



Community Redevelopment Agency Advisory Board Meeting Minutes  
September 15, 2025 at 3:00 PM

**Chair Rudy Rothseiden**  
**Vice Chair Kelly Harris**  
Member Leon Barrows  
Member Brian Boukari  
Member Mandy Bucci

**Executive Director**  
**Rodolfo Valladares**  
City Attorney Scott Walker

Meeting Location: James A. Lewis City Commission Chambers  
15100 NW 142 Terrace  
Alachua, FL 32615



**ALACHUA CRA**  
COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY

## **Community Redevelopment Agency Advisory Board Meeting**

**Notice given pursuant to Section 286.0105, Florida Statutes. In order to appeal any decision made at this meeting, you will need a verbatim record of the proceedings. It will be your responsibility to ensure such a record is made.**

### **CALL TO ORDER**

Acting Chair - Kelly Harris - 3:03 pm.

Rudy Rothseiden - Chair - Absent

### **APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA**

**Member Brian Boukari moved to approve the agenda; seconded by Member Mandy Bucci.**

**Motion passed by 4-0 vote.**

**I. OLD BUSINESS**

**II. NEW BUSINESS**

**A) APPROVE MEETING MINUTES JULY 21, 2025.**

**Member Boukari moved to approve the minutes from the July 21, 2025 meeting; seconded by Member Bucci.**

**Motion passed by 4-0 vote.**

**B) STAFF UPDATES**

Susan King, Community Redevelopment Coordinator, presented her report.

Theatre Park — there is a summary in the staff report for full review. There were delays due to unforeseen circumstances. It is on schedule for substantial completion by the end of November. Final completion will be after the tree lighting in December. There is a sign posted for the public noting this was a CRA project. This needs to be done anytime there is a CRA project.

Member Boukari acknowledged the great work that is being done in the park. He stated that he looked at the current work on Friday and was pleased. He thanked Ms. King for her efforts.

Acting Chair Harris also thanked Ms. King for her efforts and for placing the signs. This helps explain to the public what is going on.

Ms. King reiterated that the delays are unexpected but necessary based on circumstances encountered. Barring any hurricane delays, the projected completion time should remain accurate.

Member Leon Barrows asked Ms. King if the park will be open to the public or is permission needed.

Ms. King explained that all the parks are managed by the Recreation Department for events that need to be scheduled, but the park will be open to the public for general usage.

Acting Chair questioned how the park would be closed off for the events in early November if the park is not completed prior.

Ms. King stated that she has spoken to the contractors about limited access or no access based on the level of completion. It will all depend on where they are at. It certainly would not be good if the landscape was newly planted and then the public were to go in and tramp around there.

Ms. King stated that unfortunately, the first and second completion goals will not be met

due to unforeseen circumstances. She is pushing to have substantial completion by the tree lighting.

Member Boukari stated that in general, people have always used the park as they pleased but if its a big event such as a wedding; scheduling with the Recreation Department would be the way to go to avoid conflicts.

Member Bucci asked if there was a calendar available for viewing events that are being scheduled.

Ms. King stated not at this time but it needs to happen soon. There is a digital calendar at Good Life Station that shows events but the CRA needs to have one.

Member Boukari suggested that it would be a good idea for the CRA to invest in a remotely controlled calendar that would be displayed on the site. Anybody walking by could see what is scheduled to happen there. It would not be interactive in any way, but to give people information on events.

Acting Chair Harris suggested that a decision needs to be made about what will be on a calendar of this type. She asked if it would be business sales and events or just Theatre Park events.

Member Boukari believes that it should be just for Theatre Park. He believes it would make it complicated to include other things. He believes that care should be taken because of the sign space available and the competition for the space. He stated that by advertising other things, would make it a billboard and would take away from its original purpose, which is Theatre Park. His opinion is that it should be for city-sanctioned events.

Acting Chair Harris stated that these boundaries need to be decided on before that recommendation is put forth to the CRA Board.

Member Bucci added that she believes all CRA events should be included as well as city-sanctioned events.

Acting Chair Harris agreed.

Ms. King stated that there are grants available for signage like this. It is for anything that helps promote foot traffic or activate Main Street. She states that Alachua would be eligible to apply for another Home Town Grant at the completion of the Theatre Park project.

Member Bucci suggested purchasing and posting a sign that states "closed for private event" to avoid conflict.

Member Boukari agreed and stated a nominal fee should be considered as well. This

would help eliminate people from booking it "just in case". If it becomes super popular, then the fee could be higher or event-based. I.e: a wedding or birthday party being more than a smaller, simpler use. He believes that it is going to be very popular when completed.

