPoint Presentation. He presented a slide showing that Vision 2020 built on Vision 2000 and repackaged it. He pointed out that the City has made progress and many items are ongoing with some of them in place. He commented that these are all stand alone projects and there needs to be some decisions made so that the City doesn't make piecemeal decisions that don't work together in the end to create the community we want. He stated that this is smart economically, because it is smart to justify the expenditures. He explained that another part of this is the work on the Comprehensive Plan update that has input from the community and visioning exercises. He stated that they felt from reviewing these documents all of these things work together and it is important to look at all the linkages between downtown and the Historic District, the waterfront, the 8th Street gateway into town, and the surrounding downtown neighborhoods.

City Planner Adrienne Dessy pointed out that in 1999 when the plan was developed keeping the Courthouse as a focal point downtown was relevant and today that may be the Post Office. She commented that there are similar ideas about the waterfront that hasn't changed a lot in the last ten years. She stated that the City has been designated as a Waterfronts Community with the State, which demonstrates the City's commitment to this area. She pointed out that Vision 2020 didn't say a whole lot about 8th Street, but it was called out. She commented that it was also called out by the Historic District Council and Mr. McMahon that the entryway is key to the community. She explained that surrounding neighborhoods include the areas that are connected to downtown and Centre Street as well as the Southside Neighborhood and the neighborhoods off Atlantic Avenue, because these areas all tie into downtown. She pointed out that there are interconnected recurring themes of community, design/aesthetics, holistic approach, economic development, and tourism. She clarified that you can't talk about one without starting to think about aspects of the other themes. She stated that progress has been accomplished not only by the City, but from efforts from a variety of other people (i.e. public sector, private entities, and community based efforts).

Mr. Kaufman thanked City staff, Ms. Thamm, Ms. Mowery, and other members of the Restoration Foundation for their support during this process. He pointed out that this is just the beginning of the conversation about establishing direction and aligning City and community goals. He stated that if the City Commission sanctions this effort they intend to take this to a variety of community agencies. He requested the City Commission think about how to create a method for public input that involves the community as a whole. He explained that they were talking about a planning effort to create a strategic plan that defines where the City wants to go and what to accomplish over time. He pointed out that the Amelia Island/Fernandina Restoration Foundation was chartered by the State in 1972. He commented that it was not uncommon for cities and communities to rely upon an outside agency that is not-for-profit to help monitor or be the catalyst for the development of a strategic plan. He explained that when the Restoration Foundation wrote to the City they asked the City Commission: *what their vision of the City was for the next five years; what difference do we want to make; what problems are we addressing; which critical issues must we respond to; what capacity do we have; where should we allocate resources; and what should our priorities be.* He commented that once the

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City Commission and the community answers those questions then we can decide what our immediate objectives are going to be. He stated that they are going to propose a Resolution to the City Commission and suggest that the City appoint a liaison.

Commissioner Childers commented that he prioritized the items to look at the riverfront, 8th Street, Historic District, and surrounding neighborhoods. He stated that he also wanted to include in these discussions the Utility Department and the idea of exemptions to help revitalize existing structures. He referred to permitting and compliance and commented that the City had to look at streamlining everywhere that the City can. He stated that he wanted to look at making revitalization attractive to private enterprise as well as coming up with a way to fund riverfront improvements. He noted that dredging the Marina and riverfront improvements were in the budget, but these improvements are very small increments. He suggested the City consider a bond issue to address issues that would make a significant difference to the community in the next five years. Commissioner Bunch explained that he had been working with the City Manager on the idea of a bond to go to the voters for these types of improvements. He clarified that the bond he was proposing would be for specific projects. There was some discussion about this and the idea of improving the curb appeal coming in from 8th Street and coming down to the waterfront.

Commissioner Filkoff pointed out that the City Commission had to figure out what we want to do and why we want to do it so that there is a framework for the community to understand where we are trying to go. She stated that then we can worry about how we are going to do it and what can be implemented in what kind of timeframe. She explained that she thought the waterfront was a priority, but questioned if everything can be implemented that has been designed for the waterfront. She suggested to not jump too far ahead before figuring out what we are trying to accomplish. After a brief discussion, Commissioner Childers supported the riverfront as the first priority and 8th Street as his second priority. He stated that from there it would be the Historic District, library, Post Office, and stormwater improvements. He noted that there was \$250,000 for dredging and \$347,000 for other improvements for the waterfront. He pointed out that the railroad rehabilitation is \$275,000 and the comfort station is \$65,000. He suggested moving forward with these improvements and making some decisions on 8th Street. Mr. Kaufman pointed out that if the City didn't have a plan then it would be a little bit here and a little bit there. Mayor Steger questioned if there was any hope for revitalizing 8th Street and what could be done to change 8th Street. CDD Director McCrary stated that it is a multi-purpose arterial and the State has designated it as a strategic intermodal transit element, since it links the interstate to the port. He pointed out that the State has a vested interest to ensure that the roadway continues to function to move vehicles. He explained that the City controls the zoning, types of land use, encourages development options, and incentivizes reuse. He commented that he would like to see something to make 8th Street more pedestrian friendly, but due to the scale of the traffic there it may make that difficult to accomplish. He stated that in the EAR process staff has laid out the groundwork for corridors that are strategic to the City and important for redevelopment options. He clarified that the City was setting up the regulatory structure to try to facilitate what the City wants to have. Vice-Mayor Poynter commented that Mr. McMahon had said that other communities have offered dollars in a matching fund to help revitalize worn out structures. He pointed out that this was a way to leverage City dollars against private dollars and the community will get the benefit. He explained that going down 8th Street there are a lot of businesses that for not a lot of money they could be cleaned up and not have them be such an eyesore. Mayor Steger commented that a few buildings have been fixed up. There was some discussion about the idea of having design guidelines noting that along 8th Street where the City wants to encourage redevelopment to have a template for what the City was looking for.

