

CITY OF ALBANY
CITY COUNCIL (WORK SESSION)
Municipal Court Room
Monday, April 11, 2011
4:00 p.m.

MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Sharon Konopa called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Councilors present: Councilors Dick Olsen, Jeff Christman, Bill Coburn, Floyd Collins, Bessie Johnson, and Ralph Reid, Jr.

Councilors absent: None.

BUSINESS FROM THE PUBLIC

There was no business from the public.

CAROUSEL BUILDING REVIEW

Transportation Systems Analyst Ron Irish said he is here to answer the Council's questions about the road pattern around the Carousel Building. Irish passed out copies of a map of the area (see agenda file) and a brochure about back-in angle parking (see agenda file).

Irish described the street movement on Washington Street, 2nd Avenue, Calapooia Street, and 1st Avenue. There is a concern about vision clearance on 1st Avenue and Washington Street, but so far there hasn't been a problem with accidents there.

The Transportation System Plan (TSP) includes a change to the street pattern from two lanes to one lane around the Post Office, and to change the second lane to parking. The changes will still accommodate the traffic volume in the area. Irish discussed head-in angle parking and back-in angle parking and the associated safety issues with each.

Councilor Ralph Reid Jr. asked if the speed could be dropped to 10-15 mph. Irish said in the downtown area they can legally post 20 mph, but not less than that.

Councilor Floyd Collins asked how many total parking spaces there would be. Irish said using back-in angle parking would create 32 spaces; the plan in the TSP creates 37 spaces.

George Crandall, Urban Designer and Principal of Crandall Arambula, explained that he has been involved in consultant work for the downtown area since 1995. He is excited about the Carousel and thinks it is an important part of the revitalization strategy. Also, the building size and use is a great improvement to the previous site. Regarding the parking, he is not sure of the design because it is so central to the revitalization. He has suggested that it be an open selection process, and involve a committee comprised of Central Albany Revitalization Agency (CARA) staff, a couple of CARA members, and Carousel members. The idea is to send letters to architects to measure interest and ask them to respond with a letter of qualifications. Then the committee would select an evaluation panel to interview three or four architects. Part of their evaluation would be the tent structure compared to any other type of structure. A thorough evaluation is appropriate for this public effort. The Board would have the final say.

Crandall thinks the back-in angle parking is a great suggestion; he has seen it work in other cities.

Councilor Dick Olsen asked, is this location the best for the Carousel? Crandall said they met today and discussed that the end of 1st Avenue needs a retail anchor. Given all considerations, this does seem to be the right location.

Olsen asked, are you aware we may be acquiring the Denzel collection? Crandall said no, but that is even more exciting. Olsen is concerned that the building is not large enough to house the Denzel collection. Crandall said that would be evaluated in the conceptual design phase.

Collins asked, the reason we are considering this tonight is because of the financial participation by the public and the right-of-way (ROW) intrusion by the building footprint, correct? Urban Renewal Manager Kate Porsche said this project involves \$300,000 in CARA money so there are guidelines; but since it is the Carousel group that is heading the project, CARA doesn't have full say. There was some pushback at a previous Work Session about the design, and so today's Work Session is to work towards a consensus and to be transparent. The goal is to find a way, without meddling, to achieve a result that the community feels good about.

Councilor Bessie Johnson recalled that some businesses were concerned about the noise levels. She thinks there are more folks that need to be involved. Porsche thinks the Carousel group has done a good job with presenting their project, and Crandall's work is complimentary to the Advisory Board's work so far. It is still the Carousel group's

project, but CARA is trying to work with them to complete it. There may be price a tag and they may be asking CARA for money to pay for an architect.

Irish said that one of the questions that will need to be answered by the Council before the project gets too far is their willingness to give 18 feet ROW for the bump out. Discussion followed about acquiring railroad ROW.

