



March 19, 2014 Meeting Notes
11:30 AM – 1:00 PM
Willie Hinton Neighborhood Resource Center

At 11:40 AM the eighth meeting of the LRcent Committee was called to order by presiding Co-Chair Peter McKinney O'Connor.

Committee Members present during the meeting were: Dr. Anika Whitfield, Steve Strickland, Kyle Demilt, Mursheerah Tharpe, Donald Shellabarger, Charles Blake and Troy Laha

Committee Members Not Present were: Chrystal Gray and Khayyam Eddings

Also present were: Mayor Mark Stodola (stayed for the beginning of the meeting), City Manager Bruce Moore, and other City Staff

Approval of Minutes:

Mr. O'Connor opened the meeting by entertaining a motion to approve the minutes from the December 18, 2013 meeting. Mr. Blake made the motion and it was seconded by Mr. Mr. Shellabarger. The minutes were approved without objection.

General Financial Report

Mr. O'Connor introduced Finance Director Sara Lenehan to give a summary update of sales tax revenues and expenditures through December of 2013. Mrs. Lenehan highlighted that a total of \$46,788,459 had been collected year to date which was up by – 0.75% as compared to last year. Since the collection of the tax began in 2012 a total of \$93,230,784 has been collected.

Mrs. Lenehan also presented a list of Public Works Capital projects that are underway in each ward. As of December 31, 2013 a total of \$1,901,034 has been expended on these projects.

LRCent Progress Public Awareness Campaign

Mr. O'Connor asked for a presentation from the City's Communication and Marketing Manager, Ben Thielemire regarding the awareness campaign. Mr. Thielemire explained the launch of media efforts to help get the word out on progress that has been made around the City using sales tax dollars. These outreach methods included creating short videos of each Department Director, Mayor, City Manager, Citizens and Co-Chair expressing how the City has been positively impacted over the past two years.

A summary video is being aired on the City's access channel and there are also links to YouTube where they can be viewed. These are all efforts to present to the public the progress that has been made.

Departmental Updates: (Not every department had updates to report at this time)

Department of Housing & Neighborhood Programs

Housing and Neighborhood Programs Director briefly reported that all of the additional code enforcement positions for 2013 had been filled, however other vacancies had occurred due to turnover. Two Animal Control Officer Positions had also been filled by February, 2014, but one resigned.

The Little Rock Land Bank continues to acquire properties and is working with a developer who is interested in a large number of Land Bank Lots.

Department of Information Technology

Information Technology Director Randy Foshee reported that upgrades continue to be made to the City's technology infrastructure and is coming to completion. The Second Data Center should be completed in 2014.

A new phone system bid will go out in 2014 to replace the current system which was installed in 1997. All of these updates will total approximately \$3,225,469.

Department of Community Programs

Community Programs Director Dorothy Nayles indicated that the re-entry program was expanding training slots to four departments, there has been an increase in job placement, and that the sidewalk program had been awarded by Arkansas Business, City of Distinction Award.

The evening career center pilot program is set to begin in March 2014 and last until June. There will be classes in Computer Assisted Design, welding, auto mechanics and GED.

Question & Follow-Up:

Mr. Strickland indicated that he would like a comparison to other programs in the state/nation that we could determine our success rate for job placement.

Department of Fleet Services

Fleet Services Director Wendell Jones briefly went over a list of fleet purchase so far in 2014 which included two (2) salt spreaders and two (2) snow plows for the Public Works Department and four (4) vehicles for the Police Department.

Department of Parks & Recreation

Parks and Recreation Director Truman Tolefree reported that an architect and construction manager had been selected for the design of the West Central Community Center and Pool. Construction has begun on four (4) new soccer fields at the Natural Steps Ball Complex and are expected to be completed in April 2014.

Staff has started making site preparations in War Memorial Park for the restoration of Coleman Creek. Documents have been prepared for bid.

Little Rock Zoo

Zoo Director Mike Blakely stated that several exhibits had been finished. The latest exhibit that has opened is the Tiger Cub exhibit which was over \$200,000.

Question:

Mr. Strickland asked if the Zoo had seen an increase in attendance. Mr. Blakely said that they have seen an increase last year they had approximately 3000,000 in attendance and so far their numbers have been up compared to the same time as the previous year.

Mr. Shellabarger asked why North Little Rock and the State doesn't pay a portion for Zoo operations since they both benefit from it. Mr. Bruce Moore indicated that there have been unsuccessful efforts made to get the State Legislature to allocate funds, but there has been some enterprise funds to help with funding.

Department of Public Works

Public Works Director Jon Honeywell reminded the group that the City board approved a list of Capital Projects for 2013-2015, each ward has been allocated \$2,600,000. Staff is currently working to select design engineering firms and public meetings have begun to allow for citizen review and comment.

Mr. Honeywell handed out a list of all of the 2013-2015 which indicates the current status of each project.

Questions:

Mr. Shellabarger asked if there was funding for speed humps. Mr. Honeywell indicated that there is about \$50,000 for speed humps and that there is a process in which citizens could request them.

Little Rock Police Department

Police Chief Stuart Thomas reported that the public safety radio system upgrade is nearing completion and should be finalized and fully functioning by the summer. The 12th Street Station is under construction and is expected to be completed in the summer of 2014. After much negotiating, Staff and the City Manager have just about reached an agreement to move forward with initiating plans for the renovation of the Josephine Pankey Education Center to house a West Little Rock Police Station.

There have been six (6) recruit classes since 2013 with sixty-two (62) graduates who have joined the force. There are currently nineteen (19) vacant position in the 911/311 Communications Call Center that they are actively trying to fill.

Questions/ Follow-Up:

Mr. Strickland asked how many officers leave the department every year. Chief Thomas indicated that on average approximately twenty (20) to thirty (30).

Mr. Laha thanked Chief Thomas and City Manager Moore for their hard work and dedication in negotiating the deal that was made regarding the Josephine Pankey Educational Center.

Dr. Whitfield asked when the mixed use space in the 12th Street Station be available. Chief Thomas explained that it will take time before it is available due to the need to move some other operational functions into the building from downtown.

Dr. Whitfield congratulated the Chief on his upcoming retirement.

Other Items

City Manager Bruce Moore recognized Dorothy Nayles who will be retiring and this will be her last meeting. He said that she has done a remarkable job and will be missed.

Mr. suggested that if the group wanted they could take a tour of the 12th Street Station after the next meeting.

There were no further questions or comments and the meeting was adjourned at 12:20pm.