



IMPROVING OUR COMMUNITY

COLUMBIA GATEWAY URBAN RENEWAL AGENCY

CITY OF THE DALLES

Columbia Gateway Urban Renewal Advisory Committee Minutes

Tuesday, April 20, 2004

City Hall Council Chambers

313 Court Street

The Dalles, OR 97058

Conducted in a handicap accessible room.

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Chair, Dan Ericksen at 5:35 P.M.

ROLL CALL

Administrative Secretary Denise Ball conducted roll call.

Present members: Dan Ericksen, Jack Evans, Dick Elkins, Chris Zukin, Nikki Lesich and Ken Farner

Absent members: Randy Carter

Staff present: Nolan Young, City Manager, Dan Durow, Community Development Director, Denise Ball, Administrative Secretary

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Ericksen lead the group in the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA ITEMS

Ericksen asked if there were any changes or additions to the agenda. Zukin moved to approve the agenda as submitted and Evans seconded. The motion carried unanimously with Carter absent.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Ericksen asked if there were any corrections or additions needed for the minutes of February 17, 2004. There were none. Evans moved to approve the minutes and Farner seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously with Carter absent.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Eric Gleason, 704 Case Street, The Dalles, Oregon asked that the Urban Renewal Advisory Committee investigate the need for the demolition of, possibly, both of the Wasco Warehouse buildings on the Flour Mill site. Gleason suggested hiring a third party structural engineer to make that decision. Gleason said his personal opinion is that the southern building can be saved and he feels the property will have less value if the southern building is also demolished.

Ericksen asked if the Commission had any questions.

Lesich said she admires Gleason for holding on until the last breath.

Gleason said this is a special building and he would hate to see it demolished entirely without due diligence, especially since the City has a financial investment in it.

Ericksen asked for Staff comments on the state of the building.

Durow said that the City did not order the demolition of the building. The building became a dangerous building due to the collapse of the roof during this winters snowfall. The owner, Cereal Foods, was told to stabilize the building and it was the owner's option as to how to do that. Cereal Foods hired a demolition contractor to remove as little of the building as possible until stabilization was attained. The shared wall between the two buildings creates a problem.

Durow said he explained to Gleason that the City couldn't interject itself between a property owner and his contractor. The City does have an option to buy but does not have contractual rights with the demolition of the building. Cereal Foods has a vested interest in limiting the amount of the demolition because the demolition expense is coming right out of the sales price. The demolition bid was in two parts: the north half and the south half. The owner has a representative on site to oversee the project.

Durow said there is historical value in the buildings. However, most of the prospective RFP contractors, who are looking at bidding on the redevelopment of the site, have said the time to worry about saving the warehouse was twenty years ago. One contractor did some quick calculations and said it would cost approximately an additional one million dollars just to salvage the warehouse building.

Lesich suggested that when Urban Renewal has money invested in historical properties that a clause be added that protects the historical artifacts and allows the City first right of refusal at obtaining those items.

City Manager Young said that could be looked at in future situations. He indicated that there would be bricks left over for the City when the demolition is completed. Evans asked if historic documentation of the warehouse building was being performed and Durow said he is taking many pictures and complying with State Historic Preservation requirements.

Durow clarified that historic items in the building, that are not a structural part of the building, stay with the owner, Cereal Foods. The City has no rights to those historic items and would need to purchase them if the owner is willing.

ACTION/RECOMMENDATION

Chamber of Commerce/Visitor Center Scope of Work and Contract Approval: City Manager Young briefly discussed the history of the Chamber's search for an appropriate facility and location.

Director Durow presented the Staff Report and asked for questions.

Lesich asked if there are other projects for privately owned properties that Urban Renewal funds have been expended. Lesich said she does not want this project to set a precedent. She asked, "If this were the Texaco Station would the City and Urban Renewal be doing the same thing"?

Durow said the Gateway Project and the Urban Renewal Plan talks about W. 2nd Street and property redevelopment, redesign and reconstruction. The Plan allows for this to be done. Durow went on to say that from the private sector side this is the first project. Money has been spent on the Thompson Park project, which is a public/private project.

Lesich asked if the Cannon Packer property in the East Gateway would be a similar situation and Durow said yes.

Lesich asked if the Chamber is taxable property and was told no.

Elkins asked if this is just a first request and how much further the spending could go.

Durow said he does not foresee anything beyond this.

Young added that there could be additional costs for construction of the West Gateway and possibly the building of public parking lots.

Elkins said his concern was not future infrastructure but whether Urban Renewal would be asked to help fund a new Chamber building.

Young said no, there will be no funding for construction.

Lesich asked if there is any consideration in the design of the West Gateway project for the Chamber to have public restrooms.

Young said it does present an opportunity to look at public restrooms on the site.

Eric Gleason, from the audience, asked if this proposal includes remodeling/reusing the existing, historic building.

Ericksen confirmed that the building has gone through the Historic Landmarks Commission public hearing process.

Young said this proposal does not include remodeling or reusing the building.

Lesich asked what “secondary” means in referring to a historic building and Gleason explained that secondary refers to the time period the building was constructed and does not mean the building is less significant than a “primary” building. The Chamber building was constructed in 1938.

Farner asked why Urban Renewal is involved in the developmental work for the property; this appears to be a developer’s task.

Durow said the Visitor Center and the entry into our downtown area are City and Urban Renewal interests. The traffic flow has to work, the streetscape has to be attractive, and a visitor must have a good experience moving in and out of the site.

