

Urban Renewal Agency of
the City of San Antonio
City Hall
Agency Conference Room
Luncheon Meeting
June 25, 1959

MEMBERS PRESENT: Commissioners R. A. Nelson, E. C. Parker, Waldemar D. Schaefer, Clarence Thorne and R. Roy Baines.

MEMBERS ABSENT: Commissioners Henry A. Guerra, Sr., J. A. Kemple, Edwin Schroeder and Frank Valdez.

AGENCY STAFF: M. Winston Martin, Executive Administrator, and Mrs. Singleton, Agency Secretary.

CITY STAFF PRESENT: Mr. Jack Shelley, Assistant City Manager, and Mr. Carlos Cadena, City Attorney.

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Invocation was offered by Mr. Shelley, Assistant City Manager.

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APPROVAL OF MINUTES

May 28, 1959

On MOTION by Mr. Parker, seconded by Mr. Thorne, the minutes of May 28, 1959, were approved as read. All voting in the affirmative, MOTION CARRIED.

June 8, 1959

AMENDMENT: Relocation Committee, Paragraph 1, Line 3. Change "... or starting new slums ..." to read "... starting different slums ..."

On MOTION by Mr. Nelson, seconded by Mr. Parker, the minutes of June 8th were approved as read and amended. All voting in the affirmative, MOTION CARRIED.

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JAIL SITE

The Chairman asked for clarification of action taken by the City Council on the new jail site. It was his understanding that proper course of action would be for acquisition of land to be made by the Urban Renewal Agency.

Mr. Shelley replied that an agreement had been signed in City Council meeting that morning designating the portion of property to be purchased by the City for County use, also the City was considering the purchase of land across Laredo Street from the site; this would involve three (3) sites PLUS the property to be bought by the County.

The Chairman asked that if it were not true that in the end analyses the City and the Agency would receive a pro-rata share of credit for the value of improvements the City proposes to make.

Mr. Shelley replied that the City would receive a percentage.

The Chairman then asked if it were not true that after the Agency acquired the land it could then be resold to the City at a lesser price than the City could purchase it themselves?

It was the opinion of Mr. Cadena, City Attorney, the City could purchase the site from the Agency at a saving and clear the land at a later date.

Mr. Martin noted that if the City did purchase the land from the Urban Renewal Agency, two-thirds (2/3) of the loss to the Agency in resale of the land would be borne by the Federal government.

Mr. Shelley stated he would look into the matter more thoroughly.

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AGENCY MATTERS SUBMITTED BY THE CHAIRMAN

Correspondence from Rev. J. A. Kemple

The Chairman requested the Executive Administrator reply to a letter received from Commissioner Kemple in which he advised the Agency that due to previous commitments he would be unable to actively participate in Agency matters until early fall.

"The Business Side of Urban Redevelopment"

The Chairman requested a speech by Philip W. Kniskern entitled "The Business Side of Urban Redevelopment" be reproduced by the Agency Staff and mailed to members of the Agency Commission.

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REPORTS

NAHRO Conference, Kansas City, Missouri

Mr. Nelson. Being generally concerned with relocation primarily, looking over projects in Kansas City you can see they have done a tremendous job. One contractor has done over one project in its entirety. Apparently the State of Missouri has permitted a tax abatement to off-set high interest costs. These particular buildings are luxury apartments, not relocation apartments. Driving down the streets in the urban renewal areas, some of the buildings condemned for clearance appear to be good, standard buildings.

As far as relocation is concerned, very few of the tenants went into public housing and either bought or rented higher priced dwelling units - an entirely different situation from what we have in San Antonio. I didn't get any answers to what their relocation problems were except to provide rentals low enough for the people to afford. They have a large urban renewal staff. I could not compare Kansas City's project to

what we have here except that the first project is in close proximity to the downtown area and overlooks the stockyards and airport.

The Chairman asked the size, in acres, of the St. Louis project.

Mr. Martin replied that St. Louis had a 253 acre project.

The Commissioners were interested in information regarding the mechanics of handling the relocation problem in Kansas City, how the people were received and what information should be accumulated in helping these people to relocate.

