

Corrected MINUTES
WHIDDEN INDUSTRIAL PARK OWNERS SPECIAL MEETING
CHARLOTTE HARBOR CRA Advisory Committee
Wednesday, April 30, 2014 – 5:30 p.m.
Charlotte Harbor Event Center, 75 Taylor Street, Punta Gorda, FL 33950

Members Present

James Herston, *Chairman*
Charlotte Ventola, *Secretary*
Michael Haymans

Staff Present

Debrah Forester, Redevelopment Manager
Kathy Knee, Recorder

Members Absent

Garland Wilson, *Vice Chairman*
Nathaniel Cooley
Susan Dupper
Delmar Wooden

I. Welcome

Charlotte Harbor CRA Advisory Committee Chairman Jim Herston welcomed everyone to the April 30, 2014 Whidden Industrial Park Owners Meeting which began at 5:30 p.m. at the Charlotte Harbor Event Center, 75 Taylor Street, Punta Gorda, FL. Mr. Herston asked everyone to introduce themselves.

II. Whidden Park - Discussion

Mike Haymans gave a brief history of the CRA and its TIF funding. The CRA was created due to blight in the area and tax increment financing was created so those funds could be used for projects within the CRA. The US41, Bayshore and Melbourne areas were looked at and some improvements have been done. Money and effort went toward sewer facilities. Whidden Industrial Park has failing roads and drainage issues. Research has recently been done to determine the history of the existing roads in Whidden Industrial Park. Questions remain: Are the problems so bad? Are property owners willing to pay for improvements?

Jim Herston reported there are public and private roadways within the Industrial Park. Mr. Herston displayed a map of the area and noted that roads to the left of Whidden Boulevard were dedicated to the public but not accepted by the County. The project plans have been found but the signed construction plans still need to be located. It was suggested that someone may need to go back to the original engineering company. Southwest Florida Water Management permits have been found. The roads need to be brought up to standard before the County can accept them for maintenance. Once accepted the roads would probably go into one of the MSBUs. The opposite side, to the right of Whidden Boulevard, is more complicated. These are private easements and not public roadways so they cannot go into public maintenance. Discussion followed and included the following comments/questions:

- Can the penny tax be used? Only if the roads are public.
- ~~If construction plans are found, it would then be up to the County Engineer to accept the roadways at old standards or require that they be brought up to current standards.~~ approved construction drawings are found, regardless of what year the documents were approved, they would be the basis for acceptance review as opposed to bringing things up to current standards.
- Once the roads are dedicated, the turn over process needs to be initiated by the developer.
- The SWFWMD permit is for the condo side.

- The easements on the condo side need to be identified.
- 100% of the owners on the condo side would need to be in agreement.
- A flash drive with Whidden Industrial Park historical documentation was offered to anyone interested.
- Status of condo association is not known.
- Plat side had an architectural control committee established but its current status is not clear.
- The County cannot accept roads that are not up to standard.
- The property owners are ultimately responsible for moving forward.
- The utility map is included on the flash drive. The County does have a mandatory connection requirement if a sewer line is in close proximity. The policy is not always enforced.
- Condo is connected to sewer but not everyone on the platted side is connected.
- Subdivisions are governed by the County; condominiums are governed by the State.
- The condo easement is for the condo owners not the general public. The condo side can block off their roads; public roads cannot be blocked.
- Options: Improve only the platted side; improve only Whidden Boulevard.
- There are condo associations within the condo association. Some are active but not the main one.
- Associations can create a budget for infrastructure improvements.
- Someone needs to take the lead and reactivate the association.
- Whidden Boulevard is part of the plat.

III. Next Steps

Mr. Herston noted the next step would be for the property owners to review the historical information and then each group would need to figure out how they want to move forward. It was suggested that property owners hire an engineering firm to find the original construction plans, determine the status of the current roads and what is needed to upgrade them to standards.

The CRA Advisory Committee will help facilitate. The committee and staff has helped identify the problem and offered solutions. Many in the audience are part of condo association and someone may want to contact Mr. Lorah who might be helpful in locating the master agreement.

From an engineering point of view, if work was to begin on Whidden Boulevard, starting points would be: obtain a survey for boundaries and existing conditions within the right of way; soil borings to determine existing base; and a plan to bring the road to standards. Have the County engineer determine if the acceptable standards would be based on the approved plans or current standards.

Mark Hilliard, a property owner, suggested a band-aid for 8-10 years at a cost of \$100,000 be considered. He distributed a proposal from Bonness Inc. which would put a 1-inch skin on the Whidden Park roads. Mr. Hilliard asked if the County would allow this band-aid approach and was told it would be at the discretion of the County Engineer. It was requested that the County Engineer look into the possibility of skinning the roads in Whidden Park. Before the condo side could be included the association would need to be active.

Whidden Park has been identified by the CRA Advisory Committee as a priority area. However, TIF funding is currently not available. Staff continues to look for potential grant opportunities but many grants are tied to job creation. Staff has submitted improving the

roads and drainage in Whidden Park as a potential project for the BCC to consider when funds are available from the BP Oil Spill settlement. After Charley, there was CDBG money available for several projects including the façade grant and sewer improvements.

Jim Herston offered to create a spreadsheet showing ownership, lot size and property value so it can be best decided how to share expenses.

Debrah Forester noted that Whidden Park is part of Enterprise Zone and informational flyers are available. Please take one for future reference or share with others in Whidden Park.

The consensus around the room was that another meeting should be held in about 60 days.

IV. Adjournment

Mr. Herston thanked everyone for coming. There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 6:53 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Charlotte Ventola, Secretary

Approved: 06/02/2014

/kmk