

River House Minutes

The River House Committee met on Thursday, October 7, 2021. The meeting was called to order at 6:05 at the River House. The following committee members were present: Al Herndon, Leslie Davidson, Kevin Hurley, Charlie Sohm and Pam Lewis.

Steve Thomas, Assistant Director of Public Works opened the River House and accompanied us on our walk through of the house. After some time we proceeded to Council Chambers in City Hall for the remainder of our meeting.

Leslie Davidson was selected as Co-Chair of the committee and Pam Lewis acted as Secretary until someone can be selected.

The committee set the first Thursday of November as their next meeting date at 6:00 P.M. in the Community Room at the Green Cove Springs Police Facility.

Committee discussion consisted of each member present to giving their impression of the River House and their ideas for its' use. The following committee members made remarks.

It was mentioned that someone has offered to buy the River House from the City and move it to another location and restore it.

Charles felt the property was charming and needed a "ton of work" guessing somewhere in the \$100,000 to \$200,000 range in cost. It is tempting that someone offered to move it but seemed to prefer it being renovated on site if possible.

Kevin is not in favor of moving it to another location but would rather do that then tear it down. He is concerned that many of our historic homes have been torn down. He likes the idea of tax incentives to save and restore historic homes. He believes it "has restaurant written all over it".

Leslie, who is a structural engineer, didn't think the River House was in "that bad" of condition. She is also concerned that Green Cove Springs is losing its' historic homes. She asked if there have been any RFP's for restoring it, is in favor of a Public / Private Partnership, having it put on the

Historic Registry and apply for grants. She is in favor of saving the River House suggesting it can be used for an event site or some other commercial use.

Pam would like to see it restored to meet current codes but doesn't think it has to be in pristine condition as it would lose some of its' charm. She suggested pitching it to restauranteurs as a Public / Private Partnership for a long term lease at a very low price for an extended period of time with tax incentives in exchange for renovations. An attorney would need to weigh in on protections for the City as its' owner when writing a contract.

Another suggestion is for it to be an incubator for small businesses such as rentals for bikes, canoes, kayaks, a small cafe, a gift shop and an educational display for eco tourism displaying regional flora and fauna. All co-existing in the River House.

Al suggested it could be an Artist's Retreat that could be used to house an artist for a month at a time (or other lengths of time) and the public could observe their work as well as gift a piece of their art for the public to enjoy. He suggested that revenue could come form grants.

After suggestions were discussed it was suggested that Art Yeaman come to our next meeting to give the committee some knowledge of the history of River House. It was also suggested we consult with Mike Daniels, the Development Director for the City about our ideas and seek his guidance.

Our meeting adjourned at 7:05 PM.

These notes are subject to correction but taken to the best of my ability.

Pam Lewis
(Acting Clerk)