



APPROVED: March 15, 2006

CITY OF ALBANY
Central Albany Revitalization Area
Advisory Board
City Hall Council Chambers, 333 Broadalbin Street
Wednesday, January 18, 2006
5:15 p.m.

MINUTES

Advisory Board Members present: Jeff Christman, Kent Hickam (arrived approximately 5:30 p.m.), Ray Hilts, Bessie Johnson, Doug Killin, Gordon Kirbey, Sharon Konopa, Chuck McLaran, Chris Norman, Dick Olsen, Cordell Post, Ralph Reid, Jr., Stella Reimers, and Kim Sass

Advisory Board Members absent: None

Staff present: Assistant City Manager/Chief Financial Officer Susan Busbice, Economic Development Director Dick Ebbert, City Manager Wes Hare, Graphics Specialist Matt Harrington, Parks & Recreation Director Ed Hodney, Management Assistant/Public Information Officer Marilyn Smith, and Administrative Assistant I Tracy Swett

Others present: Approximately two others in the audience.

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Chris Norman called the meeting to order at 5:20 p.m.

ROLL CALL

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Board Member Chuck McLaran moved to approve the December 21, 2005 minutes, as written. Board Member Bessie Johnson seconded the motion, which passed 13:0.

SCHEDULED BUSINESS

Business from the Public

None.

Budget Update

Board Member Jeff Christman referenced the handout "CARA Agency Statement of Revenues and Expenses" (Exhibit A, in agenda file). He said a request was made at the Board's last meeting to provide more budget detail. He and Assistant City Manager/Chief Financial Officer Susan Busbice are working to provide the data in the future with a focus on items within the Capital

Projects category. He said staff is reconciling items between two accounting programs given the City's mid-year software conversion.

Christman noted the district's property tax income since 2003 has increased by almost one-hundred percent.

Johnson asked how often property taxes are dispersed by the county. Busbice said the City receives monthly payments. Board Member Ray Hilts asked about the delinquent taxes. Johnson said the amount represented delinquent taxes that have been paid since the urban renewal district was formed.

Christman asked for members of the Budget Committee to see him after the meeting to discuss scheduling the next committee meeting.

Project Recaps

Streetscape

Economic Development Director Dick Ebbert said the garbage can liners have been added and the project is almost complete, with a few amenities still needing to be placed. Board Member Stella Reimers asked if the Willamette Community Bank streetscape was also completed. Ebbert said the lighting was not yet installed. Reimers noted the three benches currently placed near John Boock's building. She thought one should be placed by the bank. Ebbert said he would speak with staff on the placement of the benches.

Reimers said she needs brick replaced on her building and the contractor has not yet responded to her request. Ebbert said that could be because of weather.

Board Member Sharon Konopa asked if there had been any public feedback. Ebbert referred to Albany Downtown Director Rick Rogers, who said the response has been very positive. McLaran said he has heard positive remarks from a number of people regarding streetscape.

Iron Works

Ebbert said Graphics Specialist Matt Harrington and Glen Rea have been working on the co-marketing plan. Rea and project partner David Reece hope to close on the site late January. The Board should see activity on the site shortly after.

Harrington presented a picture (Exhibit B, in agenda file) of what the Iron Works site would look like with signage and flags incorporating CARA's logo.

Norman asked what the status of CARA website was. Harrington said there is already a lot of information on the CARA website. He encouraged Board members to review the site and make recommendations. Both CARA and Rea's Iron Works websites would have reciprocal links.

Flinn Buildings

Ebbert said he had tried to reach owner Marc Manley to get a status, but was unable to make contact prior to the Board meeting. Architect Robert Dortignacq has been through the building twice, but a report with findings is not yet available.

Swoboda/Vintage Furniture building

Ebbert and Planner II Catlin recently toured the building in response to some concern over progress with the rehabilitation of the building. Ebbert reported the Board's allocations are being spent as approved. Swoboda is also doing some seismic upgrades and improvements to the apartments on the second story. Façade work is constrained by the weather, but interior work is ongoing. Ebbert advised Swoboda he would need to come before the Board for any more funding requests.