Mayor Steger commented that she thought the first priority would be the parking lot at the base of Centre Street to keep that main street looking ok. CDD Director McCrary stated that it is good to develop a strategic plan to bring all these pieces together so that when private development occurs all the pieces are in place. Mr. Kaufman pointed out that the point of this discussion was to get the City Commission to buy into this process and to address things that are important. Vice-Mayor Poynter expressed his concern about the City Commission sending people out to get all the information and then not funding anything. He noted that a lot of hard work goes into these proposals and then the City doesn't fund for all sorts of reasons. He stated that it was the perfect time to stimulate the City's economy by doing work in the community. He commented that he rather not have a Commission liaison, but have the Restoration Foundation report to the City Commission on a regular basis. He questioned if the City Commission was willing to fund this. Commissioner Childers commented that the only realistic funding source he saw was a bond referendum. There was some discussion about this and the fact that some projects would not be able to be completed in one budget year. Concerns were raised that there would never be enough money to complete the projects. The City Commission had further discussion about how to proceed to help contribute to the community's economy and well-being.

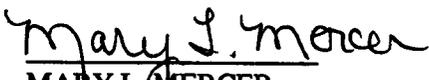
Commissioner Filkoff questioned if there was not a formal assignment from the City Commission onto the team that is doing this does the City run the risk of having a new Commission saying that is not a serious effort. Commissioner Bunch stated that he didn't think so. He commented that by having only one Commissioner on any board that Commissioner could come back and slant their report to the Commission. Vice-Mayor Poynter pointed out that Commissioners also couldn't talk with each other until there is a meeting. He again supported the idea of the Restoration Foundation reporting to the City Commission and then the entire Commission gets the information from the source at the same time. Mr. Kaufman explained that their plan was to come back at least quarterly and have a continuing conversation with the City Commission. Commissioner Childers stated that he would like to have it monthly, because that would help maintain the momentum rather than have people lose interest. Mr. Kaufman suggested that the City Commission host a meeting at the Atlantic Recreation Center since there is interest in the community and it is important to create a forum where everyone can come down to address the City Commission. He stated that when they get into the planning process the Restoration Foundation has some resources to pay for someone to facilitate as we begin to look at a plan. Mayor Steger explained that she saw the Restoration Foundation as facilitators to help get a plan together to accomplish the things that we want that are important for the City. Mr. Kaufman stated that they want to be the catalyst for that discussion. Mayor Steger pointed out that the meetings would be posted and open to the public. She inquired if Mr. Kaufman saw any problem with not having a Commission representative. Mr. Kaufman stated that it was up to the City Commission and commented that this is a small town and we see each other so there are no secrets about what the issues are. He explained that they don't intend to be closed about it and pointed out that the News Leader, local churches, and various others are important stakeholders in this discussion. Mayor Steger inquired how long this process would take. Mr. Kaufman requested to have a week to discuss this with the other members of the Restoration Foundation. He stated that strategic plans in Florida and elsewhere for cities of similar size have used telephone surveys. He commented that a suggestion was made to contact local universities to help get feedback. He pointed out that the strategic plan has to be integrated into the budget planning process. Commissioner Filkoff commented that she liked the idea of the City Commission meeting in a Town Hall setting at the recreation center to kick this off. Commissioner Bunch noted that everyone would have to be educated to sell the plan. Mayor Steger explained that the City Commission wasn't reinventing the wheel, but was fine tuning the vision plan to prioritize things. *The consensus of the City Commission was to not have a Commission representative to this body.*

The consensus of the City Commission was to come back with a Resolution for the Restoration Foundation to facilitate this process and to work with City staff. Mr. Kaufman presented a draft Resolution for the City Commission to review.

Mayor Steger commented that she learned from Mr. McMahon about the importance of libraries downtown. She stated that she was now convinced that the library needs to be downtown and she felt that other Commissioners also believe that. Mr. Kaufman pointed out that it makes sense to give the community a couple weeks to reflect on the questions that were provided to the City Commission.

ADJOURNMENT: There being no further business to come before the Commission, the meeting was adjourned at 7:11 pm.

ATTEST:


 MARY L. MERCER
 City Clerk


 SUSAN HARDEE STEGER
 Mayor-Commissioner