



APPROVED: February 18, 2009

CITY OF ALBANY
Central Albany Revitalization Area Advisory Board
City Hall Council Chambers, 333 Broadalbin Street SW
Wednesday, January 21, 2009

MINUTES

Advisory Board Members present: Jeff Christman, Bill Coburn, Floyd Collins (arrived at 5:55 p.m.), Loyd Henion, Bessie Johnson, Gordon Kirbey, Sharon Konopa, Ray Kopczynski, Dick Olsen, Cordell Post, Ralph Reid, Jr., and Kim Sass

Advisory Board Members absent: Oscar Hult

Staff present: City Manager Wes Hare, Community Development Director Greg Byrne, Planning Manager Don Donovan, Urban Renewal Manager Kate Porsche, Public Information Officer Marilyn Smith, Building Official Melanie Adams, and Administrative Assistant Teresa Nix

Others present: Nine others in the audience

CALL TO ORDER

Acting Chair Jeff Christman called the meeting to order at 5:15 p.m.

ELECTION OF CHAIR

MOTION: Gordon Kirbey moved to elect Cordell Post as Chair of CARA. Loyd Henion seconded the motion, and it **passed** unanimously.

Chair Post presided over the meeting from this point forward.

ELECTION OF VICE CHAIR

MOTION: Ralph Reid, Jr., moved to elect Jeff Christman as Vice Chair of CARA. Bill Coburn seconded the motion, and it **passed** unanimously.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

December 10, 2008

MOTION: Ray Kopczynski moved to approve the December 10 meeting minutes as presented. Bessie Johnson seconded the motion, and it **passed** unanimously.

SCHEDULED BUSINESS

Business from the Public

Rick Rogers, Director of the Albany Downtown Association (ADA), advised that he will retire from his position effective March 31, 2009. The ADA Board has appointed a selection committee to recruit and select finalists for his replacement. The ADA Board will then make a final decision. Mr. Rogers expressed appreciation to the CARA Board for its time, effort, and support of Downtown Albany over the past several years.

Budget and Cash-Flow Update

Urban Renewal Manager Kate Porsche distributed and reviewed *CARA Funds Available*. She advised that RCM Homes will not complete the first phase of its project until next fiscal year which frees up additional CARA funds for use this fiscal year. CARA's current cash balance is approximately \$861,500.

Funding Requests

Throop \$15,000 Matching Grant for Restaurant

Porsche referred to the written staff report distributed in packets. She explained that Skip Throop is requesting a \$15,000 matching grant for a new venting hood for the space at 210 First Avenue West. Matt Bennett, owner of Sybaris Restaurant, plans to lease the space and open another restaurant once it is restaurant ready. Staff recommends approval of the request.

Post said that Mr. Bennett is a friend and client; he will abstain from discussion and decision on this matter. Kirbey said that he will also abstain for similar reasons.

MOTION: Coburn moved to approve the grant. Reid seconded the motion.

In response to an inquiry from Kopczynski, Porsche said that the applicant received two bids for a venting hood – one in the amount of \$23,900 and one in the amount of \$38,750. She had suggested that an average of the two bids be used to calculate the 50 percent matching grant request. She noted that the grant would be dispersed on a reimbursement basis and that \$15,000 would be the maximum reimbursement.

Matt Bennett, 822 Tenth Street SW, came forward and briefly reviewed the two bids received.

The motion **passed** unanimously with Kirbey and Post abstaining.

Partnership with City of Albany Code Compliance Blight Removal Pilot Project

Porsche provided a summary of the proposal as detailed in the written staff report. The proposal is for a pilot program to address issues of blight within the CARA boundary. The request includes \$50,000 for code compliance staff costs and between \$50,000 and \$100,000 for project work.

Porsche reviewed discussions she has had with City staff, including Building Official Melanie Adams, regarding new and creative ways to address blight in neighborhoods. The proposal came out of those discussions. If the CARA Board is supportive of the concept, staff could form a task force to create a more detailed plan.

Henion asked about other possible partnerships, perhaps with ODOT or Linn County. Porsche said the task force could look at ways to leverage urban renewal funds.

Building Official Melanie Adams said that the City is looking at changing the code compliance model of operations to a more proactive, community-based approach. Community Development Director Greg Byrne added that this is one request of several to provide funding for the code compliance team.

Kopczynski stated that, since the City plans to change the code compliance model anyway, this may not be the best use of CARA funds. Adams stated that the Building Division is experiencing a significant lack of funding and that the code compliance program will probably not continue to exist without alternative sources of funding. Byrne added that the Building Division is experiencing a \$400,000 shortfall for next year. Staff has developed a menu of ways to address the shortfall. This proposal is part of the effort to keep highly qualified staff. In response to an inquiry from the Chair, Byrne stated that CARA funds would be spent on staff time and projects within the CARA boundary.

