



If any person decides to appeal any decision made by the Board with respect to any matter considered at this meeting, that person will need a record of the proceedings, and that, for such purpose, the person may need to ensure that a verbatim record of the proceedings is made, which record includes the testimony and evidence upon which the appeal is to be based.

WORKSHOP MEETING MINUTES
Thursday, March 23, 2017 5:00 p.m.
City Commission Chambers
100 NW 1st Avenue
Delray Beach, FL 33444

STAFF PRESENT:

Jeff Costello	Thuy Shutt	Joan Goodrich	Lori Hayward
Kristyn Cox	Kevin Matthews	Elizabeth Burrows	Krista Walker
Susan Shaw	Renee Roberts	Missie Barletto	John Morgan
Sgt. Darrell Hunter			

OTHERS PRESENT:

Jane Smith	Tom Fleming	Evelyn S. Dobson	Laura Simon
Ari Whiteman	George Brewer	Dorothy Ellington	Ryan Boylston
Peter Arts	Kelvin Bledsoe	Lauren Lyall	Alex Farnsworth
Roberto Portes	Philippe Edouard	Pierre Dieujuste	Steve Vitacolona
Al Costillo			

1. Call to Order

Chairman Cox called the Workshop to order at 5:05 pm.

2. Roll Call

Present: Reggie Cox, Joseph Bernadel, Herman Stevens, Paul Zacks
Absent: Cathy Balestriere, Dedrick Straghn, Daniel Rose,

3. Approval of Agenda

Mr. Zacks made a motion to approve the Agenda. The motion was seconded by Mr. Bernadel and passed unanimously.

4. Discussion –

A. Presentation – Downtown Development Authority – Downtown Safety Ambassador Program

Ryan Boylston, Chairman of the DDA Board, provided an overview of the DDA, noting that residents in the downtown make up 32% of the DDA constituents. He stated that funds have been gradually moved out of the DDA’s marketing budget and into placemaking and economic vitality which includes money for the new Visitor Center by the beach as well as for the Downtown Safety Ambassador Program which is being presented tonight. Mr. Boylston stated that a big takeaway from the recent Downtown Symposium in Ft. Lauderdale was the Ambassador Program which is designed to alleviate the burden posed by the homeless on the police department. He reported that a many of the cities have Ambassador Programs which

have been working very well including West Palm Beach which has been operating for over ten years. He said the DDA is being proactive in launching a pilot program in Delray.

Laura Simon, Executive Director of the DDA, introduced some of her Board Members and staff who were present as well as some of the officers from the Ambassador Program. She presented an overview of the Program, noting that open spaces and parks are deemed 'hot spots' for the homeless. She said this Program gives an extra pair of eyes and ears along with a friendly face on the streets and will be an enhancement for the Downtown. She addressed the importance of the perception of safety, and noted that DDA staff is working closely with the Police Department, Clean and Safe, and Community Improvement. The coverage area is currently from SW/NW 5th Avenue to the bridge along Atlantic Avenue and one block on either side of Atlantic Avenue. She identified the hot spots as Libby Wesley Plaza, Old School Square and Veteran's Park, and stated the Ambassadors do both bike and foot patrols. She said they are out all day long. She reviewed some statistics on the impact the Program has had to date which were compiled through the Daily and Weekly Reports which are submitted. Mr. Stevens inquired about the law enforcement and ambulance assists. Ms. Simon gave examples where the Ambassadors have assisted, and noted that once an Ambassador has made a call to the police or an ambulance, they stay until assistance arrives. She stated the Program is in its seventh week, and they will be doing a survey to get feedback. She said there has already been a noticeable reduction in panhandling along the Avenue. She stated the goal is to take this to a full program and expand to the entire downtown.

Mr. Zacks asked about the protocol for panhandlers. Mr. Kelvin Bledsoe of the Ambassador Program addressed the question, noting that the officers are well trained to establish a rapport with individuals and that they are taught how to disarm without aggression so they can encourage vagrants to move along, provide them information on shelters, etc. He added the officers are a non-threatening force as well as a multiplier for the police. Mr. Zacks asked about training regarding transients and the mentally ill. Mr. Bledsoe stated potential Ambassadors must be trainable and teachable and most importantly must have the correct temperament. It was also noted the Ambassadors have more time to spend with an individual than police officers do. Mr. Bernadel congratulated DDA staff on this initiative and on being proactive in areas where there is the potential for something explosive. He referenced the shooting at the nightclub in Orlando. Mr. Bledsoe stated the Ambassadors are put in the areas where the most people congregate, and he added that you can spot ones who are getting loud or drunk and keep an eye on them and be diligent. He said the idea is to move them away from the downtown Delray area.

Mr. Cox thanked the DDA for coordinating this Workshop to explain this Program. He felt the next step would be gathering community input from the stakeholders. He added that he understands it is a fill-in type of service which he feels has a place. He stated this is Delray and if it moves forward it should be scaled toward what Delray wants. Mr. Boylston pointed out that the firm has a standard to hire locals, so the Ambassadors would be Delray residents. Sergeant Hunter of Clean and Safe reported there have been good interactions with the Ambassadors so far and they have been very open. He commented that closing the bathrooms after hours in Old School Square has helped alleviate a lot of the issues in that area.

Al "Big Al" Costillo, a restaurateur on Atlantic Avenue, commented that in speaking with his staff the reports about the Program have been great. He said the Ambassadors are around late at night, and that it is nice to see the yellow shirts (the Ambassadors wear) – that they are a sign of comfort. From what he has seen they seem to bring a sense of calm. He said Clean and Safe is great as well and that his corner on Atlantic Avenue where his restaurant is has been much improved.

Mr. Cox re-emphasized the need for community input from the stakeholders and thanked the DDA for the presentation. Ms. Simon commented to the Board that the DDA has invested in lighting along SW and NW 5th Avenue which they will maintain as well as continue to grow throughout the DDA area as it is a huge safety perception factor. Mr. Boylston commented that the West Palm Ambassador Program is interesting in that the City has grown the program through private dollars. He said that City Place almost doubles their team through private dollars, and that Ambassador Program continues in Delray Beach that is a strategy for getting more coverage in busier areas.

5. Adjournment

There being no further business the Workshop was adjourned at 5:53 pm.

Jeff Costello, Executive Director

Reginald Cox, Board Chair