

**CITY OF
MOUNT DORA, FLORIDA**



October 4, 2023

**CRA ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MINUTES**

I. Call to Order

Having been duly noticed as required by law, the October 4th, 2023 special meeting of the Mount Dora Community Redevelopment Agency Committee was called to order by Chair, David Berndt at 5:34 PM.

II. Roll Call

Present: David Berndt; Andrea Lother; Akhtar Hussain; Jay Smith; Patrick Murray

Absent: Barbara Hensinger

City Staff: Adam Sumner, Deputy Planning Director and CRA Manager; Catherine Hutcheson Administrative Coordinator; Whitney Scott, Administrative Coordinator; Misty Sommer, Economic Development Director; Warford, CRA Police Officer.

III. Public Comment Period

None given.

IV. Approval of Minutes of August 2, 2023 & September 13, 2023

Motion by Mr. Smith, seconded by Mr. Akhtar to approve the minutes of August and September, 2023. The minutes were approved unanimously by voice vote.

FOR: David Berndt; Andrea Lother; Akhtar Hussain; Jay Smith; Patrick Murray

AGAINST: None

MOTION CARRIED: 5-0

V. Discussions

1. Shuttle Program with Misty Sommer:

Mr. Sumner introduced Ms. Misty Sommer, Economic Development Director. She gave a presentation on the new shuttle program and a possible grant opportunity to work with Freebee Vehicles for public transportation.

Ms. Sommer went over prices and other important information, including sizes, regarding trolleys, buses, and the Freebee vehicles.

Mr. Berndt asked what the charge for the vehicles would be.

Ms. Sommer stated that was still to be determined between the grant and City Council.

Ms. Sommer continued on with her Freebee presentation stating that these vehicles fit the Mount Dora brand with sustainability, ADA compliant and that they are electric. This would also provide an app for users to better access the Freebee vehicles.

She briefly went over the FDOT Service Development Grant, it is a 50/50 matching grant. The city would pay for half and the grant would cover half. The funding for the grant would last up to three years. She mentioned the downside to the grant is it cannot be applied for until the year of 2024; it is awarded in July of 2025; and implemented in October of 2025.

Ms. Sommer stated that was where she left off with City Council. Council is looking into other transportation choices in the interim and if it would hurt the chances of receiving the grant. She further stated that she would have the answer to that tomorrow October 5, 2023.

Mr. Hussain made a comment that he liked the Freebee option. It fits the brand. He also asked how much it would cost the city freebee vehicle vs trolley.

Ms. Sommer stated that it is more affordable through the grant than the bus at \$17,000.00 for one and \$50,000.00 for three. All dependable on sizes.

Further discussion about the program with Ms. Sommer and the Board.

Discussion on if employees would use the service to help with parking downtown.

Ms. Lothar asked about the time frame of the vehicle usage being only one day a week year round. She commented that it was a waste of CRA money when the service would really only be needed during the winter months.

Ms. Sommer stated that she would bring that inquiry back to Council to discuss.

Mr. Sumer stated that when the city went out to bid previously those bids were not chosen because the city had to guarantee the revenue.

Further discussion on this issue with board members.

Discussion between Ms. Sommer and the board members about employees parking and the best time of year to use the service.

Mr. Smith asked if the CRA had it within their budget to pay for the Freebee service.

Mr. Sumner stated that yes, the CRA would pay for it. The question is does the city want to pay for this or find a more immediate relief.

Mr. Sumner gave his option that he agreed with using the Freebee options due to the flexibility and it matching our brand.

Further discussion on how the grant would work and if any other immediate relief for parking downtown is possible.

Mr. Smith asked if a trolley represented the historic nature of the city better than other options.

Mr. Hussain made a joke that horse and buggy would better fit the aesthetic of the city.

Board member agreed that the trolley holds an appeal for that reason. Further discussion on this.

Mr. Sumner stated that a wrap could be put on the Freebee vehicle to make it look more historic.

Ms. Sommer agreed with Mr. Sumner about the vehicle wrap.

Mr. Hussain asked Ms. Sumner what she thought the best option was for Mount Dora, what has the best benefits.

Ms. Sommer stated that she believed Freebee does. It allows businesses to advertise as well.

Mr. Berndt asked how much it would cost.

Ms. Sommer stated \$17,000.00 for one and \$50,000.00 for three, annually and with the grant.

Mr. Berndt asked who would drive the vehicles.

Ms. Sommer responded with Freebee does.

Mr. Jay asked about the pick-up points.

Ms. Sommer showed the map from the presentation on the pickup spots. Further discussion on this and on the app.

Ms. Lotter asked where the people using freebee would park.

Ms. Sommer stated with our contracted lots like the Methodist church and the parking lot on highland St.

Mr. Hussain asked how we would advertise this.

Ms. Sommer stated that the city would have to do a huge push through mass communication, social media etc.

Mr. Smith stated that getting the news stations to cover could help boost the program. Ms. Sommer agreed with him.

Mr. Sumner stated the plus side is that there are already other surrounding cities using freebee so we can take them as an example.

Ms. Sommer brought back the topic of using another transportation service in the interim.

