

ECONOMIC RECOVERY BOARD FOR CAMDEN

Walt Whitman Center for the Arts

Camden, NJ

November 28, 2006

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL MEETING

Members of the Board present: Michael Lihvarcik, designee for State Treasurer Bradley Abelow; Reverend J. C. Jones, Vice Chairman; Chief Operating Officer, Randy Primas; Dennis Kille representing Mayor Gwendolyn Faison; City Council President, Angel Fuentes; Anthony Bucchi representing Freeholder Director Louis Cappelli, Jr.; Public Members: William Hosey, Rodney Sadler, Robert Milner, and Rosa Ramirez.

Also Present: Assistant Secretary, Maureen Hassett; Bette Renaud, DAG; and EDA staff.

Absent: Marge DellaVecchia representing Commissioner Susan Bass Levin; Legislative Members: Assemblyman Joseph Roberts, and Senator Wayne Bryant.

Vice Chairman Jones called the meeting to order at 10:10 am.

In accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act, Ms. Hassett announced that notice of this meeting has been sent to the *Star Ledger*, the *Times*, the *Courier Post* and the *Philadelphia Inquirer* at least 48 hours prior to the meeting, and that a meeting notice has been duly posted on the Secretary of State's bulletin board at the State House.

A quorum of the ERB Board was present.

Vice Chairman Jones asked for a motion to approve the October 31, 2006 minutes of the Board.

MOTION TO APPROVE: Mr. Sadler SECOND: Mr. Primas AYES: 9

MINUTES OF BOARD MEETING

Pamela Bridgeforth, Executive Director, Walt Whitman Arts Center (WWAC) welcomed the board and all present. Ms. Bridgeforth stated that the last time the board was there the WWAC was in the midst of renovations and she was proud to show the outcome. Ms. Bridgeforth stated that over the next several months they would be hosting a series of concerts and art exhibits. There would be a key exhibit "Made in Camden", which will showcase artistic creations by Camden residents. Two beautiful handmade chairs were on display in the center of the room as examples of the artwork. Ms. Bridgeforth also stated there would be a catalog available to purchase some of the artists' works.

Vice Chairman Jones called on Ms. Hassett to summarize the first item before the board. Ms. Hassett stated the purpose of the annual meeting is to elect the officers of the Board for the coming year including the Vice Chair and Treasurer. Ms. Hassett stated that Reverend Jones has expressed an interest in continuing to serve as Vice Chairman, and Bradley Abelow, New Jersey State Treasurer, as Treasurer of the Board with Michael Lihvarcik, as his designee.

The appointment of a Board Secretary is also required, and any Assistant Secretaries. The board is asked to confirm Caren Franzini as Secretary, and to appoint Preston Pinkett, Senior Vice President of the NJEDA and Maureen Hassett, Vice President - Strategic Partnerships of the NJEDA to serve as Assistant Secretaries.

Ms. Hassett pointed out that the by laws also provide for the formation and appointment of the Members to the committees charged with advising the Board in its operations. The Board has two committees that were formed; the Policy Committee and the Project Review Committee. Members have expressed their interest in participating as follows:

The **Policy Committee** will review the implementation of the Strategic Revitalization Plan, the Capital Improvement and Infrastructure Plan, the City Master Plan and any other plans and review the progress of the investment strategy for the fund disbursements. This committee will consist of the Chairperson and the following five appointments: Marge DellaVecchia, Executive Director of NJHMFA as designee for Susan Bass Levin, Commissioner of New Jersey Department of Community Affairs, Rosa Ramirez, Council President Angel Fuentes, Michael Lihvarcik, designee for New Jersey State Treasurer, Bradley Abelow, and Rodney Sadler.

The second committee, the **Project Review Committee** will review and approve all projects for financing prior to submission to the Members of the Board. Projects will be reviewed for their consistency with the strategic revitalization plan, capital improvement and infrastructure plan or annual recovery program or financial plan. The Project Review Committee will consist of the Chairperson and five appointments that will rotate monthly. The rotating Members will include Marge DellaVecchia, designee for DCA Commissioner Levin, Rosa Ramirez, Rodney Sadler, William Hosey, Robert Milner, Reverend J.C. Jones, Dennis Kille for Mayor Gwendolyn Faison, and Freeholder-Director Louis Cappelli.

Ms. Hassett referred the Members to the schedule of the ERB's monthly PRC and Board meetings through October, 2007, which was attached, the resolution to adopt this schedule for next year's Board meeting dates, approval of the Committee and Secretary appointments, election of a Vice Chair and Treasurer as listed above, was presented to the Board for approval.

MOTION TO APPROVE: Rev. Jones SECOND: Mr. Hosey AYES: 9

Vice Chairman Jones called on Ms. Hassett to summarize the next item before the board, the Neighborhood Housing Services of Camden, Inc. ("NHS"), Camden Kids Pre-School & Community Learning Center (P017412). Ms. Hassett stated that the Members are asked to approve a \$100,000 recoverable grant to the NHS to fund pre-development costs for the proposed development of the Camden Kids Pre-School & Community Learning Center ("Center").

Ms. Hassett recognized Marilyn Swangin, Executive Director of NHS who was present in the audience along with her partner, Rev. Fitten of the Shalom Development Corporation, Inc. ("SDC").