Committee Reports

Downtown Revitalization

Board Member Gordon Kirbey referenced his memo from the agenda packet. He reported the Committee felt it prudent to grant extensions on a few projects given construction delays because of weather. He said the committee expects to receive more requests to fund projects, specifically the rehabilitation of the Flinn Block and the building that currently houses Old Town Café. Kirbey requested a discussion be opened on increasing the current funding available within the program.

Board Member Cordell Post asked why extensions were needed. Kirbey said weather had delayed construction on exterior projects.

McLaran asked how much money the Committee was asking for. Kirbey said \$100,000.

MOTION: McLaran moved to set up a contingency fund of \$100,000 for the Building Revitalization Grant and Loan Program. Hilts seconded.

Board Member Kent Hickam asked what the funding would be set up for. Kirbey said to fund new projects through the Grant and Loan Program. Post asked what type of projects. Kirbey said both front façade and interior rehabilitation. Norman said the committee felt reallocating money to the program would better allow CARA to quickly respond to future requests at a committee level.

Johnson asked how an application is processed. Norman said requests come before the Committee for their consideration if the proposal is within the established scope and financial limits established when the program was first created. Projects would come before the Board and Agency for approval if the proposal is outside the scope of the committee or funding is beyond what is available at the time of application.

Board Member Ralph Reid, Jr. said he was opposed to creating a contingency fund. He thought the committee should operate from the beginning balance. Contingency funds were meant to be reserved, not spent.

Board Member Doug Killin asked if the Committee wanted a guaranteed fund on which to draw. Kirbey and Norman said yes.

Reid asked if the motion could be amended to give the Committee an authorization to draw up to a certain amount to fund specific projects. Killin said "contingency" was misleading, but he believed what Reid was suggesting was the intent of the motion.

Reimers asked if the applicants were meeting their obligations. Kirbey said yes. Ebbert said yes with regard to grant history. Loans have not yet come due and there is no history to evaluate.

Board Member Kim Sass said there are five ongoing projects with financial commitments within the Grant and Loan Program, and the Agency is about to issue a Request for Qualifications (RFQ). She asked if the request could wait until after the initial response from developers on the RFQ to determine whether the \$100,000 would make a difference in whether the Agency could fund a waterfront redevelopment project. Kirbey said current and anticipated projects with the Downtown Building Revitalization Program might be more dependable for return on investment than the unknown results from the RFQ.

Norman said he thought it important not to wait.

Johnson asked for clarification on where the reallocated funds would go. Busbice said there is a line item for the Grant and Loan Program. She said less than \$50,000 was currently available in the program for award.

Board Member Dick Olsen asked if the report on the RFQ draft process could be heard before voting on the motion. The Board agreed. Christman said there is currently money available within the program, but the question is whether it is enough.

MOTION: Killin moved to table the motion until after the RFQ report was given. Reid seconded the motion. A vote was held to table the motion, which passed 12:2 with Konopa and Olsen opposed.

RFQ Progress Report

City Manager Wes Hare said he did not think a \$100,000 allocation would make a difference to the RFQ process since it would be a one-time reallocation. The goal of the Agency is to increase property values within the area. Redevelopment of an area is one tool; rehabilitation of existing buildings is another. Both have merit.

He said Busbice is working to negotiate a line of credit for the CARA Agency of \$5 million. Olsen asked how much \$100,000 would affect a line of credit. Hare said a one-time reallocation would not diminish the City's ability to get a higher line of credit, but if done every year, it could decrease the amount staff would be able to negotiate.

Hare referenced the draft RFQ (Exhibit C, in agenda file). He said staff was hoping to distribute later that week, early the next. When asked how the document would be distributed, Hare said staff was considering using such tools as the Urban Land Institute's website and advertising in key publications to solicit requests for the document. It would also be sent to contacts gained through the Oregon Downtown Development Association and the City's banking contacts.

