

ECONOMIC RECOVERY BOARD FOR CAMDEN

Malandra Hall Community Center - Camden

May 29, 2007

MINUTES OF THE MEETING

Members of the Board present: Reverend J. C. Jones, Vice Chairman; Judge Theodore Davis, Acting COO; Dennis Kille representing Mayor Gwendolyn Faison; City Council President Angel Fuentes; Marge DellaVecchia representing Commissioner Susan Bass Levin; and Public Members: Robert Milner, and Rodney Sadler.

Also Present: Assistant Secretary, Maureen Hassett; Bette Renaud, DAG; and EDA staff.

Absent Lopa Kolluri, designee for State Treasurer Bradley Abelow, Chairman; Secretary Caren Franzini, designee for EDA Chairman Carl Van Horn; Freeholder Director Louis Cappelli, Jr. and Legislative Members: Assemblyman Joseph Roberts, and Senator Wayne Bryant, and Public Members: Rosa Ramirez and William Hosey

Vice Chairman, Reverend Jones called the meeting to order at 10:02 am.

In accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act, Ms. Hassett announced that notice of this meeting has been sent to the *Star Ledger*, the *Times*, the *Courier Post* and the *Philadelphia Inquirer* at least 48 hours prior to the meeting, and that a meeting notice has been duly posted on the Secretary of State's bulletin board at the State House.

A quorum of the ERB Board was present.

Vice Chairman Jones asked for a motion to approve the April 24, 2007 minutes of the Board.

MOTION TO APPROVE: Judge Davis SECOND: Ms. DellaVecchia AYES: 7

MINUTES OF BOARD MEETING

Sue Brennan, Executive Director, Fairview Main Street, welcomed the board members to Malandra Hall. Ms. Brennan stated that the Fairview neighborhood and Yorkship Square have been in the midst of redevelopment for the last 5 years. She stated that Phase I and II of the Fairview Village closed on 66 homeownership units. Currently, Phase III is underway with 35 units to be rehabilitated. Currently, 72 apartments are fully rehabilitated and occupied. In Fairview Court, 15 of the 30 units are rehabilitated and occupied and one new business has located in Fairview. In addition, the \$2.1 million restoration of Yorkship Square is being finalized. The Fairview Mainstreet Association is seeking \$25,000 from the State Main Street program to supplement the recent improvements. Ms. Brennan also mentioned that the First Annual Fairview 5K Run, which was held last Saturday, was a success with over 120 runners. She thanks the members of the ERB for their support and stated that she's looking forward to working with the ERB in the future.

Vice Chairman Jones requested Maureen Hassett to present the item before the board. Ms. Hassett stated that the Members were asked to approve a \$1,000,000 public purpose grant to Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey – Camden Campus (“Rutgers Camden”) (P018292) to fund a portion of the \$5 million Rutgers Early Learning Research Academy (ELRA) that will serve Camden children, ages birth to five, by transitioning them into primary schools. Ms. Hassett stated that the project represented the most recent effort of Rutgers-Camden, under the leadership of Professor Gloria Bonilla-Santiago, to extend university and community resources to enhance quality education for vulnerable children. The ELRA will include an Early Care and Education Program, a Research Unit, an Academic Component, a Professional Development and Training Center, a Health Center, and a Parent Development and Resource Center. ELRA will build on activities LEAP Academy began three years ago to enhance teaching, improve children’s language skills, empower parents and transform the culture of preschool centers. Dr. Gloria Bonilla-Santiago will serve as the project director and the main staff person overseeing the development.

The ELRA will be located at 421 Cooper Street in Camden and will include six major components: An Early Care and Education Program serving children in Camden City, A Research Unit providing ongoing evaluation of programs and commissioning research studies on key areas of early childhood development for publication, dissemination and replication, as well as to inform public policy; An Academic Component that will focus on developing undergraduate and graduate level programs to prepare professionals for the field of early childhood development and education; A Professional Development and Training Center (to include Infant/Toddler, P-3 certification, and CDA credentialing); A Health Center that will provide comprehensive care for families, specializing in pediatric (and prenatal) care; and A Parent Development and Resource Center that will provide parents with opportunities for training and development to maximize their involvement with their children’s education, strengthen their parenting skills and nurture their leadership skills as partners in the educational process. Once operational, the ELRA will serve 73 children: 8 infants (6-18 months); 20 toddlers (1 and 2 years old); and 45 preschoolers (3 and 4 years old).

Approximately .5 acres of land has been acquired by Rutgers University and construction of the school is estimated for completion in 2008.