Ms. King asked the board how to prevent the not-so-nice actions that have been happening. I.e: graffiti on the back wall, sleeping in the park... etc. She asked about a gate or cameras, some way to protect the park after all this hard work has gone into its renewal.

Member Barrows agreed with the camera idea.

Member Boukari stated that gates would give the impression of limited accessibility. Also, hiring someone to go unlock and lock it every day would be costly. The cost of a nice camera system is minimal in comparison. Posting signs that inform the public about the cameras would be necessary as well.

Acting Chair Harris believes that cameras would dissuade the teenagers from causing trouble.

Ms. King reminded the board that Theatre Park will have WiFi. It was part of the Home Town Grant.

Levitt Amp Music Series — Voting ends today at 8:00 pm. The overall rank was 14 and the Amp rank was 9. The ABL team and Josh's place team have done exemplary work. Ms. King reminded the board that our category is up to 250,000 citizens. So, for our little city to be that high in the ranking is amazing. The 50 finalists will be picked today and announced tomorrow.

Acting Chair Harris commended the citizens of the City for coming together to accomplish this. "Community is what we have here right now".

Christmas on Main Tree Lighting — The tree lighting will be on Friday, December 5th from 5-8pm. Santa will start a bit earlier, at 4:30 pm. Good Life Station will host Santa and Mrs. Claus again. The Christmas parade will be Saturday, December 13th starting at 11:00. Ms. King stated she is also putting together another grant request from Visit Gainesville. It is called the small cities and towns grant program. She is requesting \$5000.00 — similar to last year, to help offset the costs of this event. There should be no reason why Alachua wouldn't receive it again. She states that all the activities will be similar to last year except for the train. There will be an inflatable obstacle course where the train was because they believe they needed another draw to get people to notice the snow. It will be a fun activity for the children.

Member Boukari asked about the riders on the billboards advertising the event.

Ms. King stated that the billboards need to be redesigned and she will start on that this

week. On another note, we will be losing one of the billboards. There is a national company that wants the southbound billboard and we can't compete with their price. If it comes available again, the company will offer it to us first but right now we will only have two. The design for the new ones need to simpler. The current billboards are too busy for high-speed traffic. Also, the CRA logo needs to be on them.

Member Boukari explained for the new Board member what is meant by riders on the billboards.

Ms. King verified the use of the riders for special events. She explained that the Farmer's Market rider will be kept up after the fall events all happen.

Farmer's Market — Ms.King commended Ms. Bucci and the Alachua Business League for all their efforts for this. It will be called Market on Main and is slated to begin on Saturday, October 4th, from 9 am–1 pm. The Special Event Application process is still ongoing. The fall/winter hours will be October–March and the summer hours will be April–September. The initial site will be Skinner Park because approvals need to be obtained by the CRA board for the cost of staffing if Main Street is closed down for this event. Currently, there are 29 vendors on board.

Member Bucci stated all the statistics for the vendors applying, availability and committments.

Ms. King confirmed that there are vegetable vendors signing up for the event. She also stated that ideas such as food trucks and children's activities are being confirmed.

Acting Chair Harris questioned the expenses that have popped up for this event. She asked if pricing for the bollards have been found. Ms King explained the pricing that she found concerning the bollards. She stated that she still has to meet with Public Services to get their input.

Member Barrows asked if there would be a fee for the vendors.

Member Bucci stated that the first month would be free because the event is still being organized and after that it would be \$20.00 a week per vendor. But, if the vendor does all four weekends in the month, they will get one free. This would total \$60.00 for the month, as of now. It is still undetermined who will pay for the police officers and public services personnel that are required.

Member Boukari questioned that statement. He asked who are candidates for this expense, what is the cost, and why the cost?

Member Bucci explained the break-down of costs for each.

Ms. King stated there are more options that would entail fewer costs.

Member Bucci went on to explain that those costs are for the initial application site of Main Street. However, to make the target date of October 4th, they compromised and moved the site to Skinner Park. This would limit to cost to the police officer. Those funds would come from the CRA budget or the ABL.

Member Boukari suggested the board ask Ms. King to investigate and compile a breakdown of the costs and present it to the CRA board for approval, not to wait for the Advisory Board's next meeting.

Ms. King explained that there is overtime money in the budget that is used for personnel to do the Harvest Festival, so maybe some of it could come from there. She also stated there is additional money in grants and aid and she requested more for the facade grants and vibrancy grants. They compliment each other but are used differently.

