

MINUTES

COLUMBIA GATEWAY URBAN RENEWAL AGENCY MEETING

March 30, 2021

5:30 p.m.

VIA ZOOM

PRESIDING: Gary Grossman, Chair

BOARD PRESENT: Staci Coburn, Mike Cronin, Tracy Dugick, Steve Kramer, Darcy Long-Curtiss, Tim McGlothlin, Dan Richardson

BOARD ABSENT: John Fredrick

STAFF PRESENT: Urban Renewal Manager Alice Cannon, City Attorney Jonathan Kara, Associate Planner Joshua Chandler, Secretary Paula Webb

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Chair Grossman at 5:31 p.m.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chair Grossman led the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Director Cannon recommended removal of Action Item 10. A. "Intergovernmental Agreement for the First Street/Riverfront Access Project for Right of Way Services." This item requires action from City Council, not the Urban Renewal Board.

It was moved by Long-Curtiss and seconded by Dugick to approve the agenda as amended. The motion carried 8/0; Coburn, Cronin, Dugick, Grossman, Kramer, Long-Curtiss McGlothlin and Richardson in favor, none opposed, Fredrick absent.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

It was moved by Coburn and seconded by Dugick to approve the minutes of February 16, 2021 as submitted. The motion carried 8/0; Coburn, Cronin, Dugick, Grossman, Kramer, Long-Curtiss McGlothlin and Richardson in favor, none opposed, Fredrick absent.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Chuck Gomez, Granada Theatre, 221 E. Second Street, The Dalles

Mr. Gomez suggested possible development of the parking lot directly behind the Granada Theatre. He believed the City would be greatly enhanced by an “urban greening” of the space. Gomez would like to convert the lot into a three-season, family style outdoor walk-up theater space.

Gomez stated both adjoining tenants are amenable to discussion of the project; Eric Gleason agreed to place a movie screen on the side of his building. Gomez also proposed raised garden beds and placement of a banner or ivy on the retaining wall for East First Street. He said the Granada is in the perfect position to offer the movies as well as provide snacks, grilled food and drinks.

Gomez thought this would be a positive development for the parking lot. In the past seven years, he has seen no development, or plans for development, of the parking lot. These improvements would not be permanent.

Gomez would like to lease the property for \$1.00 per year with five one-year extensions followed by an option to purchase the property.

Director Cannon stated she met earlier with Mr. Gomez and discussed the idea. She expressed her willingness to further discuss the project.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

Proposed FY 2021-2022 Urban Renewal Goals and Priority Projects

Director Cannon thanked the Board for accommodating the special meeting. She then presented the staff report.

Board Member Richardson requested the status of the First Street project.

Director Cannon replied the last update on the First Street project was provided at the September 15, 2020 meeting; KPFF consultants presented the current design. The design is 75% complete. The project began as a connection between Lewis and Clark Park to a new plaza space on Washington Street between First and Second Streets. The project morphed into the First Street Streetscape Project to improve the pedestrian crossing at Union Street and improve First Street between Union and Laughlin Streets with new sidewalks, streetscape, water line, sewer improvements, and a bike lane. The redesign could, if desired, accommodate two-way bike traffic.

Cannon stated next steps include communication with property owners and the public, coordination with the Engineering Department to ensure compliance with the Transportation System Plan, right-of-way acquisition, design completion and preparation of bid documents.

Board Member Richardson stated he would like a thorough discussion prior to bid phase. He suggested bike and pedestrian lanes be wide enough to allow two-way traffic. Richardson requested a review of the project as proposed.

Chair Grossman directed staff to include the topic at the April meeting.

Board Member Kramer stated this raises additional questions. The Agency does not own the streets or sidewalks. Kramer asked if the City would be included in the discussion, and who would be responsible for removing the RVs parked along First Street. These questions need to be addressed.

Director Cannon offered Staff would pledge to complete the discussion portion this fiscal year, making an amendment to the 2021-22 Goals and Priority Projects unnecessary.

Board Member Kramer suggested moving forward with Board consensus and formalize the decision within the budget process. Board consensus was in favor of Kramer's suggestion.

Urban Renewal Governance

Director Cannon presented the staff report.

Board Member Kramer stated he was disappointed there was no off-line discussion. Kramer said Director Cannon found historical information that negated the need for discussion, and said he would like to know who her historian was. Kramer felt his discussion with Director Cannon and Chair Grossman should have taken place.

Board Member Kramer referred to the staff report that listed the current membership of the Board. He noted the County was not included in the staff report. Director Cannon apologized for the oversight.

Board Member Kramer stated most of the content in the staff report appears to be City-driven. Kramer thought the Advisory Committee was doing good work, but a Council member lobbied to move to the present format. An Advisory Committee is not a Board, just a group of folk advising a governing body with full fiscal responsibility. Kramer stated he did not see Mid-Columbia Fire and Rescue (MCFR), the Port of The Dalles, Parks and Recreation (NWPRD), and Wasco County acting as the responsible agencies for work done within the city limits. He said, "That's where my heartburn is with the governance of this particular Board."

Board Member Kramer stated if the Board was okay with the way things were, he would move forward with this format. "I think the decisions that were made in the past were the wrong decisions and we need to revert that back to having the fiscal agent be the elected representatives of the City Council."

Chair Grossman stated he received input from Board Member Fredrick by email. Fredrick felt the current Board process was correct.

