



**CITY OF ALBANY**  
**Central Albany Revitalization Area**  
**Advisory Board**  
**City Hall Council Chambers, 333 Broadalbin Street SW**  
**Wednesday, June 20, 2007**

**MINUTES**

Advisory Board Members present: Chris Norman, Jeff Christman, Ray Hilts, Bessie Johnson, Doug Killin, Gordon Kirbey, Sharon Konopa, Ray Kopczynski, Dick Olsen, Cordell Post, Ralph Reid, Jr., Stella Reimers, Kim Sass

Advisory Board Members absent: Dan Bedore

Staff present: City Manager Wes Hare, Economic Development Director Dick Ebbert, Urban Renewal Coordinator Kate Porsche, Community Development Director Helen Burns Sharp, Planning Manager Don Donovan, Planner II Anne Catlin, Administrative Assistant Teresa Nix

Others present: Approximately eight others in the audience

**CALL TO ORDER**

Chair Chris Norman called the meeting to order at 5:15 p.m.

**APPROVAL OF THE MAY 16, 2007, MINUTES**

**MOTION:** Doug Killin moved to approve the May 16 minutes as presented. Cordell Post seconded the motion, and it **passed** unanimously.

**APPROVAL OF THE JUNE 5, 2007, MINUTES**

**MOTION:** Ray Hilts moved to approve the June 5 minutes as presented. Gordon Kirbey seconded the motion, and it **passed** unanimously.

**SCHEDULED BUSINESS**

Business from the Public

None.

Subcommittee Reports

**Finance Subcommittee**

*Budget Update:* Jeff Christman said Urban Renewal Coordinator Kate Porsche is preparing information regarding CARA's current commitments and the future impacts of those commitments. The Finance Subcommittee will meet next month to review that information and will report back to the Board at its July meeting. Following brief discussion, a Finance Subcommittee meeting was scheduled for July 9 at 2:00 p.m.

*Borrowing Update:* Porsche reported that the City's Financial Advisor is working on a new RFP, in light of decisions made at the last CARA meeting; and it will be going out to the banks shortly.

## New Small Grant Subcommittee

Porsche provided a brief update. She said information about the small grant awards process will be published in the coming weeks and that a presentation is planned for the August CARA meeting, at which time grants will be awarded.

### Design Review: Riverview Place Apartments

Porsche reviewed the history of the project, as outlined in the staff report, noting that the design has changed substantially since CARA's 2003 letter of commitment. She said the motion at that time indicated that any substantive changes to the project needed to return to CARA for reconsideration of the partnership. She said that from the beginning, CARA indicated that it was important to give careful consideration to the design of this building, due to its location and size; and it was a catalyst for creation of the design guidelines. She introduced Architect George Crandall.

George Crandall said his firm in Portland specializes in revitalization of cities. He complimented CARA on a quality set of design guidelines, which is a fundamental tool in downtown revitalization. He showed several slides of developments in downtown Portland in the 1960s and 1970s, which did not fit into the neighborhood and which eroded the investment environment around them. He said that in the early 1980s, the City of Portland began working on design guidelines with the idea to enhance the investment environment, provide the development community with certainty, and enhance the economy and quality of life. He showed slides of buildings created using the design guidelines, which are respectful of the neighborhood and fit into the historic environment. He said his firm has since prepared design guidelines for other communities, and he showed slides of projects in Milwaukee, Oregon; Racine, Wisconsin; and Santa Fe, NM.

Crandall showed several slides of historical buildings in downtown Albany and said the City's wonderful, unique, and healthy building inventory is a precious commodity. He said the Riverview Place Apartments is an important site, and it is extremely important that it be well designed because it will establish the character for the area. He added that housing in downtown is a great and needed use and ought to be encouraged. He reviewed the site plan against the design guidelines, noting that there is significant noncompliance in the areas of character, pedestrian emphasis, and architecture. He said that it is not necessary that a building be in compliance with every design element, but it is most important what happens at street level. This design encroaches into the public right-of-way, over the sidewalk, which would establish an undesired precedent. In his experience in other cities, this type of encroachment has been denied. His recommendation is that there is no reason to allow this building to go into the public right-of-way as there is plenty of room on the site to accommodate the building. He said the cantilever and the mansard roof are not consistent with existing development. The biggest problem is the ground floor, which is not pedestrian friendly and which includes materials that are not on a scale compatible with other buildings in the area. He said his recommendation is that this design not be approved due to fundamental compatibility issues. He would recommend that the project be endorsed because this is a use that is desired in downtown but that the developer and architect be directed to work with a design subcommittee to design a better fit.

