MINUTES

COLUMBIA GATEWAY URBAN RENEWAL AGENCY
BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING

April 15, 2025
5:30 p.m.

City Hall Council Chambers
313 Court Street, The Dalles, Oregon 97058
Via Zoom / Livestream via City Website

PRESIDING: Darcy Long

BOARD PRESENT: Staci Coburn, Cody Cornett (arrived at 6:32 p.m.), Mike Courtney, Walter Denstedt, Forust Ercole, Sandy Haechrel, Scott Hege, Jennifer Jacquard, Kristen Lillvik, Donna Lawrence, Timothy McGlothlin, Dean Myerson, Dan Richardson, Jeffrey Schulkers, Ben Wring, Bob Wood

BOARD ABSENT: Marcus Swift

STAFF PRESENT: Director and Urban Renewal Manager Joshua Chandler, City Manager Matthew Klebes, City Attorney Jonathan Kara, Administrative Assistant Crystal Sayre, Planning Technician Paula Webb

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Chair Long at 5:32 p.m.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chair Long led the Pledge of Allegiance.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Timothy McGlothlin volunteered to serve as Secretary. There were no other nominations, and he was approved by unanimous vote.

Timothy McGlothlin nominated Darcy Long to serve as Chair. The nomination was seconded and approved.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Donna Lawrence recommended that the heading specify "Urban Renewal Budget Committee." City Attorney Jonathan Kara confirmed this could be corrected administratively.

Ben Wring noted he was not marked as present at the previous meeting.

A motion to approve the minutes with corrections was made by Donna Lawrence, seconded by Ben Wring. The motion passed, 6/0, with abstentions from Walter Denstedt, Kristen Lillivak, and Jennifer Jacquard, who were not present at the 2024 meeting.

BUDGET OFFICER'S MESSAGE, FISCAL YEAR 2025-2026, BUDGET PRESENTATION and DELIBERATIONS

Community Development Director and Urban Renewal Manager Joshua Chandler delivered the Budget Officer's Message. He acknowledged several staff members involved in the process, including City Manager Matthew Klebes, Economic Development Officer Dan Spatz, Planning Technician Paula Webb, and Administrative Assistant Crystal Sayre. Chandler noted that the City's former Finance Director Angie Wilson had helped launch the budget process but had recently left her position. He explained that the budget format had undergone substantial changes this year with the transition to new software, resulting in a more detailed layout. He also provided several corrections to the packet, including a mislabeling of the table of contents, a proposed removal of a redundant mission statement page, and a correction to the budgeted amount for the Incentive Program (from $1.6 million to $1.4 million).

Director Chandler reminded the Committee that the Urban Renewal District is set to sunset in 2029 and emphasized the importance of strategic investments during the District's final years. He reviewed the Agency's recent accomplishments, including the substantial amendment to the Urban Renewal Plan adopted in December 2024, which increased the maximum indebtedness by $6.1 million. He stated that Urban Renewal continues to focus on high-impact projects that support long-term redevelopment goals. Key initiatives included the redevelopment of the Tony's building, the First Street streetscape project, the Basalt Commons housing project, and continued support for the Property Rehabilitation Program.

He provided an overview of the Urban Renewal financing mechanism, noting it is a tool authorized by Oregon Revised Statutes that allows future growth in property tax revenue to be reinvested in designated areas. The Agency operates with two funds: the Capital Projects Fund, which handles administration and project implementation, and the Debt Services Fund, which supports repayment of bond debt. For the upcoming fiscal year, the Capital Projects Fund was projected to begin with a balance of approximately $6.2 million, while estimated revenues from property taxes and interest totaled around $1.8 million.

Director Chandler reviewed major budgeted expenditures in detail. The First Street project was the most significant allocation, with $3.2 million budgeted for construction and $60,000 to finalize design work. The Basalt Commons project, a 116-unit affordable housing development on the former Griffith Motors site, had a total of $1.73 million committed—$1 million through the Incentive Program and $730,000 through a separate Development Funding Agreement. The Incentive Program itself was allocated $1.4 million for the upcoming year, a $300,000 increase over the prior year. Director Chandler noted that this program supports downtown redevelopment by providing flexible funding to eligible private-sector rehabilitation projects. Additional line items included $484,658 for a joint parking lot redevelopment with the City and $150,000 for a grant match supporting the Federal Street Plaza project.

In reviewing the Debt Services Fund, Director Chandler stated that the current outstanding balance on the Agency's 2009 bond was approximately $2.84 million, with three annual payments remaining before final payoff in June 2029. He explained that the Agency budgets for the following year's debt service to ensure funds are in place prior to receiving property tax revenue, due to the absence of a fund contingency.

Committee members asked questions and offered comments throughout the presentation. Board Members Donna Lawrence and Timothy McGlothlin requested additional clarification regarding ownership and repayment details for the Commodore II building. Board Member Sandy Haechrel and others expressed concerns about the new budget software, citing reduced clarity compared to prior years. Director Chandler and City Manager Matthew Klebes acknowledged the learning curve and stated that formatting improvements were already under discussion. They noted that limited availability of qualified auditors and rising costs had also impacted budget assumptions.

Discussion then shifted to the topic of future Urban Renewal Districts. On page nine of the budget document, a reference was made to assessing the need for new districts after the current one sunsets. Board Members Donna Lawrence, Walter Denstedt, and Mike Courtney expressed discomfort with the wording, preferring that future Urban Renewal activities be considered only after a public review or vote. Director Chandler clarified that the language referred to a feasibility assessment and that the establishment of a new district would require approval by the City Council and potentially other taxing districts. He emphasized that the current Columbia Gateway District would end in 2029 and any future district would be separate.

Chair Darcy Long noted the confusion caused by using "Agency" and "District" interchangeably, clarified that the Agency and City Council are now separate governing bodies, and confirmed that the final budget approval would occur at the upcoming Urban Renewal Agency Board meeting.

APPROVAL OF BUDGET

After the discussion, Board Member Donna Lawrence moved to recommend approval of the FY 2025–2026 Urban Renewal Agency Budget as proposed. The motion was seconded by Board Member Mike Courtney and passed unanimously. Final approval would be completed by the Agency Board. Additional comments included clarification from Director Chandler that changes to language and formatting would be incorporated in future budget cycles.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS (POST APPROVAL)

Board Member Donna Lawrence expressed discomfort with the language on page 9 suggesting the creation of future Urban Renewal Districts, and recommended rephrasing to reflect an assessment of transition strategies rather than implying a commitment to new districts.

Board Member Walter Denstedt voiced concern about establishing new districts without voter input, opposed the idea of extending or creating another district without clear public approval, and emphasized that debt should not carry over to a potential new district.

Board Member Mike Courtney reminded the Committee that the original district was established for 25 years and later extended, stressed the importance of honoring commitments made to taxing entities, and supported ending the current district on schedule to allow other districts to benefit from tax increment revenues.

ADJOURNMENT

Being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 6:35 p.m.

Meeting conducted in a room in compliance with ADA standards.

Submitted by/
Paula Webb, Planning Technician
Community Development Department

SIGNED: Dan Richardson
Dan Richardson
Chair

ATTEST: Paula Webb
Paula Webb
Planning Technician
Community Development Department