Member Boukair asked about the funds that were earmarked for the big sign at the end of Main Street that is now in limbo.

Ms. King explained it is in the capitol account. The CRA board want to put that project on an indefinite hold for the time being. She did go by AT&T and spoke to the manager about the idea. Follow-up has not been done. Even though it is on hold, Ms. King is still pursuing options to complete it. She doesn't believe that the money already spent should just be thrown away. It is still a good idea for downtown.

Member Boukari agrees with that statement but the monies that have been earmarked for the sign are just sitting there getting rolled over. He asked if some of that money could be diverted to cover the Farmer's Market expenses, because we all know the sign is not going to happen any time soon.

Ms. King explained that those monies are capital funds, so she doesn't believe that they can be used for something like this. Last year, it was used for the Theatre Park project. There are other areas that some funds could be drawn from.

Member Boukari stated he believes it is only called capital funds because we named it that and the defined purpose was "the funds must be used to promote or improve the blight in the district or CRA." He stated that there may have been changes in the statues that he is not aware of, but he doesn't think so.

Acting Chair Harris asked if the bollards were considered capital improvement.

Member Bucci suggested the ask be narrowed down. Since the Special Event Permit is only for the first six months, ask for funding for the police officer and use of Skinner Park. Once the event blooms and a new Special Event Permit needs to be obtained, update the ask to include the additional staff costs and the bollards.

**Member Boukari moved to ask Ms. King to explore the CRA budget to find money**

for the expenses of the Farmer's Market to cover the initial six month permit period and submit a request to the CRA Board with that information. Also, to explore funding options for the next phase to include asking the City Manager / City Commission to explore the Recreation and Cultural Affairs budget or other departments to ensure availability so the cost of the next phase doesn't stop or sidetrack this event; seconded by Member Bucci.

Motion passed by 4-0 roll call vote.

Downtown Vibrancy Grant Program- The purpose is to focus on improving the overall attraction of the downtown area of the CRA. Examples that would be eligible for this grant are: streetscape improvements, lighting enhancement, outdoor dining, pop-up events, creative signage, storefront enhancements and activities to increase foot traffic. A grant amount could range from \$100 to \$10,000, depending on the project type, scale and budget. Matching funds could be encouraged but may not be required. Eligible applicants could be a business owner, non-profit or civic organization operating within the downtown district. Eligible projects would need to directly benefit the downtown area.

Ms. King proposed implementing a Downtown Vibrancy Grant Program as a compliment to the existing Facade Program. This was one of the strategies recommended in the Downtown Five Year Action Plan.

Acting Chair Harris stated that she likes the idea of park-lets and outdoor games.

Member Barrows confirmed that art walks have been accomplished before.

Ms. King stated she found an example from North Dakota. Small micro grants for smaller events or the costs associated with. Sandwich boards, outdoor seating, pop-up shops and parklets would highly benefit the downtown area.

Member Barrows stated he is all for anything that would bring the tourist foot traffic back to downtown. He suggested more seating at his end of downtown are needed.

Ms. King stated that she would like to look at other small towns to see examples of what they use it for. Not everything is a good fit for our community, but all ideas are welcome. The CRA can be creative and bold in suggesting what this vibrancy grant should be used for.

Member Bucci suggested more signage that would connect both ends of Main Street. She suggested something along the lines of "It's this many steps to John Doe business."

Member Boukari reaffirmed that he has personally seen tourists walk to a certain point on Main Street and turn around to go back. He believes that when they look further down the street, they see a few residential houses and tree-lined streets, and assume

that there are no more businesses to see. It doesn't give the vibe of a business district. He does not believe that business names should be on signage because it could be expensive. If you put a name on a sign and then they leave, what was the purpose of the expense? Just be simple and state more to see....

Ms. King stated that another example from the Five Year Action Plan was lighting, which is being completed in stages along Main Street. She believes this would be a nice incentive for people to keep walking.

Acting Chair Harris gave examples of an event for this Vibrancy Grant and asked if these would fall under that grant?

Ms. King confirmed that, based on her research, those ideas would qualify under this grant.

Many examples were discussed.

Ms. King stated that the point was to compliment the Facade Grant Program with this Vibrancy category. The board would just need to decide on parameters and qualifications for it.

Member Bucci asked if there was police presence in the downtown area at night. She asked why there is a necessity for a law enforcement presence at the Farmer's Market or a small event on Main Street if they already monitor the area in their rounds.

