

**MINUTES
TOWN CENTER COMMUNITY
REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY
ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING
JUNE 17, 2026 - 5:30 PM
DESTIN CITY HALL ANNEX CHAMBERS**

1. CALL TO ORDER:

Chairman Wernet called the meeting to order at 5:30 PM on Wednesday, June 17, 2026, at the Destin City Hall Annex Council Chambers with the Pledge of Allegiance immediately following.

2. ROLL CALL:

Members Present

Lockwood Wernet
Corlene Ziegler
Kyle Davis

Members Absent

Iris Bethea
Preston Green

Staff Present

Kim Montgomery Deputy City Clerk
Jesse Hernandez Senior Planner

With there not being a quorum, this meeting was held as a workshop

3. AGENDA APPROVAL:

Motion to approve the agenda was made by Committee member Bethea with Committee member Davis proving the second. The motion passed 4-0.

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: None

5. CURRENT BUSINESS:

➤ **Development & City Projects Update – Jesse Hernandez Senior Planner**

- The Preserve project was removed from the development tracking list because the original scope of work had changed and no longer required a development order.
- The Destin Linear Trail was also removed from the active tracking list at this time.
 - Mr. Hernandez clarified that the project has not been abandoned.
 - The project remains on the Capital Improvement Project list.
 - Special Projects, through Jeff Cozadd, continues working on easement-related issues.
 - Mr. Hernandez stated that the project had been open for approximately 18 months with no movement for more than a year.
 - Because the city has changed systems for processing development applications, this was removed from the active tracking list until there is more movement on the project.
- Mr. Hernandez also reported that there had not been significant changes in the Harbor CRA development projects during the previous month.

➤ **Destin Linear Trail / Easements Discussion**

- A question was posed as to whether the Destin Linear Trail delay was strictly related to easements or whether other issues were involved.
- Mr. Hernandez stated that the last information received indicated the issue was strictly related to easements.
- He stated that there were only a few remaining holdouts but that resolving those issues required time and effort.
- A Committee member asked whether there was a plan to move forward with acquiring the easements.
- Mr. Hernandez stated that they would need to check with the Projects and Grants Manager Jeff Cozadd regarding whether a specific acquisition plan exists and noted, the status had remained “awaiting final easements” since March 2025.

➤ **Review of Existing Work Plans**

- Mr. Hernandez noted that the CRA Board had asked the Committee to bring back work plans to the July meeting.
- Upon review of prior minutes, it did not appear that the work plans had been completed.
- He explained that a new process has been developed that may affect how work plans proceed.
- He provided an overview of the evening’s discussion topics, which included:
 - Updates on current development projects;
 - Updates on city projects;
 - Discussion of Committee work plans;
 - Guidance on the new work plan process; and
 - Discussion of the Mattie Kelly Connector project.
- City Engineer Robert Tomasek was present to answer questions and provide information regarding the Mattie Kelly Connector.

➤ **Publix Greenspace Work Plan**

- Mr. Hernandez reported that the City Manager had contacted Publix regarding the potential greenspace project.
- Publix is not currently willing to part with the property or enter into an agreement with the City.
- He stated that Publix appears to still be determining what it intends to do with the property.
- He noted that the work plan can remain available for future reconsideration if circumstances change.

➤ **Jewel Melvin Park Improvements**

- Mr. Hernandez explained that the City needs to re-evaluate the CRA Master Plan because the existing plan is very specific regarding eligible CRA projects.
- He stated that, before CRA funds may be used, the City must determine:
 - Whether the project is within the CRA area;
 - Whether the project is authorized by state statute; and
 - Whether the project is included in the CRA Master Plan.

- He noted that it may be difficult to tie Jewel Melvin Park improvements to the current Master Plan unless the improvements are part of the linear trail.

➤ **FPL Undergrounding and Airport / Commons Intersection**

- Mr. Hernandez stated that the Committee did not intend to use CRA funds for the FPL electrical utilities underground project or the Airport Road / Commons Drive intersection project.
 - The Committee had intended to recommend those projects to the CRA Board using other available funds.
 - He reported that the funds that had been considered for those projects have since been spent.
 - As a result, those two projects are not currently available to move forward under that funding source.