In discussion and in response to inquiries, Adams stated that the code compliance team has established partnerships with some neighborhood groups and would work on establishing others. The idea is to work with neighborhood groups to set priorities for projects that would improve the neighborhood as a whole. Projects might include such things as weatherization, street trees, community gardens, dumpster rentals, etc. Code compliance staff already has a tracking process in place and would ensure that CARA funds are spent on reducing blight within the CARA boundary. Staff could report back to CARA on a regular basis.

Coburn said that blight is a citywide problem and that he is not sure if this is an appropriate use of CARA funds. He asked if there is any revenue generated through code compliance. Public Information Officer Marilyn Smith reviewed the process by which the City occasionally cleans up individual properties and bills property owners. In general, the City does not generate income from fines, assessments, or liens. The code enforcement budget is part of the General Fund, and it has been getting smaller each year. This proposal would provide an opportunity for staff to work with citizens to clean up neighborhoods. Porsche added that this is a unique opportunity to combine enforcement and incentive to create change.

Johnson said that she was not sure about this idea at first but she likes the idea of working with citizens to fix up neighborhoods one block at a time. She said that she thinks the proposal is worth a try.

Christman said that he thinks the City should be careful about doing projects like gardens that require ongoing maintenance. He said projects should be one-time expenditures focused on residential properties.

Olsen said that he would prefer to see CARA money spent on brick and mortar projects as opposed to funding City staffing.

Reid suggested that CARA fund this proposal in part and that staff be asked to report back on a monthly basis. If it goes well, CARA could consider providing additional funds. Brief discussion followed.

MOTION: Reid moved to allocate \$50,000 for staffing and \$50,000 for projects, to require monthly reports by staff, and to consider allocating an additional \$50,000 for projects before the end of the year if the CARA Board is satisfied with the process. Johnson seconded the motion.

Brief discussion followed about whether a task force is needed for this process. Henion said that a task force might be helpful in developing ideas and connecting with other service groups. There was general agreement that staff could address the concept of a task force in its next report.

The motion **passed** 10 to 2 with Kopczynski and Olsen voting no.

Downtown – Discussion and Update

Planning Manager Don Donovan reported that the Planning Division is conducting a simple study of downtown parking. The goal is to gather factual information to include in future conversations about downtown parking as they arise. Staff will be using an established guide to conduct the study. Staff has established the boundary as the previous taxing district and has inventoried current parking spaces. The next step is to distribute a questionnaire to property owners, businesses, and residents within the area, the results of which will help establish the best times to count the number of available spaces. The final step will be to count the number of available spaces at any given time.

Collins suggested that staff consider expanding the boundaries beyond the old tax assessment district boundary, and that consideration be given to whether upcoming transportation projects will elevate the need for downtown parking.

CARA Finance Subcommittee

Christman said that the Finance Subcommittee has not met recently. He said that he thinks the general feeling is that CARA members are more comfortable with the financial data being received by staff and that it may be appropriate to disband the Finance Subcommittee at this time. Post agreed and said staff has done a great job of providing clear financial data. Reid led a round of applause for the efforts of Porsche in this regard.

MOTION: Christman moved to disband the Financial Subcommittee. Johnson seconded the motion, and it **passed** unanimously

Staff Updates and Issues

Porsche provided a brief update on the status of the Smith property. She anticipates being able to provide a full report and proposal at the next meeting.

Porsche advised that she anticipates that crews will soon be installing the pedestrian accoutrements on Second Avenue.

Porsche advised that the property at 705 Lyon SW has been sold and she anticipates that a Developer Partnership request for that property will be coming forward.

BUSINESS FROM THE BOARD

Kopczynski noted that Marc Manley is present. He invited him to provide an update.

Marc Manley, 222 First Avenue W, reported that improvements on the Ames Building are nearly complete. There are two tenants in the building, and there have been many events held in the upstairs ballroom. A state inspection for the elevator is scheduled next week. Regarding the Flinn Building, he said improvements and discussions with potential tenants are ongoing.

Konopa noted that David Anderer is in the audience and that the Albany Revitalization Agency will be asked to approve his appointment to the CARA Advisory Board at its meeting immediately following this meeting.

NEXT MEETING DATE

The next meeting of the CARA Advisory Board will be held on Wednesday, February 18, 2009, at 5:15 p.m. in the Council Chambers.

ADJOURNMENT

Hearing no further business, Chair Post adjourned the meeting at 6:32 p.m.

Submitted by,

Signature on File

Teresa Nix
Administrative Assistant

Reviewed by,

Signature on File

Kate Porsche
Urban Renewal Manager