

Community Redevelopment Authority (CRA)

Ninety-Fifth Meeting

Wednesday, November 15, 2023 – 4:08 PM

Proceedings:

The CRA meeting being held at Gude Mansion was called to order at 4:08 pm with Chairwoman Crary presiding. Roll was called with Donna Crary, Chairwoman; Mike McGowan, CRA Member present, Carlos Lancaster, CRA Member present, and Jamal Lee, CRA Member present. Robert Love, Community & Economic Development Director and Charise Liggins, Economic Development Coordinator were also in attendance.

Motion to approve CRA meeting minutes of September 20, 2023. Mike McGowan motioned; Jamal Lee seconded. Motion carried on a unanimous roll call vote 4-0.

Old Business:

a) Main Street Committee

- Ms. Liggins shared an update of Main Street Committee meeting. Shared that the committee met three times since being formed to discuss a wide-range of ideas to strengthen Main Street in areas of economic vitality as well as clean, safe and green initiatives.
- Director Love shared that the committee is eager and excited to share their ideas. He talked about some of the ideas including closing down Main Street a few times a year; wayfinding signage; awarding green businesses.
- Ms. Crary also suggested bringing back the awards for businesses that have been in existence for 10, 20 and 30 years.
- Mr. McGowan inquired about the top Main Streets across the state and whether there are ways to take best practices.
- Mr. Love also discussed the differences across Maryland Main Streets and how they all have their own unique approach to revitalization. He shared his experience serving on a Main Street panel at the fall Maryland Municipal League conference.
- Mr. Love also talked about the Laurel Arts Council's work to create more art on Main Street.
- Mr. Lee inquired about how promotion was being done for the various economic development initiatives. Mr. Love shared that there are a variety of ways that they

get the word out – door-to-door; street banners, social media, newsletters, websites, etc.

- Mr. McGowan talked about visiting Belgium and seeing artwork in alleys. He suggested ways to incorporate more artwork in the alleys of the historic district.
- Ms. Crary suggested getting the local high schools involved in helping to create art on Main Street.
- Mr. Lee inquired about the Arts District and wondered how to support the local restaurants. Suggested connecting with travel agencies and event planners so that they can consider places in Laurel for large-scale events.
- Mr. Lee also inquired about the use of influencers to help spread the word about events and attractions in Laurel. Ms. Liggins talked about a food influencer who recently came to Laurel to visit a few restaurants and the amount of visibility they received.

New Business:

a) New Business Openings

- a. Discussed the opening of Clyopatra Winery and Vineyard and the buzz that the business has been generating.

b) Small Business Saturday

- a. Ms. Liggins gave an update of Small Business Saturday event and the passport book program to encourage shopping at the city's small businesses.

Closed Session:

- The CRA commenced a closed session with the city attorney to discuss a real estate matter at 4:30 p.m.

The CRA Meeting was adjourned at 4:53 p.m. The next meeting will take place January 17, 2024.