Sharon Konopa said she appreciates the presentation. She asked if the lack of outdoor space in the plan is of concern. Crandall responded that the lack of outdoor space is one of a host of problems with the design.

Ray Kopczynski requested input regarding expense for the developer. Crandall said it would be costly to make changes at this point; however, the developer would have a much more valuable project when it is finished and the community would be better served.

Bessie Johnson inquired as to Crandall's experience in requiring changes this far into a project. Kim Sass noted that the developer has changed the design two or three times and has been aware since 2003 that CARA has an interest in and concerns about the design. Crandall said the intent is not to get into an adversarial position with development community but to design something that will be an asset to all. He said it is ideal to influence design early in the process, but it is never too late if the design is not right. Porsche added that, going forward, developers will be provided with the guidelines at the time they approach CARA for funding.

Stella Reimers expressed concern about the cost to taxpayers. Crandall said there is typically no payoff or compensation to developers to make changes and follow the rules. He said he thinks the public would be more concerned about a poor design and encroachment into the public right-of-way.

In response to inquiry, Porsche said the current site plan was delivered prior to completion of the design guidelines. However, the developers were advised in January that funds were subject to design guidelines that were forthcoming and they were provided with the guidelines as soon as they were finalized.

Paul Johnson, Cascade Housing Group, Portland, addressed the Board. He said his firm received the design guidelines approximately ten days ago. He said that they were aware that guidelines would be forthcoming, but did not know what they would be. He said Crandall's comment that there is plenty of room on the site to accommodate the building is incorrect in that there is a 100-foot setback from the river and a 25-foot setback to avoid a power line.

Philip Hedrick, Cascade Housing Group, Portland, said Crandall provided a great presentation, which he wishes could have been heard in 2003. He read a statement into the record which included the following points: CARA approved \$135,000 in funding for this project in 2003, specifically allocated for project development costs (\$50,000), establishment of a promenade (\$77,500), a transit shelter (\$2,500), and the creation of a pocket park (\$7,500). The minutes of that meeting reflect a staff recommendation that a design task force be formed to provide input on whether the exterior design positively reflects the desired quality and image. The building concept at the time included an underground parking garage, a roof top garden, a large commercial area, and green building techniques and was designed of gleaming glass, steel, and brick. At the time, no one knew that the structure could not be built as designed because the site was too small and the costs would be too astronomical for the Oregon Housing and Community Services to fund. A new design was created in October 2006 by an Albany-based architect and funding was approved by the state for development of a project to meet the rental housing needs of 40 low-income seniors. The project was supported by the City Council, which reiterated its desire for the development to revitalize the City's lagging downtown core. The developers presented the new design to CARA in June 2006. In April 2007, Kate Porsche advised that projects approved after January 2007 would have to meet the new design guidelines; however, this funding was approved in 2003. The guidelines were received on June 6, 2007, nearly four years from the time CARA initially approved funding. Prior to receiving the guidelines, the developers indicated to City staff the need to proceed with building design in order to meet deadlines with the major funding agent, Oregon Housing and Community Services. The project's architect was directed to meet the City's building code requirements, the state design and livability standards, and to do the best he could based on the fact that CARA design standards were not yet available.

Mr. Hedrick said he believes a good faith commitment was made by CARA in 2003, which provided long-term motivation for the housing authority to secure funding to develop low-income housing for its constituents. Low-income seniors are often marginalized, and he suspects they are more interested in affordable, safe, decent housing than in building elements. The developer is willing to meet the features of the project specified at the time of the 2003 funding approval. Constituents have been waiting more than four years for new housing, and that good faith commitment cannot be tossed aside to start over with a new building design to meet standards that were not even envisioned four years ago. The cost of doing so would far outweigh the financial benefits of the CARA grant. He asked that CARA approve the project as designed and stated that, to do less is to breach a good faith commitment already made.

