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CRA seeks middle ground with council

By pete skiba

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In an effort to head off what is shaping up as a turf war between two city agencies, the Cape Coral Community Redevelopment Agency wants a powwow.

The agency plans at its regular monthly meeting at 5:30 p.m. Tuesday to discuss holding a joint meeting as a workshop with the city council.

"It isn't a matter of non-cooperation, it is a matter of noncommunication," said John Jacobsen, redevelopment agency board member.

City Manager Terry Stewart and his staff had planned to meet with redevelopment representatives for discussions on making the process easier, said city spokeswoman Connie Barron. The move to a full workshop with city council was surprising, she said.

The redevelopment agency should bring city council and all the city's department heads up to date on downtown progress and the obstacles redevelopment faces in the area's 432 acres, Jacobsen said.

This is especially true because with the death of City Councilman Jim Jeffers, the redevelopment board lost its liaison with city council, Jacobsen said.

The city staff seems to have an approach to obstacles such as a stormwater system for the redevelopment area that would push development in a crazy quilt of one development at a time, Jacobsen said.

"We should coordinate our approaches," Jacobsen said. "We on the board are not planners, so it stands to reason there should be more communication."

The redevelopment area covers downtown from Tudor Drive to the west along both sides of Cape Coral Parkway to the Cape Coral Bridge on the east. A section runs north along Del Prado Boulevard to Southeast 44th Street.

Other topics could be discussed at a meeting between city council and the redevelopment agency's board as a workshop. A workshop allows for more give and take than a formal meeting.

"We'd like to seek a solution to streamline the permitting process," said Suzanne Kuehn, redevelopment agency executive director.

The building permitting process has been a source of complaints of developers planning projects in the city. The city has taken steps, including hiring an outside consultant, to speed up the process.

"We realize that the CRA often has an optimistic timeline as to when they would like to see things happen. Obviously, we do not intentionally hold up any of the permitting process," Barron said.

Other business planned for the redevelopment board meeting:

- Discussion of expanding the redevelopment area's boundaries
- Discussion of a blight study
- Review of Coronado Terrace, 80-condominium and commercial building

IF YOU GO

- What: Cape Coral Community Redevelopment Agency meeting

- When: 5:30 p.m.

- Where: Cape Coral City Hall, 1015 Cultural Park Boulevard

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