Mr. Nelson replied that the Kansas City Office employed a woman sociologist to interview families to be relocated and followed each individual case to its completion, helping the families to up-grade their living standard and even finding jobs that would permit families to afford better housing.

Mr. Martin explained each family is handled as an individual case; they actually find the families housing and make arrangements to get them into the housing. Each family MUST be taken separately and its individual problems worked out according to the individual needs.

Mr. Nelson noted that they were able to work with people in the adjoining areas and helped them develop personal pride in their homes and to make the property not only livable but also attractive. He suggested that this office should employ a person qualified to do this type work.

The Chairman was of the opinion that it was not too early to start relocating the people in the project area.

Mr. Martin pointed out that the Agency Staff was already much farther along with relocation than the Agency Commission realized, a door-to-door survey had already been completed and the needs of each individual family were known, that it was not too early to begin relocating SOME of the families in the area, however, it must be considered that to take tenants away from property owners too far in advance of land acquisition, leaving the property vacant for a long period, might be unwise. He added that two families had already applied for 221 Housing Certificates and begun their own homes.

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STINSON HOMES

A general discussion of the project area, family needs and average income in the area raised the question of the possible use of Stinson Homes for relocation purposes.

Mr. Shelley replied that the City was not in the real estate business and Stinson Homes, a temporary housing project, had been taken over by the City for the life of the project - an estimated four more years.

Some of the Commissioners were of the opinion that Stinson Homes would be good property to consider for relocation at the present rate of rentals and asked Mr. Shelley if it were possible to create vacancies for this purpose by qualifying renters in order to make best use of the property.

Mr. Shelley replied that it could be done for a short time but that at the end of four years the project would be completely obsolete. The apartments are wired for single light bulbs and the outside wiring is in a very deteriorated state and require constant watching; the overall construction meets the bare minimum of requirements. Public Service maintains service up to the pole outside the yard, from that point it is up to the City. Mr. Shelley estimated that to put the area in a "standard condition of repair" would cost several hundred thousand dollars.

The Commission requested, in order to make the Urban Renewal Project a success, this Agency have the consideration of all vacancies in the Stinson Homes Project for displacees of the urban renewal project. It was felt that to assure success of the urban renewal project, more consideration should be given to the Stinson Homes Project for relocation purposes than to public housing.

The Commission then asked the status of the vacant property across from Stinson Homes (Stinson Field) and the possibility of utilizing that area for possible 221 Housing sites.

Mr. Martin replied that not only was part of the property leased out but there is a large sewer outfall line running across the property above ground. The property would be difficult to plan and develop because of an existing school site and a sewer outfall line.

The Commission discussed the severe need for housing and the possibility of designating a new project site for residential development. It was suggested the property immediately across from Central West Project Area I (across the expressway) would be a logical location for residential development, taking into consideration the number of people in Project Area I who work in the downtown area but would not have transportation if moved farther out into residential areas. The Commission felt that, because they were permitted by HHFA to overlap urban renewal projects, it was not too early to designate a new residential project.

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PLANNING CONSULTANTS

The opinion of the Commission was there would be no advantage of considering out-of-state consulting firms but rather a local or state firm who would be familiar with San Antonio and its needs. With the statistical work completed a working plan should be formulated to present to the consultant in order that he would know exactly the type plan to present to the Agency. Mentioned for possible consideration as Planning Consultants were Caudill-Rowlett & Scott, Marmon & Mok, Associates, Noonan & Thompson, and Carl Weiss as well as other state and local firms. However, in order for any consultant to present a bid it would first be necessary to present him with a set of specifications for the project area.

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REPORT ON PLANNING COMMITTEE TOUR

Mr. Thorne reported that after a thirty minute tour of the renewal area his committee met in the Agency Conference Room. The discussion resulted in the Committee's decision to appoint a three-man sub-committee to work up general specifications to present to consultants.

The main impression Mr. Thorne received from the committee members on tour was many of them were impressed that there was a slum area in such a condition. The main purpose of the tour was to see the existing buildings and note what should be sanved and what should be torn down. The committee was not impressed with the historic value of the Navarro Houses.

In evaluating the area it is not as though you are looking at 65 acres of raw land but you have to keep in mind what is there, what can be used as well as what can be razed and what can be constructed in its place. The value of the land should be established as well as a reasonable price set on the parcels to be resold.