Mr. Murray asked about the safety risks of using this type of transportation.

Ms. Sommer stated that there would be a driver, not autonomous.

Mr. Murray re-stated his question in regards to children and handicapped persons.

Ms. Sommer stated that she would find out the answer to that.

Mr. Berndt asked how long until freebee can start.

Ms. Sommer stated in two years.

Further discussion on interim transportation services between board members and staff.

Ms. Sommer requested a consensus from board members on the transportation options. Id freebee worth the wait.

Board members all agreed that yes it is if there can be another transportation service, such as the trolleys, in the interim.

Continued discussion on how the grant works.

Mr. Smith asked how the board members felt about charging people for rides.

Ms. Sommer stated that some cities do but that they also provide tours.

Ms. Lothar stated that it would make sense to pay a small free.

Ms. Sommer thanked board members for their questions and comments and that she would follow up with them via email.

Ms. Sommer also stated that she reached out to Lake County regarding getting wayfinding signs on Highland St. She is working on filling out the application for right of way permit to hopefully get that project up and running.

2. Parking Solution Workshop:

Mr. Sumner stated the discussion on how the CRA can improve parking for downtown.

Mr. Berndt gave the floor to Mr. Jay Smith to discuss his ideas.

Mr. Sumner went over the 2022 packet for parking solutions. He stated that everything in the original plan has been achieved except building a new parking garage and paid parking. He also mentioned time limit parking.

Mr. Sumner gave explanation of why the 4 hour time limit was implemented by council.

Mr. Sumner stated that there are no properties for sale for him to buy to put up a garage or a parking lot.

Mr. Hussain asked about the height limit of the garage.

Mr. Sumner stated that the garage would need to be higher enough so it is dry enough to go down.

Mr. Hussain asked how many parking spots they have if all the grass spots and lake-view spots.

Mr. Sumner stated 49 spots for the new lot and 88 in other.

Further discussion on buying properties for lots and a garage.

Mr. Murray asked if there were any deviations or special exceptions for the height.

Mr. Sumner stated that the height is in the charter so it cannot be changed.

Mr. Smith stated that it would be better to find more surface parking places rather than having a parking garage. He asked about the Presbyterian Church parking and would it be worth asking about using that lot.

Mr. Sumner stated that he tried to speak to the owner about that and the response was a no.

Mr. Jay stated he felt like we should throw our hands up and say there is no parking in Mount Dora as there seems to be no solutions.

Further discussion with Mr. Sumner and board members about the church parking.

Mr. Smith asked about the First National Bank Parking, if that was an option.

Mr. Hussain stated that this is just a band aid solution. That parking is a real issue.

Mr. Berndt asked if the Post office was for sale.

Mr. Sumner stated that yes it is. It cannot be torn down because it is historic, over 50 years old and cannot be torn down.

Further discussion on parking options with the bank.

Mr. Sumner gave explanation on why surface parking is not actually more affordable for the CRA.

Mr. Hussain asked about moving the lawn bowling to create parking.

Mr. Sumner stated a previous City Manager attempted to do that and that is why that individual is no longer our City Manager. He encouraged him to bring his idea to council.

Mr. Smith asked about the parking at Century Link.

Mr. Sumner stated that Lumen bought out Century Link and chained there lots so no one can park there. They sent the city a cease and desist letter citing homeland security.

Mr. Hussain stated it will take another 20-25 years to build a parking lot .

Mr. Sumner stated he was there to listen to ideas.

Mr. Berndt requested Mr. Smith to give further ideas.

Mr. Smith stated he was not sure he wanted to remain on the board as they do not do anything.

Ms. Lothar asked about the bike trail on Tremian st for parking for special events.

Mr. Sumner stated that it is an actual trail so cannot be used. He gave example of the Light up event and the parking issues with that.

Mr. Sumner let the board members know that if they had any new ideas or knew of property being sold to let him know.

Mr. Smith asked about buying property in the Northeast section of the city. That he sees empty land over there all the time. They could shuttle people from there to downtown.

Mr. Sumner stated that CRA dollars cannot be spent in Northeast CRA.

Mr. Smith stated that he could use Northeast money to do so.

Mr. Sumner stated Northeast money can only be used for what they have planned not for CRA plans.

Mr. Sumner stated that the new recreation center will have parking and they could shuttle form that.

Mr. Smith stated that was a good solution.

Mr. Sumner stated it would only be able to do that when the lot was not being used.

Mr. Smith asked about the public high school and Christian Academy parking.

Mr. Sumner stated we use those for special events but otherwise is not doable due to sporting events and the like.

Further conversation on parking.

VI. Other Business

Mr. Sumner gave a reminder to the board to not “reply all” during emails so no sunshine violations occur.

VII. Announcement of Next Scheduled Meeting Date

Next meeting of the CRA Board will be held on December 6, 2023 at 5:30 PM in the City Hall Council Chambers.

VIII. Adjournment

Motion by Mr. Hussain, Seconded by Mr. Smith to adjourn the Community Redevelopment Agency Committee Meeting. Mr. Berndt, adjourned the meeting at 6:38 PM.



David Berndt, Chairman,
CRA Board



Catherine Hutcheson
Coordinator