

**MINUTES OF RAVENNA CITY COUNCIL COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
March 11, 2019**

The Meeting of the Ravenna City Community & Economic Development Committee was called to order at 5:30 P.M. by Chairman Bruce Ribelin. Present were Scott Rainone, Andrew Kluge, Rob Kairis, Amy Michael, Paul Moskun, Matt Harper and Joseph Bica. Also attending the meeting were Mayor Frank Seman; Finance Director, Kimble Cecora; Director of Public Service, Kay Dubinsky; City Engineer, Bob Finney; Police Chief Jeff Wallis; Fire Chief, Geoffrey Cleveland; Human Resources Director, Heather Richkowski; Erica Sadaj and Liz Atkinson representing Neighborhood Development Services; Larry Silenius of 123 North Walnut Street, Ravenna, Ohio; Clifford Soudil of 434 Woodland Street, Ravenna, Ohio and Tim Calfee of 910 Murray Avenue, Ravenna, Ohio.

Mr. Ribelin said the item first item on the agenda is the 2019 CHIP Program.

Ms. Sadaj explained that the City is eligible to apply for the 2019 CHIP, being the Community Housing Impact Preservation program for 2019. Ravenna is eligible for \$300,000.00; Streetsboro is eligible for \$350,000.00 and Portage County is eligible for \$400,000.00. It is set up that Ravenna is the lead and they will partner with Streetsboro and Portage County. They are going for maximum amounts which will project 17 home rehabs and 33 home repairs. The application is due May 3. There is a partnership agreement with Streetsboro and Portage County that needs to be signed as well as the administration agreement.

Mr. Ribelin said these are really valuable funds.

There being no questions or comments, it was decided by those present the issue would be forwarded to Committee of the Whole for further action.

Mr. Ribelin said the next item for discussion is the Community Reinvestment Act. They got involved with that when the theater was being built and essentially it provided for tax relief on additions or new construction. At the time they discussed it, Ms. Spencer had voiced her opinion that she would eventually like to see it expanded to the residential neighborhoods so people could have some tax relief when people fix up their homes. When they originally did this, the Ravenna Schools were included in the conversation and they signed off on it at the time. What he wants to talk about, as Chairman of the committee, is expanding that CRA.

Mr. Cecora said he spent a considerable amount of time with Mr. Finney and they tried to work out some CRA scenarios: one had to do with residential; one in the historical district; commercial property and the reinvestment of existing structures. They looked at thresholds, investment levels, types of abatement that would be eligible. After speaking with people in Columbus, he found out that in order to go citywide, they need a very, very extensive and exhaustive housing study. The pilot CRA which was the north of Main Street, the corridor that encompassed the theater, there was one dwelling there. NDS was able to include that one dwelling that included the description, the value, photographs, etc. He's not sure they would be able to accomplish this, if they are talking about a citywide housing study. It seems very extensive and there might be a better mousetrap. As it stands right now, it is a major endeavor.

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Mr. Ribelin asked if that hasn't been done within the last few years.

Mr. Cecora responded that he doesn't believe they have, at least for this purpose.

Mr. Ribelin said there are different areas of the City that were rated economically. For example, the area in the Fairgrounds and other areas in Ward 2 were deemed to be low to moderate income neighborhoods and they were able to get grants.

Mr. Finney said that was the census tract that identified Wards 1 and 2; Wards 3 and 4 were just outside of the LMI rate. That was the census.

Mr. Rainone asked if they know what is involved; is it just pulling property tax information?

Mr. Cecora said that it has to do with site inspections and a lot of providing visuals to the CRA. It is quite extensive and he isn't sure what the better mousetrap is. They are right on the cusp of bringing on an economic development individual and he thought they might be able to provide some guidance. He can talk to people in Columbus and get all the information but the actual execution of it; they thought of Todd Peetz.

Mr. Ribelin asked if the City still has hours with Todd Peetz.

Mayor Seman said they get those hours every year so they would be available this year. He has a meeting with Regional Planning Wednesday and can ask about the hours available.

Mr. Cecora said that it's going to be a stumbling block right now. He's not sure as to how to attack it. He and Mr. Finney spent a considerable amount of time and think they've honed it down to something that might be palatable to council and then it's what runs in the background. It's the housing, it's the roadways, basically, the City's infrastructure as it stands. He doesn't know if it's by ward, or how they wish to attack it. It just seems very, very comprehensive inventory of the housing stock that needs to be completed. It's not just an assessed value. He doesn't mean to kick the can to the ED person but hopefully this person will be here sooner rather than later and provide some guidance.

Mr. Rainone asked what the benefit is to gain from making a residential CRA.

Mr. Cecora said in many instances, those who have instituted the CRA in residential areas do this so the residence has some means of participating in it. It's not all about commerce.

Mr. Ribelin said that it may be a little incentive to fix up their places up. There are a whole bunch of places that need fixed up. If this is a way to help them, then he would hope it could be done.

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Mr. Cecora said one thing he did stumble upon is that one of the difficulties is there are so many things that do not qualify because they are considered maintenance and repairs vs. those that do qualify. They are still trying to get their hands around what it is they are offering in the real world. It's nice on paper to have a CRA program but if the exhaustive checklist includes everything that's nothing more than maintenance, then the County won't deem it as impacting the property.

Mr. Rainone said that's what he was trying to get at; a cost benefit. It sounds like this kind of a study would take months, a lot of time and different costs.

Mr. Cecora said the benefit is huge because it is going to allow them to offer a tax incentive and abatement to retail. Right now, enterprise zones are commercial, industrial, manufacturing but no retail. For instance, if a restaurant wanted to locate in front of the Giant Eagle, that would allow them, with a citywide CRA, to approach someone with a retail establishment and if it was a deal breaker, they could then put that abatement on the table, much like an enterprise zone. While it is a nice item to be able to offer to the residents, it adds to the enterprise zone the offering of a different component of commerce, tax abated. To do it citywide, it makes perfect sense.

Mr. Ribelin said as he recalls, there were different percentages of tax relief someone could get on those. At one point they talked about this. They haven't for a while. He would like to get something in place prior to his retirement the end of this year. He did not want to get anything decided tonight but did want to bring it up again and hopes they can get some movement on it.

Mayor Seman said he would speak with Mr. Peetz as well as the economic development director from Kent because they do have a larger CRA area designated.

Mr. Kairis said he would hope they don't put the housing study (whatever that is) as a huge stumbling block to moving this forward. They don't really know what the future is going to be but there are all kinds of possibilities out there. He read in the newspaper last week, there is a possibility of Camp Garfield being turned into a missile defense system. They don't know what the politics are with that but if it does happen, it will happen overnight. He would hate to see the City as a second class opportunity for the people coming in to build that facility. If they have a CRA, it would be a big selling point for either businesses or residents. The more incentive they have, the more they can sell the City to prospective business owners or residents. He doesn't know what a study like this costs but he doesn't think it's appropriate to just be thinking about now. Maybe the missile defense system won't go in; maybe other things may. If they're not in a position for them and have that mindset, he thinks they could miss a big opportunity.

Mr. Ribelin said he just doesn't want the idea put onto a shelf.

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Mr. Cecora said that expanding it is a much larger task than he envisioned. Certainly it is something that needs to be done sooner rather than later but it's not just modifying a couple of dots and get it down to the Ohio Department of Development. There will need to be an investment of time and some consideration as to how it is structured and getting it accomplished and down there for approval.

There being no further business before the Committee, the meeting adjourned at 5:45 P.M.

ATTEST:

Clerk of Council

Bruce Ribelin, Chairman
Community & Economic Development Committee