

**Official Minutes of  
MARION COUNTY  
BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS**

May 15, 2024

**CALL TO ORDER:**

The Marion County Board of County Commissioners met in a workshop session in Commission Chambers at 2:05 p.m. on Wednesday, May 15, 2024 at the Marion County Governmental Complex located in Ocala, Florida.

**INTRODUCTION OF WORKSHOP BY CHAIRMAN MICHELLE STONE**

Chairman Stone advised that the workshop was scheduled this afternoon to discuss the Marion County Silver Springs Community Redevelopment Area Draft Master Update.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

The meeting opened with the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of our Country.

**ROLL CALL**

Upon roll call the following members were present: Chairman Michelle Stone, District 5; Commissioner Craig Curry, District 1; and Commissioner Matthew McClain, District 3. Commissioner Carl Zalak, III, District 4, arrived shortly after the meeting commenced. Vice-Chairman Kathy Bryant, District 2, was absent due to a prior commitment. Also present were County Attorney Matthew G. Minter, County Administrator Mounir Bouyounes and Assistant County Administrator (ACA) Tracy Straub.

The Deputy Clerk was in receipt of a 288 page Agenda packet to follow along with the PowerPoint presentation.

**WORKSHOP PRESENTATION**

1. Present Marion County Community Redevelopment Agency Silver Springs Community Redevelopment Area Master Plan – May 15, 2024 at 2:00 PM.

The following recommendation was presented by Growth Services Director Chuck Varadin:

Description/Background: The Marion County Community Redevelopment Agency (Agency) in partnership with the Community Services Department contracted with Kimley-Horn and Associates, Inc. (KHA), as consultants to complete the Silver Springs Community Redevelopment Area (CRA) Master Plan Update. This update is intended to provide a detailed guiding document for the Silver Springs CRA.

The draft Silver Springs CRA Master Plan is being presented to the Marion County Board of County Commissioners for review discussion and input. Following the receipt of Board input, the Master Plan will be noticed to the public and other agencies for input, and presented for final consideration and approval by the Marion County Community Redevelopment Agency at a date to be determined.

Budget/Impact: None.

Recommended Action: For discussion.

Growth Services Director Chuck Varadin expressed appreciation to everyone who has assisted on this project and advised that today's focus is to receive Board feedback and insight on the proposed plan. He advised that the four goals of the 2024 Silver Springs CRA Master Plan are as follows: Opportunity to "refocus" and "reimagine" the CRA;

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Developed through extensive public and community outreach; Expands existing CRA initiatives and opportunities; and enhances strategic partnerships. Mr. Varadin advised that the Silver Springs CRA is the only CRA within unincorporated Marion County, noting the natural resources in the area make this CRA unique.

Kelley Klepper, KHA, SE 17<sup>th</sup> Street, provided a brief overview of his professional background. He stated the key today is to listen and learn in order to update and finalize the Master Plan.

Mr. Klepper advised that the Silver Springs CRA is broken down into these 5 uses: 1) Parks/Open spaces (62 percent (%)); 2) industry and commerce (8%); 3) Residential/Mixed Use (16%); 4) Core Commercial (3%); and 5) Low Density Residential (11%). He stated over 25% of the CRA is currently vacant, which indicates there is room to grow, redevelop, increase the revenues and the taxable base, as well as provides an opportunity in the baseline to move up through this process.

Mr. Klepper advised that multiple factors were considered and analyzed when creating the proposed Master Plan, such as public and community input; existing conditions; land use (existing and future uses); updated market study; catalyst concept designs; wayfinding; transportation; and utilities and infrastructure.

Commissioner Curry questioned what percentage of success of the CRA is reliant on the Silver Springs State Park. Mr. Klepper advised that the Park is a critical component, but it is not the only component.

Commissioner Curry commented on the condition of the Silver Springs State Park and opined that if the County is going to invest all these funds into the area there needs to be an equal effort made by the State relating to that attraction.

Mr. Klepper advised that there have been some staff changes at the park and a new Unit Management Plan is being released, noting there is a renewed interest from the park in working with the community.

Mr. Klepper stated an online survey, community meetings and stakeholder meetings were utilized to allow public involvement, noting over 850 people participated. He advised that the common desires in the community were the parks and natural environment; additional retail, hotels and other supporting uses; State Road 40/Silver Springs Boulevard corridor improvements; new and redevelopment, including catalyst concepts; quick trails and recreation improvement; and better partnership between the State Parks and local agencies.