Ms. Hassett stated that in addition to the ERB funds, the project also has funding commitments of \$2,000,000 from the Knight Foundation, and \$2,000,000 from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, which is expected in the Fall 2007.

Ms. Hassett explained that the ERB funding is a public purpose grant, the NJEDA will require a performance mortgage on the property as security of the ERB funds and that the mortgage would be forgiven by 10% each year for a total of (10) ten years.

Funding of the ERB public purpose grant is contingent upon receipt and satisfactory review of construction bid documents indicating costs comparable to area and industry standards and specifically with regard to architect and engineering fees not exceeding 16% of the overall budget. In addition, funding is contingent upon receipt of commitments for the balance of funding for the project. Disbursement of ERB funds is contingent upon receipt of a permanent certificate of occupancy and an executed Annual Service Charge agreement with the City of Camden. Rutgers has negotiated to pay an annual service charge of 2% of the ERB grant amount.

MOTION TO APPROVE: Cncl. President Fuentes SECOND Mr. Sadler AYES: 7

Vice Chairman Jones requested comments from the members.

Maureen Hassett thanked Judge Davis for hosting the May 22nd Town Hall meeting and the board members who attended. She announced that the June ERB meeting was rescheduled from June 26, to June 21st at the Waterfront Technology Center in Camden.

Ms. Hassett announced that there would be a Policy Committee meeting scheduled to review fund balances.

Marge DellaVecchia commented that she was pleased with the May 22nd Town Hall meeting and as a result she met with the Boys and Girls Club representatives this morning and toured the Catto School. Ms. DellaVecchia indicated that the facility is a wonderful model of how to coordinate and share school facilities with community service providers.

Council President Fuentes echoed Ms. DellaVecchia's sentiments and also noted that the town meetings have been very well received in the community in that they have been asking for these town hall styles meetings for years. He suggested that the slide show presentation be modified to include projects from the neighborhoods, i.e. South Camden, Cramer Hill, Parkside, South Camden, and East Camden. He also suggested that the area town hall meetings should be scheduled annually. Ms. Hassett stated that neighborhood pictures could certainly be added and she was glad that the ERB could provide the framework for the meetings.

Judge Davis stated that he met with his staff in February regarding holding town hall meetings in various sections of the City when projects are being considered.

Vice Chairman Jones inquired if there was a process in place to address concerns of residents that attended the town hall meetings. Judge Davis stated that Yolanda Neely from the Mayor's office assembled the complaints and distributed them to department heads.

Council President Fuentes inquired if the EDA and/or ERB was familiar with the Online Learning Centers that are set up in North Camden and Cramer Hill. He stated the learning center in North Camden was underutilized and was seeking assistance in having it transferred to East Camden. Maureen Hassett stated she would reach out to Commissioner Socolow in that regard.

Vice Chairman Jones requested comments from the public.

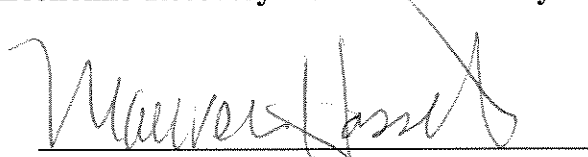
Frank Fulbrook, President of the Cooper Grant Neighborhood Association asked if the Rutgers ELRA project was approved. Ms. Hassett confirmed that it was. Mr. Fulbrook commended Rutgers University for its good work and noted that the Cooper Grant and Downtown Business district is now enjoying a seamless integration that was spearheaded by Roger Dennis, Rutgers' former Provost in Camden.

Mr. Colandus "Kelly" Francis, President NAACP of Camden Vice President, mentioned that RPM Developers's application for funding to build affordable housing in the downtown area should not be considered. He suggested that the board members reject the project, as he believes it is a bad idea and a waste of valuable real estate. He noted that most builders of affordable housing ask for a 30 years tax abatement. He believes the tax abatement would do nothing to help the schools even though the project would be family housing and would include children.

Anthony Bucci, of Freeholder Director's Cappelli's office informed the board that a press conference would be held on Wednesday, May 30, 2007 at Elm Street in front of the State penitentiary.

There being no further business, on a motion by Council President Fuentes and seconded by Vice Chairman Jones, the meeting was adjourned at 11:40 am.

Certification: The foregoing and attachments represent a true and complete summary of the actions taken by the State Economic Recovery Board for the City of Camden at its meeting.



Maureen Hassett, Vice President
Strategic Partnerships, EDA
Assistant Secretary, ERB