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PUBLIC RELATIONS COMMITTEE

Dr. Schaefer reported that both he and his committee were ready to get started, however, until there was some plan to present to the public they felt there was very little they could do.

Mr. Martin explained the necessity for the Public Relations Committee to begin functioning, even before a plan had been decided upon, was to inform the citizens of San Antonio of the history of urban renewal, its aims and intended accomplishments. He suggested that a letter should be prepared to present to all civic groups advising them that the Agency has speakers and films available for their meetings. The Agency is not at the stage of selling A special plan but want to sell them on urban renewal itself.

Mr. shelley stated that the City had prepared a list of speakers available to the various organizations from the City staff.

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GENERAL DISCUSSION

Mr. Shelley said that, other than supplying the personnel to the Agency, the City is not taking the position of supervising the work program; that they are looking to Winston to work directly with the Agency and not with their office because they do not know what the Agency wants. We are not staying close to this personally, and I am not taking the position of saying, "Winston, you should have this done by this date, etc ...". I think that is up to the Agency. Is the Agency satisfied with the job the personnel has been doing? Are we to the point you think we should be at this time?

The Chairman replied it was his personal opinion that work couldn't proceed fast enough, even the Administrator would agree to that - there are reasons for it - not excuses.

In reply to Mr. Shelley's question, the Administrator said the original estimate was that the PE & RR could be done in four months; Fort Worth had said it would take eight months. It was almost four months before the Agency had a staff so work actually has been in progress less than 90 days, however, the PE & RR Report will be ready to submit to Fort Worth within four months from the original beginning.

The Commission assured Mr. Shelley that they were well satisfied with progress

being made by the staff and expressed a normal desire for the actual physical phase (purchase and clearance) of the program to being.

It was the opinion of the Chairman that, because of the amount of time the Agency members are going to spend, now that the project is getting underway, they are going to have to look to the staff to keep them informed and supply needed information. If the Agency continues to meet only once a month, those are the times to inform the Agency of the progress being made by the staff; the only time most of the Commissioners have to catch up with the progress being made is at these meetings.

The Administrator replied that in his opinion, the Commission was being kept fully informed of all progress at each meeting, with perhaps one exception. The Administrator does not give them a detailed report of each step required by HHFA in the processing of reports, etc., as set up by the Federal government. There are a certain number of months devoted to each phase of the budget. If the Agency Commissioners are interested in seeing this schedule it is available in the office at any time.

Mr. Thorne said he felt he could speak for the group when he said that the program has progressed very well, that he is just now beginning to know what the program is really about and what is going to be required of him and his committee.

The Administrator said he had one more point to make in the matter of the survey because in the requirements as made by HHFA it provides that you can take a sampling of conditions in a project area; however, it was his opinion that there was no point in going into the area to take a sampling for a PE & RR Report and then going BACK at a later date and making a second survey. We now have complete information as a result of the initial study. The HHFA staff have taken OUR forms and are sending them to other cities now going into urban renewal.

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MINIMUM HOUSING CODE

The Commission asked Mr. Cadana if the Minimum Housing Division were set up as outlined in the Ordinance.

Mr. Cadana replied that his only check would be the number of complaints forwarded to his office.

Because of the lack of funds to provide adequate staff for the Minimum Housing Division in the present City budget, the Commission asked if it were possible for the Agency to provide a portion of the funds needed to maintain a staff adequate to enforce the Minimum Housing Code, and, could that personnel be utilized by Housing & Inspections and still be on the Agency Payroll?

In reply to these questions by the Commission, Mr. Martin said there was a good possibility enforcement of the Minimum Housing Code could be brought under the Agency, however, with regard to personnel being used by Housing & Inspections as well as the Agency, this would only be possible if it could be shown the employee worked a certain period of time for the Agency and then the Agency pay for only that portion of the inspector's salary; the City paying for the remaining portion.

The Chairman suggested this problem be discussed by the sub-committee on Housing Conditions & Minimum Housing Code.

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There being no further business before the Urban Renewal Agency at this time, the meeting adjourned at 3:30 o'clock p.m.

APPROVED:


CHAIRMAN

ATTEST:


EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