Board Member Coburn recollected earlier Board Members that shared the direct impacts this Agency had on their Boards and available funds. She appreciated that it reminded us, when making decisions, we should look at the long term, positive effect, so when this is finished those improvements increase their tax revenue. Coburn appreciated that reminder and their views, stating they come at it from a different place, almost like it's a personal investment for their Boards. She appreciated hearing their voices as part of a constituency truly affected by the decisions made to freeze their revenue stream.

Chair Grossman asked if anyone else felt the Board should look further into returning to the previous process. There was no response.

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Mayor Mays asked if the Advisory Committee was made up of the same members. Chair Grossman replied, as he remembered, it was a smaller board and different structure.

Board Member McGlothlin added it functioned as an advisory committee; decisions were made by City Council. Basically, the Board was formed from a reaction to City Council decisions on development of a hotel in the downtown corridor. McGlothlin noted he voted against the current formation because it was a non-elected group of people making financial decisions. There was no way to recall people not accountable to the citizens as an elected official. McGlothlin stated the Board was formed legally, but felt ethical accountability may or may not be happening.

Board Member McGlothlin clarified the Advisory Committee was a smaller group made up of downtown businessmen and women. The structure and ability to make financial decisions changed.

Mayor Mays asked Board Member Kramer what the Advisory Committee should be made of. Kramer replied it would go back to the original structure. Kramer stated the Board was not putting more money on the tax rolls; the return was not going back to districts. Putting the responsibility on Fire and Rescue, the Park, the Port and the County is irresponsible at this time. City Council should be the responsible party.

Chair Grossman stated, "If you look back in the history, the reason why in recent times we haven't been getting a return on property, is because the former agency, which was City Council, got us into a lot of property that didn't allow us to do what we needed to do. I don't see us returning back to a system that got us into trouble in the first place."

Board Member Long-Curtiss noted she had not served prior to the new system. Based on her research, there are only two options for Urban Renewal in Oregon; both strictly outlined in the Oregon Revised Statutes (ORS). One is under City Council, the second is the independent Board we are now. Long-Curtiss agreed the City Council structure is what brought us where we are now. Long-Curtiss felt things were changing, but we have had difficult economic times. She noted district representatives are elected. Long-Curtiss understood Board Member Kramer's frustration, but felt City Council did not have as much incentive for things other than urban blight and downtown improvements. She said, "All the other agencies want a return on their investment; that's an important focus for us to maintain."

Chair Grossman stated there was concern with the previous form. The Advisory Committee had a loose structure appointed by the Mayor. During that time the Fire District had concerns with their lack of input on projects. Chair Grossman said it had been good to have input from all the taxing districts. "I think it's that, holding us particularly accountable to making sure we have a return through urban renewal in terms of property taxes for everybody concerned."

Board Member McGlothlin stated since the inception, he counted four, maybe five, different heads of the Planning Department that brought inconsistency, changing recommendations and vision. The underlying conditions were a return on investment and taxing districts concerns. Decisions were made with incomplete information; we were basically separated. We had input, but no direct communication, between the Advisory and the City Council.

Chair Grossman stated there was a "divide and conquer" period that separated the Advisory Committee and City Council. McGlothlin added many things were already in the works, the

current Board accepted overview of projects developed many years before.

Chair Grossman stated he did not sense a strong desire to reorganize. He then asked for input.

Board Member Kramer stated his willingness to put this on hold, continue some thought process and conversations off line, and get a better grip on where folks are with this.

Board Member McGlothlin noted the life of the Agency is finite. Director Cannon stated our current debt obligation has the Agency paying off all remaining debt in 2029. She added there may be other revenues that would keep the Agency alive. McGlothlin noted we are looking at eight years to continue this Agency as it exists or return to the way it was, our only two choices.

STAFF COMMENTS / PROJECT UPDATES

Director Cannon explained why the First Street right-of-way agreement was pulled from Board action. The fiscal agent for the City with the ability to enter into an IGA (Intergovernmental Agreement) is the City organization. Governmental agreements related to our work with ODOT will go to City Council for their approval. Once finalized, Director Cannon will return to the Board for recommendation to City Council. The draft agreement sets aside \$200,000.00 to fund the right-of-way phase for the First Street project. An updated cost for this phase of work has now increased to \$250,000.00. Funds are available in the current and proposed budget to cover that cost.

Director Cannon said work continues with Todd Carpenter and Carla McQuade on the Recreation Building. Cannon stated she is pleased with recent progress. A Building Permit application has been submitted for approval. The Historic Landmarks Commission approved the façade design in spring of 2020. Staff may return as early as next month for Board consideration of a new addendum to adjust the project schedule in response to the pandemic.

Board Member McGlothlin asked if Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) was cooperative in the First Street development. Cannon replied she has had no updated conversations with UPRR. We have good documentation from the 2010-2012 era. A complication with this project is right-of-way; a large portion of the right-of-way is UPRR land.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS / QUESTIONS

Board Member Kramer thanked everyone for their candid conversation.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Pursuant to Item 11. A. of the Urban Renewal Agency Board Agenda dated March 30, 2021, which cites ORS 192.660(2)(e), the Board adjourned to Executive Session at 6:34 p.m. Mayor Mays was invited to attend Executive Session. There was no opposition.

RECONVENE TO OPEN SESSION

Chair Grossman reconvened the Open Session at 7:10 p.m.

DECISION FOLLOWING EXECUTIVE SESSION


There was no decision following Executive Session.

ADJOURNMENT

Being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 7:12 p.m.

Submitted by/
Paula Webb, Secretary
Community Development Department

SIGNED:



Gary Grossman, Chair

ATTEST:



Paula Webb, Secretary
Community Development Department