

**ECONOMIC RECOVERY BOARD FOR CAMDEN**

**December 16, 2008**

**Camden City Council Chambers, Camden, NJ**

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING**

Members of the Board present: Elizabeth Lindsey, designee for Chairman Rousseau, State Treasurer; Brett Waters for Judge Theodore Davis, COO; Dennis Kille for Mayor Gwendolyn Faison; Rev. J. C. Jones, Vice Chairman; City Council President Angel Fuentes; Marge DellaVecchia representing DCA Commissioner Joseph Doria, Jr.; and Public Members: Rodney Sadler, William Hosey, Rosa Ramirez, and Robert Milner.

Also Present: Laura Wallick, Assistant Secretary; Bette Renaud, DAG; and EDA staff.

Absent: Non-Voting Legislative Members: Senator Dana Redd, and Assemblywoman Nilsa Cruz-Perez; and Freeholder Director Louis Cappelli, Jr., Non-Voting Member.

Ms. Lindsey called the meeting to order at 10:15 a.m.

In accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act, Ms. Wallick announced that notice of this meeting had been sent to the *Star Ledger*, the *Times*, and the *Courier Post* 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.

Ms. Lindsey asked for a motion to approve the October 28, 2008 minutes of the Board.

**MOTION TO APPROVE: Rev. Jones                      SECOND: Mr. Milner                      AYES: 9**

**MINUTES OF BOARD MEETING**

Ms. Lindsey asked Ms. Wallick to summarize the first item before the board, the Heart of Camden - Environmental Mitigation and Landscape Master Plan - Phase I (P16954). Ms. Wallick stated that the Members were being asked to approve a modification to extend the grant term to May 31, 2009 for the \$1,150,000 infrastructure grant to the Heart of Camden ("HOC") to fund Phase I of the Environmental Mitigation and Landscape Master Plan ("EMLMP") for the Waterfront South neighborhood of Camden and to reallocate \$50,000 in project management fees from the Camden Redevelopment Agency to the HOC.

Ms. Wallick stated that the Camden Waterfront South Restoration Project is a multi-year effort to restore the historic Waterfront South neighborhood while addressing the issues that have caused its decline. Several non-profits, the City of Camden, and the State are working with the citizens of Waterfront South to improve the quality of life for residents while mitigating the effects of Waterfront South's industrial neighborhoods.

Ms. Wallick stated that the project implements Phase I of a comprehensive three-phase EMLMP that will total over \$3.5 million. The EMLMP involved identifying specific sources of a particulate matter in the neighborhood and using best practices in landscape design to mitigate the effects. The effort is comprised of three main areas of focus: 1) creating buffers between residential and industrial users; 2) vegetating vacant lots; and 3) increasing planting cover on walls and roofs, and creating sinks to absorb swirling particulate matter from poorly maintained roadways.

The project has taken longer than two years, mainly due to the tranche disbursement conditions. Each component of Phase I had to be completed prior to disbursement for the next component. To date, all architectural and engineering plans, property permissions and agreements, landscaping and streetscaping have been complete. The final component is the greenscaping of the open space, which will be completed by May 31, 2009. The total project cost remains at \$1,350,000.

ERB funds have been disbursed based on submission of invoices submitted by HOC, of which 10% is withheld for each tranche, until receipt of satisfactory inspection and sign-off by the architect. The initial tranche was used to implement the linear buffering throughout the industrial areas. The second tranche has been disbursed for the residential streetscaping. The third tranche of funding will be disbursed for vegetating lots and planting wall coverings. To date, the ERB has disbursement a total of \$817,821.

**MOTION TO APPROVE: Ms. DellaVecchia      SECOND: Rev. Jones      AYES: 8**

**Mr. Milner voted No.**

**Council President Fuentes entered the meeting at this time.**

Angel Fuentes, City Council President welcomed all present to the City of Camden and to Council Chambers. He remarked there have been many changes for the better in the City thru the ERB, not only to the Waterfront but also for other parts of the city.

Ms. Lindsey asked Ms. Wallick to summarize the next item before the board, the Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey – Camden Campus project (P18292). Ms. Wallick stated that the Members were being asked to approve a modification to extend the grant term to September 31, 2010 for the \$1,000,000 public purpose grant. This grant is to fund a portion of the \$8.5 million Rutgers Early Learning Research Academy (ELRA) that will serve Camden children, ages birth to five, by transitioning them into primary schools.

Ms. Wallick stated that this project represents 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.

Ms. Wallick pointed out that Dr. Gloria Bonilla-Santiago will serve as the project director and the main staff person overseeing the development. Rutgers Camden has worked with Becica & Associates to prepare the schematic designs of the facility. The University, through its Office of Facilities staff, has completed Phases I and II Environmental Studies and finalized the construction budget. Currently, bids have been issued in order to enter into A&E, construction, and construction contracts for the

building. The timeline for construction documents and permit/local planning approvals is expected by March 2009. The construction contracts should be finalized by April 2009.

