

## PSJRA News (and some really good news)

Last week, the PSJRA received a notice from the USDA that the Williams Avenue Improvement grant has been approved. This project is planned to improve the drainage and protect businesses from flooding during rain events, add a pedestrian walkway and provide increased, marked parking. The pedestrian walkway will contain a variety of mediums including brick pavers and wood planks and will meander in and out of landscaped areas. We will host a forum to share the plans and offer you a chance to share your opinions. In fact, at the last Advisory Committee meeting, Commissioner Peters and Amy Rogers recommended we include increased street lighting to ensure public safety. Great suggestion and I know there are more out there. One thing to remember—we have a finite amount of funding for this project and may have to phase it, depending on how much scope we might add.

Speaking of the Advisory Committee, we owe a great thanks to Leslie Wentzell for chairing this committee. We had another great meeting last week and discussed upcoming opportunities for special events, ideas to attract customers to our business districts and how to address upcoming cleanup efforts (such as code enforcement). I invited everyone to drive down the 98 corridor between First and Costin to really look...as if you had never before been in Port St. Joe...to see what your first impression would be. Next, let's think about how to improve this first (and sometimes only) impression to encourage visitors to want to explore our shopping areas.

We are working with the Waterfronts Partnership and the GCCDC to locate opportunities and to prepare for some of the really big grants that require a considerable amount of planning and coordination. Thanks to Dannie for hooking us up with a team of professional grant writers who can guide us. It continues to amaze me how collaboration and coordination can increase our ability to reach goals and provide success for the community.

You are all invited to an open meeting with the Executive Director of the Florida Redevelopment Association (FRA), Carol Westmoreland; the General Counsel of the FRA, David Cardwell; and Small Cities Initiative chair Marilyn Larson. This important meeting is Thursday, August 30, at 5 PM at the City Commission Chambers. We hear many ideas and options proposed, and these and more will be answered. Please bring your questions to this meeting. We will ask the group to prepare responses to a few things such as:

- Can Gulf County have more than one CRA?
- What are the pros and cons of the City Commission becoming the “agency” (in place of the current board of directors)?
- What are the legal requirements in the expenditures of a CRA?

And last but not least, we want to express our gratitude to Russ Scholz, Tom Gibson and Billy Joe Rish for their guidance (and Russ for his non-stop jokes) to the PSJRA for the past few years. What a benefit to have attorneys who are talented, available and supportive. The PSJRA board has recently voted to supplement their expertise as our City Attorneys with David Cardwell, whom we have retained as our PSJRA General Counsel. Mr. Cardwell specializes in CRA's and has functioned as General Counsel to the FRA since the early 1980's. Talk about the best of both worlds! We are indeed fortunate.

Please be aware—the PSJRA board meetings have a new location: the City Commission Chambers, and our next meeting is Thursday, August 9, at 5 PM. We hope to see you there.