Norman asked what steps staff would follow to keep momentum building. Hare said he was unsure since he has not personally completed an urban renewal RFQ in the past. If an opportunity was given to pitch the vision to a developer, staff would welcome the Board's participation.

Reimers said the RFQ document was a great marketing piece for the City.

Konopa said she was concerned with the schedule on page 11. Hare said the April date was key because that would give any indication of interest by the development community.

Norman asked the Board to consider who would be willing to review submissions should a committee need to be formed in the future.

Ebbert referenced an article in the Oregonian that a development would be built in Vancouver, Washington with a similar mixed use concept of what is envisioned in the waterfront district in Albany. He thought developers looking at that project might also consider Albany.

Reallocation of Funds to Downtown Building Revitalization Grant & Loan Program

Discussion resumed on the motion to reallocate funds to the Downtown Building Revitalization Grant and Loan Program. Hickam asked if the Building Grant and Loan Program had spent \$319,000 as of 12/31/05. Busbice recounted the history of the program's budget. Discussion followed. Christman said the budget sheet shows payments, but does not show committed funds.

Olsen asked how long the committed funds remain committed. Kirbey said the program was originally conceived with a six-month timeframe, but given current experience, six months may not be a realistic timeframe for completion of exterior projects.

Olsen said he is concerned with the consequences of allocating \$100,000 to the Agency's overall financial picture. Hare said a reallocation of \$100,000 would not be a deal breaker for a waterfront project. The question for the Agency is what tool should be used to cure blight in the area: small or large projects.

Reid said he would be more comfortable transferring the money to the established line item for the Downtown Building Grant and Loan Program. It would be easy to reallocate the money out to fund a larger project, if needed.

McLaran said there was no right or wrong answer, but allocating more funding would allow the committee to make decisions at the committee level. He thought it would be a mistake if the Agency turned its back on smaller projects in the hopes of luring a larger project.

Killin said if a motion was made to shut the program down for nine months, the public would be up in arms. By not reallocating the money, that would be the result.

MOTION: McLaran clarified his motion to move the \$100,000 to the Building Revitalization Grant and Loan Program. Hilts renewed his second. Hickam called for the question. A vote was called and the motion passed 13:1, with Olsen opposed.

Recommendation on Funding Request for 230-238 1st Avenue West

No action taken.

BUSINESS FROM THE ADVISORY BOARD

Rogers reminded the Board of the Pix grand opening on Friday, January 20 at 6:15 p.m.

Killin reported Habitat for Humanity will be out of lots when they complete the 23rd Avenue project. He thought CARA might want to consider partnering with Habitat to rehabilitate homes in the district if Habitat agreed. Sass thought rehabilitating homes had been discussed before, but Habitat was not interested. Konopa said Albany Partnership for Housing had previously discussed the issue with Habitat, but because Habitat had previously committed to building a certain number of homes, the agency did not have the resources at that time. This might be an opportunity to revisit with them.

Johnson asked how the loan portion of the Grant and Loan Program would be monitored and enforced in the future. Ebbert said the finance department reviews all paperwork prior to any signatures to ensure legality. He voiced confidence that enforcement would not be an issue. Hilts said he would be taking a tour of the CARA district and invited other Board members to join.

Ebbert mentioned the Development Code amendments to the Waterfront zoning district were recently adopted by Council and took effect immediately.

Post left the meeting at approximately 6:35 p.m.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the CARA Advisory Board was tentatively scheduled for Wednesday, March 15 at 5:15 p.m. in Council Chambers.

ADJOURNMENT

Hearing no further business, Chair Norman adjourned the meeting at approximately 6:40 p.m.

Submitted by

Reviewed by

Signature on file

Signature on file

Tracy Swett
Administrative Assistant I

Dick Ebbert
Economic Development Director

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