Dr. Gary Goby, a member of the Carousel group, would like the Council to grant the vacation so they can have a larger footprint to work with. Also, they don't have a problem with the Council being involved in the selection of an architect. He said, Crandall is helpful and we look forward to working with him, the CARA Advisory Board, the Council, and staff.

The Council consensus was supportive of pursuing the ROW and soliciting architects. City Manager Hare said this project already involves public funds and may involve more, so it would be most appropriate to call it a public/private partnership. Discussion followed regarding urban renewal laws and prevailing wages as it impacts this project.

INSURANCE SERVICES OFFICE AUDIT REPORT

Building Official Manager Melanie Adams said the Building Division has had furloughs, cut discretionary spending on items such as training and professional development, and are generally making do with what they have. They have made a lot of adjustments and yet, the Building Division remains effective because they have a very talented staff.

Adams explained that the Insurance Services Office, Inc. (ISO) grades the Building Division's effectiveness every five years. They measure an agency's effectiveness in terms of natural hazards and other general building items. A good ISO rating means that private insurers will give Albany citizens better insurance rates. The City of Albany received a "2" on a scale of 1-10 with 1 being the highest.

Adams said she has kept track of the City's total score over the last five years and they have improved their number of points. It is remarkable that they have managed to do this with so many changes and cuts to the Building Division. She thinks it was done by focusing on what matters most and putting their resources to that area. They are getting as much free and low cost training as possible; and though they are deficient in training they do get a lot for the money they spend. Mentoring is an area where they consistently score high. Also, they have not compromised on the thoroughness of their inspections and plan reviews.

Adams said they would like to achieve a rating of "1" but in order to do so they would need more technical training, and to do more public outreach which would increase staff time and expenditures. She described areas where they could adopt more restrictive codes that would also earn points.

Johnson commended Adams and her staff for doing a great job and earning a high rating, despite all the cuts made in recent years to the Building Division.

BUILDING DIVISION – BENTON COUNTY INTERGOVERNMENTAL AGREEMENT

Adams said Benton County approached the City about entering into an Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) to perform plan reviews. Benton County had been using Corvallis for commercial review and now would like to use Albany for a multimillion dollar school project in Philomath. This is great opportunity for Albany and the terms in the IGA will help to cover the hourly rate for the staff assigned to the project.

Konopa moved the Historic Albany Recovery Plan (HARP) up on the agenda.

HARP UPDATE

Michael Waldock gave a PowerPoint presentation (see agenda file).

Hare spoke regarding the location of the HARP office. City Attorney Jim Delapoer offered space in his office to the HARP team for a reduced rate. Delapoer's office had been renting the space to another tenant that recently moved out. Waldock looked at it and thinks the space is appropriate for HARP's needs.

Hare said there has been a question if this arrangement could be a conflict of interest. Hare said that in this case Delapoer is a contractor and office space is a service he is offering. Hare sees no conflict. There is cubicle space at City Hall but it is in a shared area that is not well suited to folks coming and going, or for accommodating loud discussions.

Reid said that when Transit was housed in the cubicle space it was not conducive with the Engineers trying to work in neighboring cubicles. He agrees HARP should not be put in the space at City Hall.

BUDGET OVERVIEW

Hare said he could provide a general high-level overview of the Budget. They did change the approach last year to a revenue-driven budget instead of an expense-driven budget. Hare thinks Directors did a very good job with the approach. It forces a different mindset. They will be using the same approach this year.

The Voluntary Separation Incentive Program (VSIP) was offered again this year. By utilizing the VSIP they have been able to reduce staff and the City saves money in the following year. Another positive result of the VSIP is that Hare does not anticipate any layoffs. He said they haven't seen a reduction in revenue, but have seen a reduction in the rate of increase for revenues.

Hare said this year's proposed budget will look much like the previous budget. It does contain resources to allow the Police Department to catch up on equipment replacement, to the point that they will be just one year behind.

