



STATE OF TEXAS

COUNTY OF FORT BEND

CITY OF RICHMOND

The Development Corporation of Richmond convened in a regular meeting open to the public and pursuant to notice thereof duly given in accordance with Section 501.072, Local Government Code, Vernon's Texas Codes, in Richmond City Street Barn at 109 North 8th Street and Via teleconference within said City on January 27, 2021 at 10:00 a.m. Directors in attendance included the following:

Joe Bonham, President	Kit Jones, Vice President
Verge Greenwood, Secretary-Absent	Terry Gaul, Treasurer
Becky Haas	Nancie Rain, Secretary
William B. Morefield, III	Terri Vela, City Manager
Gary Smith, City Attorney	Jerry Jones, Executive Director
Laura Scarfato, City Secretary	

President Joe Bonham proceeded to call the meeting to order at 10:07 a.m. via video conference pursuant to Texas Government Code, Section 551.125, as amended, and as modified by the temporary suspension of various provisions thereof effective March 16, 2020, by the Governor of Texas in accordance with the Texas Disaster Act of 1975, all as related to the Governor's proclamation on March 13, 2020, certifying that the COVID-19 pandemic poses an imminent threat of disaster and declaring a state of disaster for all counties in Texas. All members of the public may participate in the meeting via video conference call.

There was a quorum present.

Agenda item 2. Review and make recommendations to the Industry Target Analysis (Strategic) Plan. Any recommendations made that would need action taken will be added to our next scheduled regular meeting.

Executive Director (ED) Jerry Jones led the presentation. ED Jones welcomed everyone and stated the purpose of the workshop was to ensure the direction of the City with regards to development and the community are consistent with his goals.

- ❖ The first topic was on making the City attractive to increase business development. ED Jones stated he has been working with the area colleges and analyzing the workforce. People move to Richmond for a reason with the most attractive reason being the "quality of life" that Richmond provides. Richmond knows its identity, work just needs to be done to reach the businesses that identify with what the City provides. The DCR needs to be

more active on social media so that people feel connected to their neighborhood. It was mentioned that residents that have a Richmond, TX address are adamant that they live in the City of Richmond even though they do not live in the City Limits or ETJ. City Manager Vela brought up the question, how do we capitalize on the businesses and residents that "want and/or think" they live in Richmond but do not. ED Jones indicated that he is conservative with spending and searches for the opportunities that make sense and cents. The different corridors were discussed, Historical Downtown, Jackson & 7th St. as well as Hwy 90A. These are viewed as micro communities. Focus should be on existing business and new business development. Business retention is a must. There is a need to engage with the local Foundations to invest in the community. Engage both No. Richmond and So. Richmond enticing both to do business in the downtown area. ED Jones is joining organizations to meet other business owners in the area. With regard to infrastructure, the City should send one message of uniformity. All signs and banners need to be the same and refreshed on a regular basis as they are the gateway to the City.

Agenda item 3. Review the Downtown Richmond Assessment Report Prepared by the Texas Downtown Association.

ED Jones provided the report discussing the findings of the Texas Downtown Association which was made up of various individuals. It was suggested that the downtown buildings should be designated as Historic structures in order to utilize state and federal funding.

- ❖ The old Fire Station was discussed as a valuable asset with its proximity to the river. There has been lots of interest as of late. The term geofencing was explained which helps in determining geographic areas. It can provide data as to where a person resides based on a person's phone. Business parks were discussed with examples of Sugar Land and Rosenberg, advantages and disadvantages.
- ❖ Director Kit Jones asked how the City should deal with the businesses in the downtown area that are always closed and have no intention of selling. Legally, ED Jones stated there is nothing that can be done. Various suggestions were made including the beautification of downtown with lighting and pots with plants. However, ED Jones stated that San Francisco imposes a monthly vacancy tax until the business contributes to the tax roll. City Manager Vela stated a conditional use vacancy permit that is issued every year may be something the City discusses.
- ❖ ED Jones stated there is a disconnect between the Planning and Zoning Commission, Business Community and the Economic Development Department. The three need to be cohesive in their efforts, the challenges that were discussed were the building codes and signage possibly being too restrictive. At this time, it was stated that additional staffing is not needed. Again, it was stated the downtown needs to be declared a National Historic District to encourage the investment in incentives. It was stated that

Opportunity Zones are great but additional planning would be needed. The Hotel Occupancy Taxes were mentioned as to where the dollars need to be spent. The Historic Richmond Association was encouraged to increase their dues. ED Jones stated a work plan is in place and that the downtown and the City overall is very clean as opposed to other cities visited.

Agenda item 4. Review and make recommendations to the Downtown Development (Strategic) Plan. Any recommendations made that would need action taken will be added to our next scheduled regular meeting.

- ❖ Future plans were discussed with pocket parks, create a gathering space, and an amphitheater. The benefits of locating the new City Hall on the north side of the tracks and investing in the community further embracing the residents, were reviewed. It would send a clear message that both sides are represented. It was identified that the City is not in the parking business and it should be left up to developers. Possibly share an agreement.

Agenda item 5. Review and consider becoming a Certified Local Government.

- ❖ Certified Local Government (CLG) was introduced, and the need is great however, it takes a large staff. There was a discussion regarding creating a Cultural District. The Certified Local Government application would need to be fast tracked by a qualified consultant. Both the CLG and the Cultural District need to be completed fairly quickly in order to grow the City.

Agenda item 6. Review and consider creating a Cultural District in Downtown Richmond.

- ❖ The Cultural District was discussed earlier in the meeting. ED Jones stated it does not make a difference which is done first, the CLG or the Culture District. The estimated cost for the consultants to prepare the applications could be \$20,000 – 40,000. There was a question as to how the railroad tracks adds value to the City. ED Jones stated the railroad can't be quantified with a value, it is just ingrained in the City and is part of the fabric that defines the City. It was discussed how to take opportunities with the railroad as when Big Boy Steam Engine came through town.

In conclusion, ED Jones stated he is contacting businesses that have approached the City in the past and having conversations to revisit the City for development. Looking for better ways to spend the funds of the Development Corporation with advertising and events. Plans are to begin working on the Certified Local Government process as well as the Culture District. Work will begin on getting the Downtown buildings classified as historical buildings.

There being no further business to come before the Development Corporation of Richmond, President Joe Bonham adjourned the meeting at 12:49 p.m.

APPROVED:



Joe Bonham, President

ATTEST:



Laura Scarlato, City Secretary