Member Barrows asked why there was a need at the Farmer's Market.

Member Bucci stated that the reasoning was for crowd control.

Member Boukari confirmed what has happened in the past. Basically, the police presence is to control and diffuse any issues or to prevent any issues. They believe their presence can prevent occurrences from starting. They patrol the entire city and downtown happens to be included in that. So, if assigned to your event, they won't respond to emergencies like they normally would do on a daily basis. He believes their line of thought is: they staff each shift based on the needs of the city. A special event would entail an extra person being hired specifically for that event to avoid shortages on regular patrol.

Ms. King also reiterated that the Chief of Police also stated that if they don't have enough officers to supply one for the event, they reach out to neighboring communities. Any special event is an overtime opportunity for an officer.

Acting Chair Harris if there is any specific number that makes it necessary for police presence.

Member Boukari stressed that education of the grant processes and requirements

should also be included in any information put out. Some kind of mechanism — ie: workshop, pamphlet, etc. — should be utilized to explain the processes/expectations to any interested party.

Acting Chair Harris suggested including a time frame for submitting forms and requests.

All board members agreed.

### **III. BOARD COMMENTS/DISCUSSION**

Member Barrows introduced himself to the Board.

Member Bucci asked if any other cost estimations have been explored besides the bollards.

Member Boukari explained that he believes the bollards are the acceptable solution because there is concern for some fool purposely running a vehicle through a crowd of people. They require something substantial to stop a moving vehicle or post personnel with a vehicle to block the street.

Member Bucci clarified she was asking about other costs that would arise because of a permanent closure of Main Street. To include: ADA ramps, electrical supply, parking, more signage, etc.

Member Boukari stated that a permanent closure has not been put into motion yet. He believes the primary focus was a system for temporary street closure to facilitate the Farmer's Market.

Member Bucci states she believes the long term vision should not disappear. It needs to remain in the forefront, as some of these events are being accomplished.

Member Boukari welcomed Member Barrows to the Advisory Board. He also stated that a lot of citizens who are complaining about the city not having much to do, do not realize the parks, activities and other events that are available to them. Citizens need to be encouraged to attend meetings so they understand what the Board actually achieves for them. He also commended and thanked Ms. King on her ability to tackle the amount of requests put forth to her from this Board.

All Board members agreed and attested the same.

Member Boukari contended the Board should be doing everything in its power to further the efforts of citizens and staff alike to move everything forward.

Member Bucci stressed she believes there should be a dollar amount ceiling that would make it necessary to get approval from the CRA Board. Why should they have to get approval for everything? She believes the waiting time frames need to be shortened.

Member Boukari stated that when it comes to these grants, applicants need to be made aware of the time lag for approval because all of those decisions must be approved by the CRA Board. This is only an advisory board. The City Attorney needs to be asked about statute restrictions put on this Board.

Acting Chair Harris commented on the billboards along the highway. The colors on other billboards stand out more than ours. She stated that a southbound location is needed. Her customers come in and comment about it.

Ms. King informed the Board that the billboard company does have availability further away.

Member Barrows commented he believes that a sign a little further away would be beneficial. It would give a driver the opportunity to "think about" whether they want to stop or not.

Acting Chair Harris asked about the results of the alcohol ordinance change. She knows they discussed it but nothing was decided on.

Ms. King stated she was at a meeting that it was brought forth but nothing was decided. Her belief was the Commission was in favor of it, but a second reading needs to be done.

Member Barrows asked what a "pop-up" is.

Acting Chair Harris explained the concept and thoughts behind doing them.

Acting Chair Harris asked why all the banners hanging around downtown don't have Alachua on them somewhere.

Ms. King explained the patriotic ones don't have that but most of the others do. She would ensure it in the future.

Acting Chair Harris asked if anyone knew why half of 235 for five blocks got paved.

Member Boukari explained his understanding because he has contacted them himself. They decided that 235A was so far gone that a complete redo, right down to the substrate, would have to be done to that road, costing millions of dollars. They figured they would tackle some of the other roads in spots before those roads also get that bad.

Member Barrows stated he was informed that 2028 is the estimated time for 235A.

#### **IV. CITIZENS COMMENTS**

ADJOURN

Member Boukari moved to adjourn; seconded by Member Barrows.

Motion passed by unanimous consent.

Acting Chair Harris adjourned the meeting at 5:03 pm.

ATTEST:

COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT  
AGENCY OF THE CITY OF ALACHUA,  
FLORIDA:

  
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CRA Advisory Board Chair

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Staff Liaison