



**December 18, 2013 Meeting Notes
11:30 AM – 1:00 PM
Willie Hinton Neighborhood Resource Center**

At 11:40 AM the seventh meeting of the LRCent Committee was called to order by presiding Co-Chair Gary Smith.

The following Committee Members were present during the meeting: Dr. Sybil Jordan Hampton, Gary Smith, Chrystal Gray, Dr. Anika Whitfield, Steve Strickland, Kyle Demilt, Peter McKinney O'Connor, Mursheerah Tharpe, Donald Shellabarger, Charles Blake, Khayyam Eddings and Troy Laha

Also present were: Mayor Mark Stodola, City Manager Bruce Moore, Assistant City Manager Bryan Day and other City Staff

Approval of Minutes:

Mr. Smith opened the meeting by entertaining a motion to approve the minutes from the September 18, 2013 meeting. Mr. Demilt made the motion and it was seconded by Mr. Laha. The minutes were approved without objection.

Revenue and Capital Projects as of August 31, 2012

Gary introduced Finance Director Sara Lenehan to give a summary update of sales tax revenues and expenditures through November 2013. Mrs. Lenehan highlighted that a total of \$34,251,992 had been collected year to date which was down by -0.03% as compared to last year. Since the collection of the tax began in 2012 a total of \$80,694,316 has been collected.

Mrs. Lenehan also went over all of the projects that are currently underway and noted that most of the 2012 Public Works Projects have been completed and closed. A total of \$55,253,781 has been spent 2012-2013.

Question:

Mr. Smith asked why the state revenue was more the City's collections. Mrs. Lenehan explained that the state sales tax is 6 ½% and that Little Rock and other municipalities are impacted by the streamline sales tax as well as the rebates.

Recognitions

City Manager Bruce Moore thank the group for their service as the second year of the sales tax comes to an end. He reiterated that staff is still being somewhat conservative moving forward due to the slow revenues. While the land has been purchased for a new fire station in Southwest Little Rock it can't be built until there is enough revenue to hire twenty-four fire fighters to staff it.

He also reminded the group that this is a ten year process and that staff has moved forward with funding some key projects that were important to citizens and to each department.

Mayor Stodola also indicated that the projects that were laid out as priorities will be completed sooner. He also said the Bass Pro and the new shopping center that will be opening should help generate additional revenue.

Questions:

Mr. Shellabarger asked if Bass Pro would have enough economic impact to help build the southwest fire station. Mr. Moore again said that the issue was staffing it.

Dr. Hampton asked if it would be safe for Bass Pro to have the fire station open. Mr. Moore indicated that there is a fire station that can respond to an emergency. The new one would be to respond to residential emergencies.

General End of the Year Report:

Assistant City Manager Bryan Day briefly went through a hand out that was given to the group highlighting many of the accomplishments that have been made over the past two years.

Public Safety

Questions:

Dr. Whitfield asked about the mixed use space being proposed in the 12th Street Station when and how it would be leased. Chief Thomas indicated that after completion of the building some of it would have to be used for police functions. But eventually there will be mixed use space and the as to how it would be done hasn't yet been determined.

Mr. Smith asked for clarification on the number of grant officer kept and new officers. Police Chief Stuart Thomas explained that twenty-seven grant positions were retained and that fifty-two positions were being filled.

Mr. O'Connor asked if the Police Department was on target to fulfill its hiring goals. Chief Thomas indicated that everything was on schedule.

Public Works

Questions:

Dr. Whitfield had a question about the projects that are scheduled. Public Works Director Jon Honeywell indicated that many of the projects for 2013-2015 are under design and he explained the process and timeframe.

Mr. Smith asked if the sales tax dollars were combined with the bond money for many of the projects, Mr. Honeywell said yes because it is more practical and cheaper have contractors do multiple projects at the same time.

Dr. Whitfield asked if residents are notified of when these projects are going to take place. Mr. Honeywell indicated that a public hearing will be held for each project.

Economic Development

Mayor Stodola highlighted that the \$500,000 given to Welspun Tubular was because it created 200 new jobs and will help expand their rail system at the port.

Questions:

Dr. Whitfield asked if the Technology Park was going to dislocate anyone using eminent domain. Mr. Day indicated that there is no current mean to use eminent domain. Mayor Stodola said that there are no plans to take home now that downtown property has been identified.

Dr. Whitfield asked if the City had plans to buy the Sears property once their lease expires. Mayor Stodola said that the City has no control over what private developers do.

Dr. Whitfield asked what the relationship was between the Chamber and the City. Mayor Stodola indicated that the City contracts with the Chamber to help recruit businesses and create new jobs in Little Rock.

Mr. Shellabarge asked if the City would commit any more than the \$22 million for the Tech Park. Mayor Stodola said no, it was a public private partnership and that they would have to raise any additional funds.

Information Technology

Question:

Mr. Smith had a question regarding IT updates and what it has meant. Information Technology Director Randy Foshee explained that there are updates being made to the system, but the demand for storage continues to grow and will need to be addressed. He explained the work that will be done in 2014. Once major accomplishment has been replacing very old PC's.

Parks & Recreation

Question:

Ms. Tharpe asked when the construction of the West Central Community Center would begin. Mr. Day indicated that it is going through the design phase and construction should begin in 2014.

Other Items

Dr. Hampton staff know how much she appreciated their professionalism and support. Mr. Smith echoed her sentiments and praised everyone for their hard work and dedication.

Mayor Stodola announced that Gary Smith would be resigning as co-chair because he was had been elected the chairman of the board for the Little Rock Regional Chamber of Commerce. He thanked him for his service as co-chair of the LRCent committee

Next Meeting:

The next scheduled 2014 schedule was handed out.

There were no further questions or comments and the meeting was adjourned at 12:45pm.