Mr. Klepper advised that the basis for the plan relates to the 5 highest aspirational items: 1) provide a range of options for housing, jobs and transportation; 2) enhance connectivity to employment centers, community assets, and other key destinations; 3) improve safety for motorists, bicyclists, and pedestrians; 4) celebrate unique assets of the Springs and the region; and 5) better quality of life for all. He stated the six primary goals to guide future growth and redevelopment of the CRA are: 1) promote commercial redevelopment; 2) enhance multi-modal connectivity between the parks and natural resources within the CRA; 3) support residential development and redevelopment; 4) increase pedestrian safety and alternate mobility options; 5) establish wayfinding and branding standards; and 6) transform Silver Springs Boulevard.

Mr. Klepper advised that a market analysis was performed to determine the need in the area over the next 10 years, noting the CRA could support an estimated additional 1,000 dwelling units, 40,000 to 60,000 square feet (sf) of retail, 145 to 200 hotel rooms, and 10,000 to 15,000 sf of office space.

Mr. Klepper stated the Tax Increment Finance (TIF) funds are the primary revenue source

for funding projects within the CRA. He provided a brief overview of the projected growth and revenue generation for the CRA.

Mr. Klepper addressed the 4 catalyst concept areas and indicated where they are located on the map shown on the overhead screen. He stated the concepts are portable and can be moved to other properties if necessary. Mr. Klepper advised that Concept 1 is County owned property located in the northwestern portions of the County. He stated there is a need for diversity of housing and a range of housing options, noting this property is bounded by the railroad tracks and is remote within the CRA. It is approximately 17 acres and a multifamily or medium density type of residential project could easily be created on this property. In order to achieve this development program a Comprehensive Plan and zoning change amendment will be necessary to support the proposed 240 dwelling units (du). Currently, the property can support 140 du with the existing entitlements. Mr. Klepper advised that there is a need to extend the sewer line, noting there is an existing waterline project in process that will provide potable water to the property.

In response to Chairman Stone, Mr. Klepper advised that there is not a bus route available at this time for this property.

Commissioner Zalak questioned what will be needed to move forward with some of the necessary improvements. Mr. Klepper stated it is critical to work with staff to understand what the community wants and determine how it can be implemented. He stated water will be available to the property soon, noting it is in the design phase and the sewer project would need to be extended. Mr. Klepper advised that staff could work on the Comprehensive Plan Land Use Amendment, but hold off on the PUD zoning until they are further along in the process to avoid having to come back with modifications.

In response to Chairman Stone, Community Services Director Cheryl Martin advised that there is funding available to incentivize developers, but in situations like this where the County has the land, the land is the incentive. She stated there is some funding available for acquisition of lands within the CRA at the Boards direction. Ms. Martin advised that the Board could decide to use those funds to run infrastructure to the property.

Commissioner Zalak questioned if there was any opportunity to apply for funding from the State for this project. Ms. Martin stated the County would need to ensure that the property has the correct land use and zoning and then partner with a developer to apply for grant funding. She advised that the State likes to see the local government's commitment in these types of deals; therefore, having the vision solidified is a benefit.

Mr. Klepper commented on Concept 2, which is core commercial. This property is located on the southside of Silver Springs Boulevard immediately west of the park. He stated this area is all privately owned. Mr. Klepper advised that the land use and zoning are in place to support this concept, noting it will require improvements to State Road 40.

Mr. Klepper addressed Concept 3, which is Mixed Retail and Residential. He stated a component of this concept could be another hotel and another range of housing. This would have duplexes or smaller cottages. The concept is designed around a central amenities/stormwater feature in the middle of the property. Mr. Klepper advised there is some level of acquisition by the County as we speak for property, noting it does have the needed land use.

Mr. Klepper commented on Concept 4, which is also Mixed Retail and Residential. This is the existing RV Park and mobile home park located on the north side of Silver Springs Boulevard and immediately adjacent to and north of Silver Springs Pizza. He stated modification to the land use and zoning for this property may be necessary.

