

City of Fort Lauderdale

City Hall
100 N. Andrews Avenue
Fort Lauderdale, FL 33301
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Meeting Minutes - DRAFT

Tuesday, May 13, 2014

12:00 PM

**Joint Workshop with Beach Redevelopment Advisory Board - D.C.
Alexander Park Renovations
City Commission Conference Room**

CITY COMMISSION WORKSHOP

FORT LAUDERDALE CITY COMMISSION

JOHN P. "JACK" SEILER Mayor - Commissioner
ROMNEY ROGERS Vice Mayor - Commissioner - District IV
BRUCE G. ROBERTS Commissioner - District I
DEAN J. TRANTALIS Commissioner - District II
BOBBY B. DuBOSE Commissioner - District III

LEE R. FELDMAN, City Manager
JOHN HERBST, City Auditor
JONDA K. JOSEPH, City Clerk
CYNTHIA A. EVERETT, City Attorney

Mayor Seiler called the meeting to order at 12:08 p.m.

ROLL CALL AND INTRODUCTION OF BOARD MEMBERS

Present: Mayor John P. "Jack" Seiler, Vice-Mayor Romney Rogers, Commissioner Bruce G. Roberts, Commissioner Dean J. Trantalis and Commissioner Bobby B. DuBose

Also Present: City Manager Lee R. Feldman; City Auditor John Herbst, Assistant City Clerk Jeff Modarelli and City Attorney Cynthia A. Everett

Also Present: Beach Redevelopment Advisory Board: Chairman Anthony Abbate, Vice-Chair Ina Lee, Members Daniel Matchette, Thomas McManus, Melissa Milroy, Marvin Andrew Mitchell Jr., Judith Scher, Tim Schiavone, Shirley Smith and A.J. Yaari

OLD/NEW BUSINESS

BUS-1 14-0674 D.C. ALEXANDER PARK RENOVATIONS

Economic Development Administrator Donald Morris provided background information on the project to date. He presented a video related to this matter, which is attached to these minutes.

Chairman Anthony Abbate noted that the park is situated on a special plot of land. This is the only segment on the barrier island with public property spanning from the ocean to the Intracoastal Waterway. There is a \$70 million budget, and the BRAB (community redevelopment area) sunsets in 2019. The Board is trying to distribute the funds across the Community Redevelopment Area (CRA). Therefore, the Board would like to focus on pressing issues and an overall vision. When dealing with such a small amount of money, every decision matters.

In response to Commissioner Trantalis, Abbate said the Board's concern with the EDSA proposal was that they focused on a particular subsection of the property without taking into account the entire area which is integral to this public space. A broader scope in terms of design thinking is needed. Mayor Seiler felt that the park must be flexible in terms of hosting events. Maintaining the greenspace also is a concern. He likes the concept of using it in conjunction with the Aquatic Center. Vice-Mayor Rogers agreed. He explained that Gregg Sjoquist, president and CEO of the Wasie Foundation, is interested in creating a "people's park." He is willing to guarantee half of the funding through the Wasie Foundation. Sjoquist pointed out that a covered platform or band shell with flexible seating has been successful in other parts of the country. Sjoquist would raise the other half of the funding from the business, arts and faith-based communities. He did not want a lot of concrete. Commissioner DuBose referred to a recent national tourism appreciation luncheon and the keynote speaker's presentation which made him think of this park. The park has to be iconic and unique, but it does not have to be elaborate. It is not about the amount of money. He would like both the Board and Commission to see the presentation. Commissioners Trantalis and Roberts agreed. Commissioner Roberts said he is most concerned about flexibility and tying the park into the Hall of Fame, that is, something broader than the pool and the park. The City Auditor drew attention to the New World Symphony Park in Miami Beach where movies are regularly shown on a wall. It has flexible space. Some comments followed about the hotel development adjacent to the park occurring and coordinating use of their wall space.

Abbate referred to Vice-Mayor Rogers' comments about the Wasie Foundation. If a compelling idea exists, investment can be leveraged. He would like the City to seek grant opportunities. He encouraged

the Commission and the Board to think about the role of the designer, EDSA. The Commission and Board should provide EDSA complete clarity on the issues and leave the design to EDSA. He noted greenspace, public safety for pedestrians and bicycles and sea level rise. Vice-Mayor Rogers agreed that greenspace is important. The oval-shape seems to eliminate a lot of the greenspace.