Zukin said he certainly sees the City’s interest in being involved in the design. However, Zukin is uncomfortable having the City take the entire burden of the design. Zukin said he believed the hospital paid a portion of the Thompson Park preliminary design work and Durow said that was correct.

Zukin said he would feel more comfortable with the proposal if the Chamber were paying a share of the design work.

Young said the Chamber had it’s own plan originally and that the City stepped in and asked to be involved because the development of the West Gateway is so important to the downtown area. The Chamber did not come to the City and ask for help and has rejected an earlier proposal from David Evans and Associates because the Chamber did not feel the proposal was in its best interest.

Zukin said if that is the relationship, then this project could be completed and presented to the Chamber and they could say, "No, we don't like that."

Young said they could, however, that is why this process will be handled as a partnership and decisions will be made with all parties present. The Chamber will still have to go through the local Site Plan Review process after this preliminary design is completed.

Elkins said when he travels he looks for the Visitor Center not the Chamber office. Elkins asked why this project is called the Chamber site and not the Visitor Center.

Evans said it is a dual-purpose facility.

Ericksen said the Chamber would be making a huge investment during the construction phase. There is a significant public interest in this project so that it meets City and community needs and criteria.

Durow said the current Chamber site offers a lot of challenges and it could turn out, at the end of this project, this site will not work.

Lesich recalled comments from a previous meeting and asked Durow if the Chamber will lose any of its control as a property owner by having the City involved in this process.

Durow said the Chamber would retain control and has the right to reject any proposals.

Lesich asked what Urban Renewal has learned from the Granada Theatre situation. She also asked if Urban Renewal would be proposing to spend this money if the Visitor Center were a "contract" Visitor Center.

Durow said what was learned from the Granada is that a valuable historic asset of the community has been preserved from damage and the investment is not lost.

Zukin answered the second part of Lesich' question. He said Urban Renewal funds will not be spent improving the building for the Visitor center but will be used in making sure access and traffic flow work correctly.

Young added that Urban Renewal would probably do site planning for a "contract" visitor center but not constructing a visitor center.

Ericksen pointed out that had the warehouse buildings been re-roofed twenty years ago the demolition of those buildings would not be taking place now. The Granada will still be there in twenty years as will the Commodore.

Lesich said she doesn't understand why the Urban Renewal Advisory is being asked to approve this expenditure when the City has already offered the proposal to the Chamber. Ericksen said this is a checks and balance on Staff. Staff has recruited a request from the Chamber but must still follow the policies of the Urban Renewal Plan. This committee needs to make sure staff is not over zealous in its commitments.

Young said the City has not made any commitments. If the Urban Renewal Advisory Committee recommends against the proposal and the Agency accepts that recommendation, then it is over.

Durow said Staff is paid to look at opportunities and propose the best plan available. If the Chamber were not looking for a new building the City would not be proposing this contract. Durow added that property values in the Urban Renewal District went up 11% last year in comparison to 2% in the other areas. This is either causal or coincidental and Staff would like to believe it is causal. The Urban Renewal projects are important and effective.

Zukin moved to recommend to the Urban Renewal Agency that an expenditure, not to exceed \$33,393, be authorized to complete the conceptual plan for the Gateway Project, The Dalles Visitor Center and Chamber Office, as proposed in the attached Scope of Work with DEA. Farner seconded the motion.

Deliberation:

Elkins asked what would happen if he didn't vote yes or no.

Ericksen explained that a member of the committee really has to make a decision unless he has a conflict of interest or bias that he has stated. Ericksen said he doesn't let people off the hook that easy.

Elkins said he did not have a conflict.

Zukin said he does have a concern with the proposal and would like to see the Chamber as a true partner and be involved monetarily. However, he does feel Staff has made a good case that this proposal will solve a design problem for the City and benefit the City more than the Chamber. Zukin said he would vote yes, but with reservations.

Ericksen said he feels it does serve the public interest and there is justification for the fact Staff has gone out and solicited the Chamber. This is an opportunity to be pro-active in an acknowledged difficult traffic area.

There were no additional comments and Chair Ericksen called for a vote.

The motion carried with Zukin, Farner, Elkins, and Ericksen voting for, Lesich voting against, and Evans abstaining.

DISCUSSION

Durow updated the committee members on the Quick Response Grant awarded to the City and how it will be used in developing the Flour Mill property. Durow is expecting to have the RFP ready, for the Flour Mill property, by the end of June 2004.

Lesich said she is hoping, during the next month or two, to discuss the \$371,000 in uncommitted funds by looking at the priority list and things that have been put on the back burner because of the Underpass.

Durow said the preliminary budget would be going out this week, so the Committee will get an opportunity to review the proposed expenditures.

Elkins asked the status of 3rd Street and what year it will be complete.

Durow said at the end of this fiscal year the Public Works Department Engineers would have 3rd Street about ½ designed. For the next fiscal year, the budget will show an additional half-time amount for additional engineering to finish the design on 3rd Street. Plus, there is an estimated \$20,000 to design the traffic signals. This equals about \$58,000 for next fiscal year for 3rd Street. This includes prepared contracts, so the project will be on the shelf and ready to go.

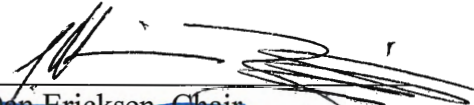
FUTURE MEETINGS

The next regular meeting is scheduled for May 18, 2004, at 5:30 P.M.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 7:00 P.M.

Respectfully submitted by Denise Ball, Administrative Secretary.


Dan Ericksen, Chair
Chris Zukin, Acting Chair