Amber Gardner, KHA, SE 17<sup>th</sup> Street, advised that one of the goals of the Master Plan is

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to transform Silver Springs Boulevard, noting this is a major corridor that provides a gateway into the Silver Springs Community. There are enhancements that can be made to make it a better place for multimodal users and assist in promoting the catalyst development. She stated there was a study done by the Transportation Planning Organization (TPO) in 2016, which identified a lot of the similar elements that staff is focusing on in this CRA Master Plan. For example, enhancing bicycle and pedestrian travel and safety, including median access and divisional islands to provide for safe travel, as well as incorporating a roundabout at the intersection of State Road 40 and Baseline Road. Ms. Gardner advised that she has laid out a concept that includes the Access Management Plan from the approved 2016 TPO study with enhancements to address the catalyst sites outlined on the overhead screens. She stated within the Safety Action Plan performed by the TPO in the last year, this area was identified as a high injury network with crashes predominately from angle and left turns, bicycles and pedestrians. Implementing some of these enhancements will address those safety concerns, which is a big part of the CRA Master Plan.

Ms. Gardner advised that a roundabout at the intersection of State Road 40 and Baseline Road was a concept identified in the 2016 TPO study, noting the study reviewed a range of intersection alternatives and the alternative most supported was the roundabout. She stated the project will be designed and constructed by the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT). Ms. Gardner advised that landscaping, monument signage and an iconic feature in the center of the roundabout would enhance the gateway into the CRA. She recommended the County start the planning process for the iconic feature to facilitate that coordination with FDOT as they move into the design and construction phase(s).

Ms. Gardner commented on proposed corridor improvements and provided a brief overview of the proposed enhancements.

Ms. Gardner advised that another goal of the Master Plan is providing connectivity within all of the natural spaces within the CRA. She provided a brief overview of the planned trails in the CRA and surrounding area

In response to Commissioner Zalak, Ms. Gardner advised that the planned City of Ocala trail from downtown to the Silver Springs State Park will be a combination of an in-road experience and off street paths. She stated it will be a designated bike route.

Ms. Gardner advised that she has had several meetings with Silver Springs State Park representatives and they have recognized that this area is a hub for all of these trail systems. She stated the State has expressed a desire work with the County.

Ms. Gardner stated another component of the Master Plan is providing transit service to this area, noting Suntran will be a partner in this process. She commented on the enhancements that will be needed to the bus stops within the CRA. Ms. Gardner stated catalyst site 1 does not currently have transit service, but there could be an opportunity to have those services become available in that area.

Ms. Gardner advised that Silver Springs State Park has done a lot of work within the park itself, noting a lot of time has been spent rehabilitating buildings and updating Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessibility. She stated discussion also took place regarding wayfinding signage locations and types. A focus working group that meets quarterly is needed to discuss common things that are going on in the area and how the partnership should occur.

In response to Chairman Stone, Ms. Gardner advised that the focus group would be led by the CRA, but would also include County staff, the Parks and Recreation Department,

and Silver Springs State Park staff.

Commissioner Curry questioned if the State has a Master Plan for Silver Springs State Park. Ms. Gardner advised that the State is currently going through a Master Plan update. In response to Commissioner Curry, Commissioner Zalak advised that the Silver Springs State Park Master Plan is a vision, but does not have funding.

Commissioner Curry requested a copy of the existing and proposed Master Plan for Silver Springs State Park.

Ms. Gardner advised that she could provide the Commissioners with the existing Master Plan, but may not be able to provide the one currently in development.

Mr. Klepper commented on the importance of wayfinding signage and provided an overview of the proposed signage options.

Mr. Klepper advised that the Board needs to start identifying the types of projects, whether it is the catalyst concepts in whole or in part, but also the transformation of Silver Springs Boulevard. He stated there is a Capital Improvements Plan on page 69 of the Master Plan, noting page 65 provides a series of grants and other alternative funding sources that the County/CRA can partner with to address projects. Mr. Klepper advised that the CRA does not have to fund all the projects identified by itself, but it can be a willing partner.

Mr. Klepper provided a brief overview of the Key Recommendations, which are as follows:

Goal 1 – Promote commercial redevelopment that includes family-friendly public spaces, implementation of the Catalyst Concepts, and encourage uses more appropriate for tourism.

Goal 2 – Enhance multi-modal connectivity between the parks and natural resources within the CRA and in the surrounding areas.

Goal 3 – Support residential development and redevelopment that provides additional housing options for residents.

Goal 4 – Increase pedestrian safety and encourage alternate mobility options. Reconnect disconnected areas.

Goal 5 – Establish wayfinding and branding standards for the Silver Springs CRA

Goal 6 – Transform Silver Springs Boulevard.