Ms. Wallick remarked that the ELRA project location has changed from 421 Cooper Street to the property located at 5<sup>th</sup> & Cooper Streets in Camden. This parcel is also owned by Rutgers Camden, which will provide a ground lease to ELRA for \$1 per year. The new 1-acre site has two buildings that will be demolished in order to construct the new facility. The new facility will now be 25,908 sq.ft. versus the original plan for 16,000 sq. ft. The school will include three floors for instructional use, a basement with a kitchen, conference, break and activity rooms, a cyber café, research labs, play areas, and a roof garden. The construction of the school is estimated to begin by June 2009 and be completed by September 2010.

The ELRA program is currently being operating in trailers and the LEAP academy school, excluding infant care. The ELRA school will have the six major components originally envisioned and will serve approximately 126 children: 16 infants (6-18 months); 20 toddlers (1 and 2 years old); and 90 preschoolers (3 and 4 years old). Operating revenue is expected to continue to come from the Board of Education Abbott Program, and Department of Human Services NJ Cares for Kids. The funding for infant care will derive from grant vouchers, and tuition. All revenue is projected at a total of \$1,864,333 for fiscal year 2010 to 2011.

Ms. Wallick remarked that to date, the ERB has received commitment letters for \$2,000,000 from the Knight Foundation, and grants totaling in excess of \$448,500 from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. In addition, the Camden County Improvement Authority has approved a resolution authorizing the issuance of up to \$5,000,000 in tax-exempt bonds for the ELRA project and Commerce Bank, now "TD Bank", issued a commitment letter to purchase the bonds.

**MOTION TO APPROVE: Council Pres. Fuentes                      SECOND: Mr. Hosey                      AYES: 10**

Ms. Lindsey asked Ms. Wallick to summarize the next item before the board. Ms. Wallick stated that the item was approved under delegated authority and was for informational purposes only. The applicant, On Time Staff, LLC (P24133), located in Pennsauken, was formed in 1999 as a staffing agency. The company was approved for a \$73,245 Business Lease Incentive Grant to support its relocation from Pennsauken to approximately 4,800 s.f of space in the Ferry Terminal Building in Camden. The project will result in the relocation of 20 jobs within the next two years.

Ms. Lindsey requested updates or items of interest from the Members.

Ms. DellaVecchia stated that the HMFA approved their final round of tax credits for this year and that the City of Camden was the successful recipient for the Michael's Development project which is part of the Hope VI development in the Centerville neighborhood of Camden.

Ms. Wallick announced that Business Development Officer Mujiba Parker had resigned her position at the EDA to operate her business fulltime and that Friday, December 19<sup>th</sup> would be her last day. The board members thanked Mujiba for her work and gave her a round of applause.

Council President Fuentes stated that the City is working on a business summit scheduled for January 24, 2009 at Rutgers University Camden. He mentioned that the Camden Chief of Police promised to attend and speak regarding safety issues. He expects representation from Judge Davis' office amongst others. He asked fellow board members for their assistance in getting the word out.

Ms. Lindsey requested comments from the members of the public.

Mr. Colandus “Kelly” Francis, President NAACP of Camden stated that in his opinion the board has made good decisions about funding several projects in the City, however he believed the Board made a mistake in approving funding for the Centerville housing project in South Camden, specifically for Michaels Development. He felt that the area was unhealthy for residents and that the 30-year tax abatements would have a negative financial impact on the city.

Mr. Francis also remarked the students from Camden High School, and the NAACP ACT-SO marching band will attend the Inauguration Ceremonies on January 20<sup>th</sup> Washington, DC.

Ms. Lulu Williams, Camden resident introduced two neighbors who addressed the board regarding their housing problems.

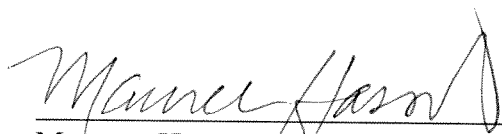
Ms. Francine Richards, 1913 South 4<sup>th</sup> Street, Camden, NJ addressed the board, stating that in September 2007, she purchased a home through the Heart of Camden that is plagued with mold, floors boards coming up and a basement that floods. She stated that the conditions have negatively affected her health and that of her young son.

Ms. MaryAnn Anderson, 916 Chelton Avenue, Camden, NJ expressed her concerns about the abandoned homes in the City, as well as with the City’s schedule to tear down trees near her home. She stated that the neighborhood needed those trees as a buffer against noise and pollution.

Ms. Wallick announced that there was a sign up sheet available for those members of the public who spoke at the meeting and wished to be contacted by the City Council’s office for follow up to their concerns.

**There being no further business, on a motion by Rev. Jones, and seconded by Mr. Sadler, the meeting was adjourned at 11:20.**

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, Senior Vice President, EDA  
Assistant Secretary, ERB