➤ **Mattie Kelly Connector Project**

- Mr. Hernandez stated that the Mattie Kelly Connector appears to be the project that is furthest along and that best meets the required criteria for potential CRA funding at this time.
- City Engineer Robert Tomasek provided an overview of the project.
- Mr. Tomasek explained that:
 - The project has been reviewed during the current year;
 - It meets the Town Center CRA requirements;
 - It is included in the Comprehensive Plan;
 - It is included in the Mobility Plan;
 - The project would involve approximately 750 feet of new roadway construction;
 - The project would include sidewalks;
 - The project would include a component that could function as part of the linear trail, although it would not be the linear trail itself.
- Mr. Tomasek stated that the City would need to purchase right-of-way from private property owners.
- The property owners mentioned included:
 - Big Kahuna's; and
 - A shell company that appears to be based in California.
- Mr. Tomasek stated that the shell company owns a small parcel in the area, described as approximately 200 feet by 100 feet.
- A question was asked whether the red box shown on the diagram map provided to the members represented the work area and whether the sidewalk and bike lane areas on the north end were included in the project package.
- Mr. Tomasek clarified that the red box represented the area that would need to be purchased and that they were included in the project.
- The project would connect from Airport Road down to the existing sidewalks on South Mattie Kelly.

- Mr. Tomasek noted that some sidewalk already exists between the old hospital and the project endpoint, although he was unsure whether the existing sidewalk was eight feet or ten feet wide.

➤ **Staff Guidance on Mattie Kelly Connector Priority**

- Mr. Hernandez emphasized the fact that the City does not currently own the property should not be viewed as the deciding obstacle at this stage.
- He stated that the key question is whether the project should be moved forward as a priority.
- He explained if the committee has a quorum at its next meeting and makes a motion to move the Mattie Kelly Connector forward as the priority, the recommendation would inform the CRA Board before the budget process is completed.
- The CRA Board could then consider whether to prioritize funding toward:
 - Acquiring the necessary property; and
 - Completing the connection.
- He clarified that the CRA Board controls the funding and that the Committee serves in an advisory capacity.
- He also clarified that the Committee is not required to recommend the project, but it is currently the most viable project available based on the status of the other work plan items.

➤ **Prior Committee Approval / Prioritization Discussion**

- There was a discussion regarding two previously approved work plans:
 - Mattie Kelly Connector; and
 - Linear Trail project through the Gulf Power easement. Noting that that when the Committee previously went before the CRA Board and discussed other projects for unencumbered funds, the CRA Board directed the Committee to return and prioritize the list.
- Mr. Hernandez acknowledged that the linear trail was already in progress and that the Mattie Kelly Connector had been presented to the CRA Board in April.
- He explained that, with other projects falling off or becoming unavailable, the Committee can revisit prioritization when a quorum is present.
- He noted that the Publix greenspace project could be tabled indefinitely while preserving the work plan for possible future review.
- Staff stated that projects such as the Airport / Commons intersection and Jewel Melvin Park improvements may be revisited when new funding opportunities arise, possibly in January or February.
- He reiterated that CRA funds cannot be used for projects that are not part of the CRA Master Plan.

➤ **CRA Master Plan Discussion**

- Mr. Hernandez explained that the current CRA Master Plan is very specific and may limit the Committee's ability to fund broader project categories.

- The Committee may wish to discuss whether to recommend that the CRA Board revisit or amend the Master Plan.
- The Master Plan could potentially be made more general and tied more closely to the intent of the CRA's findings of necessity.
- The Committee may make recommendations, but the CRA Board would make the final decision.
- This could be discussed further at a future meeting when a quorum is present.

➤ **July Meeting / CRA Board Timing**

- The members discussed the need to prioritize projects to be included in the FY 2027 budget process.
- The regular Town Center CRA Advisory Committee meeting was referenced as being scheduled for July 15.
- The CRA Board meeting was tentatively referenced as being scheduled for July 20.
- Mr. Hernandez raised a timing question regarding whether the Committee could take action on July 15 and still have the matter properly noticed and placed before the CRA Board on July 20.
- The City Attorney indicated that an agenda item could likely be advertised generally enough to allow the CRA Board to consider recommendations from the Committee.
- The notice could reference recommendations to the CRA Board, including the Mattie Kelly Connector and other Town Center CRA work plan items.
- The City Attorney stated that the public notice should provide enough general information for members of the public to decide whether they wish to attend.

➤ **Mattie Kelly Connector as Remaining Viable Project**

- Mr. Hernandez and Committee members discussed that the Mattie Kelly Connector had previously been identified as a committee priority.
- Because several other projects are no longer viable or available for funding at this time, Mr. Hernandez stated that Mattie Kelly appears to be the remaining project that could move forward.
- He stated that it would be helpful for the Committee to formally confirm whether it still wishes to move the Mattie Kelly Connector forward.
- The members acknowledged that a public statement and formal action would need to occur at a properly noticed meeting with a quorum.