## **BOARD DISCUSSION AND CLOSING COMMENTS**

In response to Commissioner Curry, Mr. Klepper advised that the Board has a means to fund certain types of improvements/projects to attract businesses to the area. He stated hotels are something that is critical right now, noting the current hotel stock is very old.

Chairman Stone advised that there is a lot of park space within the CRA; therefore, ecotourism should be a focus. She stated there is 122 acres of Core Commercial and 327 acres of industry and commerce. The CRA funding comes from the tax base and these types of business generate higher taxes, which will allow the County to complete some of the proposed improvements on a quicker scale. Chairman Stone commented on the blythe in the area and opined that the focus should be to clean up the area in order to attract businesses.

Commissioner Zalak opined that the Board should provide staff with direction on what they would like staff to bring back for consideration. He stated staff should bring back some conceptual plans relating to the roundabout for the CRA to consider. Commissioner Zalak commented on signage design and having a process in place to move forward.

In response to Commissioner Zalak, Mr. Bouyounes advised that the BCC approved the acquisition of a hotel within the CRA, but the County has not closed on the property.

Commissioner Zalak recommended starting their focus on the hotel property the County

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is in the process of acquiring. He stated in order to issue an RFP for development the proper zoning and land use need to be in place.

General discussion ensued.

In response to Chairman Stone, Mr. Bouyounes advised that right-of-way (ROW) acquisition for the roundabout will depend on if the project is State funded or a partnership.

Commissioner Zalak advised that during previous conversations with FDOT about the roundabout, FDOT wanted to avoid acquiring land from the Park.

In response to Commissioner McClain, Commissioner Zalak commented on the costs associated with swapping land between FDOT and State Parks.

Mr. Bouyounes advised that the County can submit the plan to FDOT, but the project will depend on how high it is on the TPO priority list.

General discussion ensued.

In response to Commissioner McClain, Mr. Klepper advised that there is an older dilapidated structure located on the Silver Springs State Park side, which has been recommended for demolition.

Commissioner Zalak stated he is unsure about tearing that down just yet, noting he would like to work further with staff.

Chairman Stone stated the Board would like to focus on getting the TPO to set the roundabout as a priority and establish code for the signage.

In response to Commissioner Zalak, Mr. Klepper advised that the Board does have a series of design standards already in place. He stated the Board can enhance their existing standards.

Chairman Stone stated the LDC needs to mimic the styles and pieces as well.

Commissioner Zalak opined that there should be a summary sheet available to create an action plan.

General discussion ensued.

Chairman Stone opined that a longer than usual CRA meeting will need to be scheduled.

Mr. Rison advised that the next scheduled CRA meeting is Tuesday, June 18, 2024 at 1:50 p.m. immediately before the Zoning meeting. He stated staff is planning on scheduling a CRA meeting to specifically discuss the Master Plan. Mr. Rison advised that the signage being discussed today is the general wayfinding signage of the overall CRA, noting there are individual sign requirements for projects.

In response to Commissioner Zalak, Mr. Rison advised that there are monument signs with multiple businesses listed, noting those are considered wayfinding signs. He commented on the differences between wayfinding signs and overall signage.

Mr. Bouyounes advised that the proposed signs in the Master Plan will be public signs and the responsibility of the CRA/County to construct and maintain.

Mr. Rison stated the CRA would fund the signs and the Board would have to decide which department will maintain the signs when the CRA sunsets.

Chairman Stone questioned the possibility of acquiring grants for the CRA. Mr. Rison advised that there are funding sources the County can pursue.

Mr. Bouyounes advised that the Master Plan has to be adopted by the CRA Board first.

Mr. Rison concurred, noting it does not have to come back before the BCC for approval.

In response to Commissioner Zalak, Mr. Rison advised that existing architecture will mesh with the proposed architecture.

Mr. Rison advised that staff will be requesting an additional CRA meeting in addition to what is already scheduled.

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Commissioner Zalak requested the process move forward to ensure RFPs are going out prior to the end of the year.

Mr. Bouyounes advised that July 11, 2024 in the morning is available.

General discussion ensued.

Chairman Stone advised that staff can move forward with scheduling the CRA meeting for the morning July 11, 2024 between 9:00 a.m. and 11:30 a.m.

There being no further business to come before the Board, the meeting thereupon adjourned at 3:28 p.m.

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Michelle Stone, Chairman

Attest:

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Gregory C. Harrell, Clerk

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