Ms. Hassett stated that NHS is a 501(c)(3) non-profit community housing development corporation that targets its services to assist very low and moderate-income families reach home

ownership throughout the Greater Camden Area. Its mission is to restore and revitalize the neighborhoods of Camden, primarily for the benefit of its current residents, by stimulating reinvestment, restoring confidence and renewing pride through the efforts of local residents in Cooper Plaza acting in concert with financial institutions, government agencies, the business community and others.

Marilyn Swangin, the Executive Director of NHS, has been coordinating this project. Presently, NHS has partnered with Shalom Development Corporation, Inc. (“SDC”), a 501(c)(3) non-profit community-based organization, created by members of the Shalom Baptist Church, to meet the needs of Camden’s diverse population through educational and economic development. NHS & SDC entered into a Memorandum of Understanding in April 2006 in order to work together to construct this preschool and community learning center. A non-profit corporation will be formed to acquire, construct and operate the Center.

The Center will also have 24-hour security service. The Center will serve approximately 110 pre-schoolers on site. In preparation for possible application to the Abbott Program, each classroom will be designed according to Abbott specifications, 50 sf of space for each child allowing for 950 sf classrooms to house 15 children and 3 teachers. The Center will open with approximately 60 full time and 10 part time employees. The positions available will be the Executive Director, teachers, para-professionals, a nurse, social workers, food service, building & grounds coordinators, curriculum/instruction/community coordinators, media technologists and security officers.

MOTION TO APPROVE: Council Pres. Fuentes SECOND: Mr. Milner AYES: 9

Vice Chairman Jones stated that the next item was already approved and presented for informational purposes. He asked Ms. Hassett to summarize the SMSMR Enterprises LLC (P17327) project. Ms. Hassett stated that the following project was approved under delegated authority in September 2006 through the **Business Lease Incentive Program**. She also stated that SMSMR Enterprises, which will be known as Victor’s Pub, is a newly formed entity that intends to open a full-service restaurant within the Victor Building. The applicant was approved for a business lease incentive grant, totaling \$120,000 over the course of five years. The company anticipates creating 46 jobs within the next two years.

MOTION TO APPROVE: Mr. Hosey SECOND: Mr. Primas AYES: 9

City Council President Angel Fuentes asked if there were any solutions to the parking problem around the Victor Bldg area.

Randy Primas stated that everyone agrees we need more structured parking, but how to fund the expense of parking is a question that continues to challenge the City.

Anthony Perno, Vice President/CEO Cooper’s Ferry Development Association gave a PowerPoint presentation on the renovation to the Walt Whitman Arts Center, which was built in the 1920’s by Eldridge Johnson. The \$2 million renovation (\$1 million from the ERB) was for restoration of the park, a new entrance, an elevator, and a wheelchair accessible ramp in the rear. The building is listed on the National Historic Landmarks Registry.

Vice Chairman Jones requested comments from the Members.

Ms. Hassett stated that a staff is working on a report regarding the hiring activity and economic impact of ERB Funding recipients. She stated the report has garnered approximately 75% response at this point. Ms. Hassett stated that staff would follow up to obtain 100% responses and present the findings to the board in December.

Robert Milner asked if there was a way of check the validity of the responses regarding employment statistics.

Laura Wallick stated that their employment records could be checked.

Ms. Hassett thanked Mr. Primas for all his work and dedication to the board and the committees of the ERB and wished him well on behalf of the staff at EDA.

William Hosey thanked Randy Primas for his years spent on the board, pointing out that Mr. Primas was always there, was articulate in his vision for the City, and worked hard to achieve the vision.

Vice Chairman Jones also expressed his appreciation for Mr. Primas' hard work on the board.

Vice Chairman Jones requested comments from the members of the public.

Mr. Colandus "Kelly" Francis, President NAACP of Camden County expressed concern about placing more low income housing in South Camden near Interstate 676, and the sewerage treatment plant because of the environmental issues and the potential health issues.

Frank Fulbrook, President of the Cooper Grant Neighborhood Association commented on the recently approved Cooper Grant Condos. He stated that the sales office would open next Saturday and he hoped to see long lines of potential homebuyers. He was hopeful that the market rate condos would help bring balance to the City with a mix of income levels.

Thomas Rapacki, Jr., 426 North 36th Street, Camden, NJ, expressed frustration that Camden is a magnet for low-income residents from surrounding townships. He also felt that not enough

Camden residents are working on the ERB financed jobs. He stated that the City should solicit HS seniors and other residents that might want to work those jobs. He stated his belief that most construction workers on ERB projects come from Philadelphia not Camden. He further stated his displeasure with many high paying jobs in the City being held by people who live outside of Camden.

William Hosey stated that he was involved with the Victor Building project as part of the building trades, and that there were in fact at least 30 to 40 Camden residents, representing all trades, on that project.

There being no further business, on a motion by Mr. Primas and seconded by Rev. Jones, the meeting was adjourned at 11:15 am.

Certification: The foregoing and attachments represent a true and complete summary of the actions taken by the State Economic Recovery Board for the City of Camden at its meeting.



Maureen Hassett, Vice President
Strategic Partnerships, EDA
Assistant Secretary, ERB