Vice-Chair Ina Lee wanted to see if the presentation referenced by Commissioner DuBose is available for the Board and the Commission. Additionally the Board watched a TED talk that sparked creativity and open-mindedness. In walking the Community Redevelopment Area (CRA), they noted that a lot of public greenspace not being used. People in the park cannot hear the ocean. If the goal is to create a water theme, there should be some sort of water feature. She also felt that flex space is important as well as infrastructure for use of the space. EDSA should be allowed to go outside of the box as long as it works and it is utilitarian. She agreed that the wave wall is iconic. This area is not only the entrance to the beach, it is also the entrance to the Aquatic Center. The area in front of the Aquatic Center adjacent to the roadway needs to tie in it is holistic, cohesive and has a wow factor.

Member Daniel Matchette noted there has been a lot of discussion about creating something iconic. However, money for this park will be primarily devoted to underground infrastructure. He suggested extending the theme presented by EDSA across the roadway to the Aquatic Center to pull the two pieces together and make good use of the greenspace. The Board discussed using a Jumbotron-type amenity on the side of the new adjacent hotel, with possibly contribution from the developer. Anything that is happening in the city could be broadcasted there. He supported EDSA's design along with a water feature that would attract people.

Abbate felt the greenspace's function needs to be defined. He felt it would translate into shade and a comfortable place to sit. The water feature has a cooling element and would mask the sound of traffic. It is important for the designer to be made aware of the functional components. Commissioner Roberts believed that connectivity is a key concept.

Member Andy Mitchell emphasized the importance of the park being active with flexible space that is engaging and serves as an oasis from the beach. There should be discussion about the entire park area, not just the south side. He indicated that a Member Yaari owns a significant amount of property on the north end but no one has talked with him about its intended use. He supported a water feature and elements that make the park active. The notion of connecting the Intracoastal Waterway and ocean is a home run.

Member Judy Scherer agreed with the concept of a people's park connecting the ocean and the Intracoastal; greenspace and flexibility. It does not take much to create a central point where people gather. There is no need for big structures with the beauty of the natural amenities. Member A.J. Yaari felt it appears everyone wants flexible space and a people's park. He did not think that would cost \$7 million. The goal is to become a world-class destination. There are many various ways to attract visitors. People who have never been to Fort Lauderdale will enjoy the park and Aquatic Center and return. Currently there is not much to do at the beach.

Member Tim Schiavone felt it is important to keep in mind that this is one piece of the puzzle as it relates to the beach. The park does not have to be the statement; it should be part of the statement. It should not be cluttered with a lot of amenities. Perhaps an oceanic element, such as a coral reef wall, could be incorporated. Fort Lauderdale has one of the best diving reefs in America but does not showcase it. He wanted to allow EDSA to do its job.

Member Shirley Smith agreed that it is a people's park. Greenspace is important. A lot of lighting is not needed. Children want to go to the ocean. The park's main concern should not be children. It should

be simple.

Member Melissa Milroy also was impressed with the presentation mentioned by Commissioner DuBose as well as the TED talk experience. She agreed with Yaari that the beach is really the only thing for people to do. The greenspace is needed but it should be a flex space. There should be underground utilities to facilitate concerts. She supported a water feature. The greenspace should be AstroTurf rather than something that has to be mowed weekly. It should be a place for people to sit, enjoy the view and bring their families. There is an opportunity to tie it to the Swimming Hall of Fame.

Member Thomas McManus agreed with the board members' comments. He did not think \$7 million should be spent on a park. Shade trees, a band shell and greenspace are needed. It should be flexible but not too much so.

Matchette noted that the Riverwalk is one of the City's iconic areas. The signs to the Riverwalk are published in a hardcover book as national award-winners yet they are not being maintained. Iconic features need to be maintained.

EDSA Consultant Paul Kissinger did not feel there are a lot of differences in the opinions expressed. The big issue is the budget. About \$36 million is being invested in the Aquatic Center. If DC Alexander Park is viewed as the front door to it, a 10 percent budget is already at \$3.6 million. It could go up or down. The broader context of incorporating the Aquatic Center makes sense. The Aquatic Center will have 500 parking spaces and consequently people will make use of those spaces to go to the beach which makes the park an automatic destination. It is not working the way it is currently configured. Commissioner Trantalis noted that currently it is being used as a staging area for events. The goal is to clean it up, connect it with the Aquatic Center and at the same time elevate it to the 21st century. Kissinger agreed. He said the current flexible greenspace is only working at a basic level. Programming should be increased perhaps to 30 or 40 times a year which requires a lot of flexibility. Artificial turf is more expensive than grass, but there are maintenance issues. The proposal is probably about 40 percent greenspace and 60 percent hardscape. He understood from today's discussion that it should be the opposite which saves money and does not take away the flexibility.

