



IMPROVING OUR COMMUNITY

COLUMBIA GATEWAY URBAN RENEWAL AGENCY

**CITY OF THE DALLES
COLUMBIA GATEWAY URBAN RENEWAL AGENCY
AND
URBAN RENEWAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MINUTES**

Tuesday, June 18, 2013

5:30 pm

City Hall Council Chamber
313 Court Street, The Dalles, Oregon

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 5:30 p.m. by Vice Chair Gary Grossman.

Roll Call

URAC: Gary Grossman, Jennifer Botts, Robin Miles, Mike Zingg

Absent: Greg Weast; Chris Zukin

Urban Renewal Board: Steve Lawrence, Linda Miller, Dan Spatz, Bill Dick

Absent: Timothy McGlothlin

Also in attendance: City Manager Nolan Young, Administrative Fellow Garrett Chrostek, City Attorney Gene Parker, Economic Development Specialist Dan Durow, Public Works Director Dave Anderson

Late arrivals: 5:35 – Carolyn Wood, Richard Elkins; 5:55 – Steve Kramer

Pledge of Allegiance

Vice Chair Grossman led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Approval of Agenda

It was moved by Spatz and seconded by Zingg to approve the agenda as presented. The motion carried unanimously; Timothy McGlothlin, Steve Kramer absent

Discussion Item – The History and Future of the Urban Renewal District
City Manager Young introduced Administrative Fellow Garrett Chrostek, Economic Development Specialist Dan Durow, and City Attorney Gene Parker. Chrostek reviewed the Agenda Staff Report covering the history of Urban Renewal in The Dalles; a performance evaluation; and end of life conceptual budget narrative. Chrostek said the results from these analyses suggested that the Agency had positively influenced property tax base growth within the District, supported more efficient land uses within the District, and successfully leveraged Agency funds for investment within the District; noting that analysis began with 2000, as that was the last major change to the District.

Durow noted that Canton Wok and Don Xi taxes would likely increase this year. He said the projects weren't reflected in last year's taxes.

Chrostek noted that the Association of Oregon Redevelopment Agencies was working on a project to evaluate and recommend general indicators for urban renewal performance. He said there would also be an effort to compile indicator data from Urban Renewal Districts across the state. He recommended reevaluating the Columbia Gateway Urban Renewal Agency when those indicators and data became available.

Lawrence asked if Chrostek had reviewed the Redmond implementation and how it compared to the Agency's. Young stated that the implementation did not use detailed project sheets as were used in Redmond.

Lawrence said he would like to see each project evaluated against overall goals of the Agency.

Young asked if the group was asking for a futuristic look or rear view mirror. Lawrence said futuristic, with review of each project against plan goals.

Lawrence asked how the sprinklers in downtown, as requested by Mid-Columbia Fire and Rescue (MCFR) had been addressed. Young said as projects were done sprinklers were upgraded. Public Works Director Anderson said that there was adequate pressure downtown; the old pipes were being replaced as street scape projects were done.

Lawrence questioned if the Plan was still consistent with what the public wanted. He suggested paying down bonds faster or returning impact funds back to other districts for a year or two. He noted the importance of coordination with other existing plans; Land use, Parks and Recreation, Mid-Columbia Fire and Rescue.

Wood asked Durow to refresh her memory regarding the verbiage of the plan; was it a template. Durow said the current plan was consistent with state law and framework requirements. He said each district had an approach and philosophy that met their needs. Durow noted that the voters decided to change from infrastructure to economic development, there was a mediated group.

Spatz said the Agency should step back and hear the Advisory Committee recommendation.

Zingg asked if the politics of each community drove the plan, and what the politics of our community were.

Dick said all members of Council were hearing from constituents, he believed staff should follow the amendments made to the plan.

Durow stated that the focus of Urban Renewal in The Dalles hadn't changed. The focus had always been downtown improvements; and he was hearing that in the community. The question was could the focus be sharpened.

Grossman said with new faces on the committee there was value in reviewing the history and how various projects tie together.

Botts asked if the bonds noted in FY 2013-14 and 2017-18 were to meet the over commitment. Young explained they were a financial vehicle to allow for completion of projects at the earliest time. Bonds were for cash flow, and were not general obligation bonds that go before the voters.

Young further explained that there were eight projects on the project list that were not currently underway. He said if all those projects were done they would exceed the available funds. Those projects were: 3rd Street Streetscape; 4th Street Streetscape; 3rd Place Streetscape; Mill Creek Greenway; West Gateway; West 2nd Street infrastructure; Civic Auditorium (not including the \$57,000 committed to engineering this next fiscal year); and new property rehabilitation loan or grants.

Lawrence clarified he wasn't suggesting ending Urban Renewal; he was encouraging outside of the box thinking, saying there was too much focus on the riverfront.

Durow said that the Riverfront projects were a long term vision that had been driven by a taskforce.

Wood said the infrastructure at the beginning of the plan was referring to the sewer treatment plant. She said the plant couldn't support growth, and needed upgrades. She said many alternatives were explored, with the intent to create an environment for economic growth and diversity, not street repair.

Grossman said the Advisory Committee and Agency needed to have a long term focus, making The Dalles shovel ready for business.

In response to a question, Durow said the overlapping districts had been informed and involved with the Plan. All received formal notifications and he met with many of the boards. He said MCFR had sprinkler concerns that were addressed; and members of those districts were added to the Advisory Committee.

Elkins said the need was to make the downtown a healthy business environment. He asked what could be done to make that happen.

Miles said she owned property that was always full, due to keeping lease rates reasonable. She said the property managers appear to have set unreasonable rates.

Botts said she had heard that rates and the utilities costs were forcing business to leave downtown. She suggested a program to help owners bring properties up to date, with energy efficient incentives.

Zingg said it was time to reevaluate the list of projects and prioritize.

Lawrence agreed using criteria, such as how each project would fit the goals of the plan.

Wood asked how to address the downtown property owners; are spaces appropriate for the needs of niche stores.

Lawrence said everyone wants to be part of success – create success.

Grossman said the time is right. He said the Granada block was headed for success. He suggested one on one meetings with property owners, informing them of opportunities and incentives.

Spatz summarized the need to review criteria, priorities; build incentives; buy into the Chamber marketing incentives; work with the Main Street group. Spatz said Council could create incentive through ordinances similar to ones in Hood River that had penalties for buildings that had been vacant for too long.

Lawrence said he had attended a meeting on the Gorge Historical Highway Bike Trail Project, and in 2014 through 2016 downtown needs to be ready to take advantage of it.

Miles said she had heard many great visions and ideas for businesses, but the rent downtown kills them.

Grossman suggested creating Urban Renewal incentives to drop the rent.

Young recapped the staff action would be to prepare a process to review criteria and priority for previously identified eight projects; and options for incentives with consequences. Young said the next joint meeting would most likely be August or September.

Update of On-going Urban Renewal Projects
Chrostek distributed the Granada process timeline.

Grossman thanked Chrostek for his hard work, wishing him the best in Bend, and noting he would be missed. Botts passed on the appreciation of the NWC Parks and Rec Board for his assistance with the splash park grant. Wood said she appreciated all his hard work.

Future Meetings – July 16, 2013

Being no further business the meeting was adjourned at 7:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:
Izetta Grossman, Recording Secretary

Attest:


Chris Zukin, Chair