Hare explained Oregon's budget law philosophy and why they are constrained to some degree about what they can talk about in today's Work Session with the Council. The law requires a full Budget Committee to consider the Proposed Budget and it limits the distribution of the Budget to a specific timeframe so it becomes public at the same point. This prevents discussions from taking place by a not-full Budget Committee in advance of the legal noticing.

Hare said the Budget is based on the Strategic Plan (SP). They are not proposing any big changes.

Councilor Jeff Christman said he was satisfied with Hare's summary; it gives him an overview before going into the budget process.

Hare said the City is not in crisis mode and can continue to offer the services the community expects. He anticipates it will be a productive budget process.

Collins pointed out that when we do a revenue-driven budget we may not be meeting benchmarks compared to when we use an expenditure-driven budget. Hare agreed and used Fire as an example; currently the City cannot meet the benchmarks for response times, based on a lack of stations and personnel. The question becomes, is the benchmark the right standard that we feel is critical, or have we demonstrated that we are able to live with a lesser standard? Our average is a little over five minutes response time compared to the benchmark of four minutes. The next issue, is how well are we measuring? Hare said we are making progress but are a long way from having the quality of data to make an across-the-board judgment. Another consideration is the added value for going the next step to meet a benchmark, versus the cost of doing so.

Reid said if standards become lower and lower based on budget constraints, he doesn't want the City to be complacent with the "new" (lower) standards years down the road. Hare said staff will continue to find ways to improve and do the best we can; but it is a policy choice for the Council. For example, if the Council wants us to meet the four minute response time for Fire, then we would need to discuss how to meet that benchmark, which may involve additional funding.

Collins said at some point the Council and the Budget Committee need to discuss if the City is providing the right services at the right level, and do an internal prioritization. When staff provides a balanced budget the governing body misses the step of critical thinking. He doesn't see that discussion happening other than in the SP process, but that particular discussion doesn't get to the specific level he desires. Hare said that staff is having the kind of detailed discussion Collins is referring to, and gave examples of conversations taking place in the Fire Department. Hare said planning also takes place in several other City documents such as the Transportation System Program (TSP) and the Capital Improvement Program (CIP).

Collins thinks they do a good job communicating with staff and the Council, but not with the community. Hare said that folks can do in Albany, Oregon, what no other city can - and that is to see what was spent as of last night by using the Dashboard program on the City's website.

Konopa thinks the tools on the City's website are very good. She constantly tells folks we are the most transparent city in Oregon. Discussion followed about how to get information out to the public.

Olsen asked, how much federal money did we depend on last year? Hare said federal funds were used for the Airport, Talking Water Gardens, and the Wastewater Treatment Plant. In terms of operating expenses, not much was federal dollars. Most of the discretionary funds the City gets from the state is based on an agreement made long ago that local government would not tax for certain items, and the state would share the revenue instead. So far the state has honored those agreements.

CITY MANAGER REPORT

FARMER'S MARKET

Hare said the Farmer's Market has been using the City Hall parking lot for the last two years. He hasn't heard many complaints; they plan to use it this year and staff wanted to make sure the Council agrees to the arrangement. The Council was supportive.

COUNCILOR COMMENTS

Christman passed out a document that he created regarding the Transient Lodging Tax (TLT) Policy (see agenda file). He reviewed his recommendations which involve changing the makeup of the committee members; the allocation of funding to programs by a percentage of the actual revenue; and getting rid of the reserve fund. He pointed out that the three agencies that receive money now would get more money under his plan than they would under the previous policy. Konopa said Christman's numbers may not be accurate. Discussion followed.

Christman and Konopa will meet with staff to reconcile the numbers. Christman stated that he will remain firm on his overall policy recommendations.

Olsen said Sybaris hosted a very nice dinner to promote the East Thornton Lake Natural Area (ETLNA). Matt and Janelle Bennett hosted and Olsen said Albany is fortunate they are part of our community. A total of \$2,300 was raised toward the land purchase.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the Work Session adjourned at 6:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary A. Dibble, MMC
Deputy City Clerk

Reviewed by,

Wes Hare
City Manager