➤ **Quorum Concerns / Potential Special Meeting**

- A concern was expressed about whether they would have a quorum at the July 15th meeting.
- The member noted that the three members present usually attend, but one member would be out of the country for the July meeting.
- The City Attorney suggested checking member availability and possibly scheduling a special July meeting rather than relying on the regular meeting date.
- The City Attorney also noted that, alternatively, a code amendment could be considered in the future to change the number of members or quorum requirement.

- The members discussed alternative dates.
- July 9 appeared to work for the members present and did not appear to conflict with another meeting on the calendar with the start time the usual 5:30 p.m.
- Mr. Hernandez stated that they would check the availability of the remaining board members and that he would coordinate with the Clerk's Office to verify meeting availability and scheduling.
- He also stated that if a special meeting could not be arranged, they could review prior minutes to determine how earlier project priorities had been approved.

➤ **Work Plan Handouts and New Process**

- Mr. Hernandez reviewed the handouts provided to the committee members.
- The handouts included:
 - CRA work plan process and funding availability;
 - Advisory committee / board work plan process;
 - Work plan schedule and guidance.
- He stated that the documents are interconnected.
- He identified the CRA work plan process and funding availability document as especially important when they begin developing project ideas.
- He stated that the Committee should focus on whether:
 - The project is located within the CRA boundary; and
 - The project is included in the CRA Master Plan.
- The CRA Master Plan would be sent to members again for review and encouraged the members to consider whether it wants to discuss possible amendments to the Master Plan.
- A question was asked whether the issue is the specific wording of projects already identified in the Master Plan.
 - Current project language is very specific and may hinder the ability to move forward with projects.
 - Mattie Kelly Connector was used as an example of a project specifically named in the Master Plan, including specific mobility plan references and improvements.
 - Work plans do not broadly authorize funding for general mobility, greenspace, parks, beautification, or visual appearance improvements unless tied to specifically listed projects.
 - Work plans should not be too broad, but the current language may be too restrictive.

➤ **Project Feasibility Review Form**

- A question was asked whether the new CRA work plan process and funding availability document replaces the prior process of coming to the table with a full work plan.
- Mr. Hernandez explained that the new process is intended to serve as a preliminary review process before a full work plan is developed.
- He referenced a project feasibility review form that is expected to be finalized soon and that review form will be simpler than the original work plan document.
- The form will require limited research by the committee and some research by staff.

- Mr. Hernandez described the preliminary information as a “5W” format:
 - Who;
 - What;
 - Where;
 - When;
 - Why;
 - Estimated cost.
- Once the form is submitted, senior leadership will review the project for feasibility.
- The leadership review would include the City Manager, Community Development Director, and City Engineer.
- He stated that this process is intended to determine whether a project is feasible and whether the Committee should continue spending time on it.
- He cited the Publix greenspace issue as an example where an earlier feasibility check may have saved committee time, because the City Manager’s outreach quickly confirmed that Publix was not interested.
- He explained that the goal is to help move feasible ideas forward more efficiently and avoid unnecessary work on projects that cannot proceed.

➤ **Coordination Across City Departments and Boards**

- Mr. Hernandez explained that the new process is also intended to reduce planning in a vacuum.
- He noted that other departments and boards may already be working on related projects, including:
 - Parks and Recreation;
 - Public Safety;
 - Other city departments and advisory boards.
- He stated that some projects may fit better under another board or may benefit from interdepartmental partnership.
- He gave an example of a parks-related project within the CRA district that could potentially be coordinated with the Parks Board.
- He stated that this process will create more transparency for senior leadership and allow departments to identify opportunities to help projects move forward more quickly.
- He stated that CRA funds may be available when needed, but in some cases another department or board may already be advancing the project without the need for CRA funds.
- He emphasized that the new process should help ensure that city leadership knows what work plan ideas are being considered throughout the CRA.

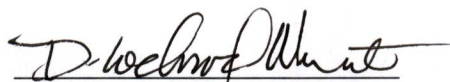
6. **PUBLIC COMMENT: None**

7. **NEXT MEETING: July 9, 2026 – Special Date**

9. **ADJOURNMENT:**

Having no further discussions, the meeting was adjourned at 6:15 PM.

Adopted and approved day of August 2026.


Lockwood Wernet Chairman


Kim Montgomery Deputy City Clerk