

**MINUTES OF AN OPEN MEETING OF A MAJORITY OF THE QUORUM OF THE CITY
COUNCIL OF PEORIA, ILLINOIS,
CALLED BY THE AFRICAN-AMERICAN LEADERSHIP ALLIANCE
TO DISCUSS THE PROPOSED MEDICAL AND TECHNOLOGY DISTRICT
FOR THE WEST BLUFF AREA**

A public meeting was called by the African-American Leadership Alliance on Friday, May 9, 2003, from 5:30 p.m. until 7:00 p.m., at City Hall Council Chambers, 419 Fulton St., Peoria, Illinois, to discuss the proposed Medical and Technology District for the West Bluff Area, with proper notice having been given.

Council Members present: Mayor David Ransburg, Council Members Gulley (arriving 5:45 p.m.), Sandberg (arriving 5:40 p.m.), Teplitz, Thetford (arriving 5:55 p.m.), Turner –6 Absent: Council Members Ardis, Grayeb, Morris, Nichting, Spears -5

Also present: Public Information Officer Alma Brown, Corporation Counsel Randy Ray, Workforce Development Director and member of the Alliance Bashir Ali, Police Chief John Stenson, Economic Development Director David Dobson, City Clerk Mary L. Haynes, interested citizens, members of the media and Attorney Jack Teplitz.

In attendance from the African-American Alliance were: Chair McFarland A. Bragg, II, Vice Chair Donald Jackson, Ernestine Jackson, Helen Young, Andre' Bohannon, Dana Davis, Bashir Ali, Charlie Burke, Jackie Petty, and Clara Hooks.

Citizens who signed in were: Jo Lakota, Ernestine Jackson, Donald Jackson, F. Nolan, Bernadine Nolan, Bernie Goitein, Bill Gilbert, Andre' Bohannon, Armond Ciota, Charlie Burke, Dana Davis, Kathleen Teegarden, Todd and Karla Dennhardt.

Clerk's Note: Three handouts were distributed; (1) A communication from Director of Economic Development David Dobson recommending adoption of an Ordinance creating the Peoria Medical and Technology District and authorizing the Administration to take the steps necessary to implement the provisions of the ordinance and to direct staff to begin work on amendments to the Zoning, Planning and Subdivision Ordinances, based upon the Commission's powers within the District; (2) A supplemental communication regarding an Ordinance creating the Peoria Medical and Technology District from Corporation Counsel Randy Ray; and (3) A communication from Council Member Gary Sandberg with a revised Ordinance within the concepts of the Moss-Bradley Neighborhood Associations, a request for modifying the existing Comprehensive Plan of the West Bluff and West Main Street Corridor through Public Hearings and bringing the revised Comprehensive Plan and ordinance forward for adoption.

Donald Jackson, Vice Chairman of the Alliance, opened the meeting on behalf of Chairman McFarland Bragg and stated that the citizens and Alliance wished to have some explanation regarding the proposed Medical and Technology District for the West Bluff. He especially cited concerns regarding the increased acreage that was proposed. He stated there were concerns and rumors regarding the proposed project as well as bad memories from the Southtown Project, and the Alliance wished to have answers. He added that Southtown was a promise from the City fathers, that the object was to renovate, rebuild and reestablish that community so that the citizens could move back in and live where they had grown-up, and that did not happen.

Chairman McFarland Bragg stated the Alliance would like to have a narrative on the initiative from either the City Council Members present or Attorney Jack Teplitz.

Mayor David Ransburg addressed the group and stated the intention was to create a place to utilize the medical and technical people and facilities and this would represent a whole new era for the community. He stated this would enable the City to spawn new businesses, and that the reason the area was so large was to involve the neighborhoods in the planning and development process.

Council Member Marcella Teplitz stated that a group had gone to Kalamazoo, Michigan, and had observed a similar initiative and that several of the medical people had expressed interest that Peoria have something similar, because of the proximity of the Ag Lab, the hospitals, the School of Medicine and Bradley University. She stated that this was a new knowledge economy and that such an initiative would help grow Peoria's economy.

Chairman McFarland Bragg expressed concern with the enlarging of the area to 840 acres and stated they (the Alliance) were more comfortable with the initial proposal, which was the corridor on Main Street.

Mr. Andre' Bohannon questioned whether the neighborhoods were troubled and have there been any businesses who have come to the City expressing any interest after we have acquired all of this property.

Council Member Teplitz stated that the neighborhoods have had a maximum level of input into this process and some neighborhoods have opted in and some have opted out.

Economic Development Director David Dobson stated that some doctors have expressed interest in the proposal. There were no commitments to buy property, according to Director Dobson.