Mayor Seiler noted that because there is already a wall on one side, another wall is not needed. Commissioner Trantalis added that it does not create an entry feature for the Aquatic Center.

Kissinger emphasized the importance of flexibility of space in that it will reach a broader cross-section of the city. The design should avoid single-purpose elements. A portable stage or band shell that could be set up temporarily for events is important as it relates to flexibility. He liked the idea of a people's park because it could also be an element that happens on the beach in other places. He mentioned that iconic does not necessarily refer to architecture. For example, Central Park is an iconic place. This park could be made iconic through elements, programming and use. He noted the "bubbles" idea in the proposal that is an opportunity for donors to be recognized. It is an enhancement to the proposal that could be removed and reduce the budget.

Vice-Mayor Rogers felt the placement of the water feature impedes flexibility. Kissinger explained when an event is held, the water feature could be turned off and become hardscape. The challenge is creating a space that works every day. He further discussed the desire to have multiple types of open space opportunities that can be added in the future. EDSA believes that Las Olas and A1A Plaza are the highest priority as public open space and DC Alexander Park is a close second, followed by the marina. This may be helpful in budgeting. He felt that the Board and the Commission are in agreement; it is just a matter of the dollars.

Abbate believed that shade and water are integral to the project. Kissinger agreed. The challenge is balancing shaded areas with enough space for big events. In the proposal, the shaded areas are along the perimeter. Discussion ensued about how to best utilize a small space in the 1.3-acre site and incorporating what would be needed for a portable stage. Comparisons were made with Esplanade Park. Commissioner Trantalis posed the idea of a coverage area similar to what is in Esplanade Park that would be multi-purpose and frame the Aquatic Center. Kissinger also mentioned using elevation to provide visitors a better perspective of the beach. It would be less than a story in height and connect people visually to the beach. Yaari noted that the site's accessibility is prime to do many things. Abbate appreciated that the proposal extends beyond the park's limit. He wanted to take advantage of that public space.

Mayor Seiler opened the floor for public comment.

Central Beach Alliance (CBA) President John Weaver supported the idea of open space. He felt that it would define this area of the beach. Thought should be given to what kind of people to attract. He supported a family concept. He liked the idea of a band shell that would not obscure the Aquatic Center. He believed the CBA would donate a sculpture. If the greenspace is closer to the ocean, it would give the appearance of there being more of it. He felt the Wasie Foundation's interest should be explored. Mayor Seiler did not want to delay the project any further.

There was no one else wishing to speak.

Member Lee wanted to schedule another workshop where the entire CRA projects could be discussed. Mayor Seiler agreed to check on available dates for another lunchtime workshop.

Kissinger advised that the budget amount needs to be decided. Yaari suggested EDSA provide a couple of options. Mayor Seiler suggested \$3.5 million and \$6.5 million options. The City Manager pointed out that, regardless of the design, significant site work will be necessary which will be a good portion of the cost. Incremental costs should be provided. Kissinger explained that the sketch presented today is \$6.3 million. He posed the idea of a \$5 million plan with \$1 million of alternatives that can be added.

Commissioner Roberts asked about restroom facilities. Mayor Seiler preferred to take advantage of the restrooms across the street rather than at the park where there is limited space. Kissinger indicated a restroom is required within a certain distance if there is a fountain. Smith preferred real grass. Abbate referred to a plaza in Spain that still has authentic functionality. The perimeter is shaded. Elderly people sit around the perimeter and children play in the middle. If this could be achieved, he would be pleased. Mitchell did not see the need for technology charging capabilities. Mayor Seiler felt that amenity could be added if a corporation wanted to donate it. Kissinger pointed out the naming rights can help with funding. In response to Member Lee, Mayor Seiler felt this venue will likely only hold about 1,000 or 1,500 people. Lee also wanted attention given to blowing sand in high wind storms and artificial turf. Commissioner DuBose commented that children are no longer attracted by what may have been an attraction in the past. Tablets and smartphones are indispensable to them. He did not favor a fountain. Any water element must be creative. In conclusion, Mayor Seiler emphasized the need to move forward with completing the beach projects.

There being no other matters to come before the Commission, the meeting adjourned at 1:32 p.m.