Vice Chairman Donald Jackson questioned whether alternative proposals could be considered or was the proposal coming from the Administration a done deal.

Council Member Teplitz stated work on the ordinance started in December and if this was approved on Tuesday, May 13 at City Council, that would be the beginning of the project. She explained many meetings had been held with interested parties to gather input. We have consensus to what is before the Council from institutions and Peoria Next and various neighborhoods, some not-for-profits, churches. The door is open, she explained.

Vice Chairman Jackson questioned whether or not this would be binding for neighborhoods if they opted in or out.

Council Member Gary Sandberg submitted an alternate proposal and stated it was the Moss-Bradley concept. He said his proposal was not nearly as big as the one coming from the Administration. He stated the proposal coming from the Administration now encompassed areas near City Hall and several blocks in the Third District and it also crossed over Knoxville into District Two, as well as the West Bluff. He spoke in support of and on behalf of the Moss-Bradley concept. He said his plan was the dumbbell plan, with Bradley University and Methodist Hospital—and perhaps even St. Francis Hospital—becoming the two ends of the dumbbell. The bar between those two, he explained, is a two-block range down Main Street between Russell and Windom. Predominately the commercial area; there were very few homes in that area, he explained. He said this was close to the DPZ plan, but includes the two areas at each end. He said this would be a very hearty medical research area which would also include the School of Medicine.

Council Member Sandberg said this land needed to be used better because it was becoming a suburban development in an urban area. He advocated the Evanston model rather than the Kalamazoo model, although he explained Kalamazoo wasn't 840 acres. He said his proposal wasn't 840 acres or 770 acres and it allowed the neighborhoods to survive. He stated the Chamber of Commerce supported the Medical Technical, Bio-Science Research District, but centered on West Main between University and Kumpf Boulevard to include at least one block on either side of Main Street. He said the scale and the scope was the issue.

Ms. Ernestine Jackson stated there was concern on the part of African-Americans that eminent domain would be used. She said in the displacement in Southtown, many people had their homes paid off; and when they were forced to move, they were forced to take out mortgages and this was a concern. She also expressed concern regarding the School District and the proposed TIF district. She explained she worked for the City during the Southtown Project and could testify that the jobs did not translate into jobs for African-Americans.

Attorney Jack Teplitz stated the proposal coming from the Administration did not commit the City to use TIF.

Corporation Counsel Randy Ray reiterated that there had to be a public purpose in order for the City to engage in eminent domain.

Mr. Bashir Ali, Workforce Development Director, explained that Workforce Development would be working with the hospitals and the African-American community to utilize grant funding for job training.

Dr. Tim Vega of the Randolph-Roanoke Association spoke in support of the proposal.

Mr. Andre' Bohannon explained that many of the businesses coming into the area would not meet the hiring needs of the current residents. He added they are not going to qualify for employment in the types of businesses proposed.

Council Member Gale Thetford spoke on behalf of the proposal and explained why she wanted the Third District to be included in the proposal. She said there was no foundation for the rumor that this project would displace minorities and it was unforgivable that many incorrect rumors had developed. She said this was simple project.

Mr. Charlie Burke a member of the Alliance expressed grave concerns with the proposal and said he had bad experiences in the Southtown Project.

Ms. Ernestine Jackson reiterated the proposal was not simple, but a complex issue which would disrupt citizens and likely cause them to have mortgages among other concerns.

Economic Director David Dobson stated Southtown was carried out under the tool of urban renewal and this project was different. He stated that the City had no intention of handling things the same way. He stated there was no intention to attempt to clear large masses of property.

Mr. Bernie Goitein stated that owner-occupancy housing should be one of the goals.

Discussion was held regarding specifics of the Ordinance coming from the administration. Mr. Teplitz referred the citizens to the Ordinance, Page 19, paragraph 7, which stated it would stabilize the neighborhoods and Page 18, paragraphs 8 and 9, which stated it would maintain the diversity of the District.

More discussion followed regarding citizens concerns. Ms. Ernestine Jackson referred to paragraph 2b, Page 5, and cited the language and stated that African-Americans were afraid of this proposal.

Mr. Todd Dennhardt spoke in regard to job creation.

Mr. James Polk urged the Council to make sure there would be opportunities for jobs and training.

Mr. Gary Baker stated that he had planned to sell his home and now with the publicized proposal, he could not sell his house.

Ms. Karla Dennhardt urged the Council to coordinate with all of the councils of neighborhoods.

No other citizens came forward to speak, Mayor Ransburg thanked everyone for attending and the Chairman adjourned the meeting at 7:50 p.m.

Mary L. Haynes, MMC
City Clerk of Peoria, Illinois