Sharon Konopa said she is sorry that Mr. Hedrick feels there was a good faith commitment to fund the project; however, the project that CARA committed to is no longer the being proposed. She said CARA is aware of the need for affordable housing but needs to make sure the development is something to be proud of and that will be sustainable. Hedrick reiterated that the elements for which CARA allocated funding are still part of the project. Konopa noted that there have been significant design changes, including elimination of the underground parking and green space. In discussion, Mr. Hedrick stated that the design guidelines were received on June 6, 2007, that one can only be in noncompliance when there are rules in place and that the design could not be delayed pending completion of the standards. Kim Sass said the developers' architect, Don Johnson, is involved in the Landmarks Advisory Commission and has some understanding of the architectural standards in the community.

Don Johnson, Architect, addressed the Board. He expressed appreciation to Mr. Crandall, noting that he has followed his work and agrees with his concepts. He said he had to work within a strict budget and constraints of the site, which include a 100-foot setback from the river and a 25-foot setback from the power line. He reviewed several changes that he worked up this afternoon on short notice, including a new roof concept similar to others in town, a 15-foot high brick base, additional glass to replace some of the masonry, and minor design changes that would not be terribly expensive. He further suggested adding brackets to give more character to the overhang.

In response to inquiries from the Board, Mr. Johnson stated that the underground parking garage had to be eliminated due to state funding issues, that there is a 25-foot setback on Third Avenue, that the alley side is similar to what one would see in other downtown alleys, and that he believes he could design more transparency on the two street sides. He briefly reviewed parking on the site. He stated that the overhangs are necessary in order to comply with minimum apartment sizes set by Oregon Housing and Community Services and the number of apartments requested by the developers. He tried several different orientations, none of which would allow for elimination of the overhangs. Paul Johnson added that the ground floor common space is also dictated by state regulations. Designing the project with fewer apartments would not be financially feasible and would require going back to the state for authorization, adding a year to the process with no guarantee of approval. Brief discussion followed.

Chair Norman noted that the right-of-way issue came before the City Council. Porsche advised that, to her understanding, Council has not made a decision on this issue but has directed staff to look at the possibility of establishing a lease for the right-of-way.

Konopa asked for additional information regarding the income level being targeted for this development. Mr. Hedrick said he does not have the specifics with him and is not prepared to discuss financial criteria this evening. Konopa noted that lower-income residents are not likely to have cars and she inquired whether it might be possible to reduce parking and redesign in such a way as to eliminate the overhangs. Don Johnson stated that he has gone through several exercises and was unable to find an orientation to eliminate the overhangs. Konopa asked about the possibility of adding an additional floor. Paul Johnson responded that, at six stories, the entire structure of the building begins to change in terms of code and cost requirements. Konopa asked if another site has been considered, and Hedrick responded that it is too late in the process to do so.

Killin expressed concern about this body going into problem solving mode in terms of trying to redesign the project. He said he has not seen a proposal that he can approve tonight and he would like to ask the developers and their architect to come back with a new presentation. Brief discussion followed, and the developers agreed to come back with their best effort to meet as many of the design elements as possible within the constraints and deadlines of the project.

**MOTION:** Hilts moved to request that the developers make a presentation at the next meeting which gives information on areas where the proposal does not comply with the guidelines and which makes corrections in areas where it can comply. Post seconded the motion.

Olsen suggested that the developers be offered architectural assistance, and Porsche responded that she would ask for assistance from Rob Dortignacq if the developers so requested.

Norman noted that none of the Board members have indicated that low-income housing is not important; however, the project has changed several times and it is important to have this discussion and to try to reach a compromise given the size and scope of this project.

The motion **passed** unanimously.

#### Identification of the \$1,000,000 Expenditures for the RCM Homes Project

Porsche said identification of the \$1,000,000 in expenditures for the RCM Homes project is in progress, and she requested permission to take that information directly to the CARA Agency in order to piggyback it onto an upcoming Council work session.

**MOTION:** Hilts moved to allow staff to present this information directly to the CARA Agency. Kopczynski seconded the motion, and it **passed** unanimously.

#### BUSINESS FROM THE BOARD

Porsche referred to a question raised at a previous meeting on whether the City's sign ordinance applies to murals. She said 13.6.50 under the sign ordinance specifically addresses murals.

Brief discussion followed regarding the Riverview Place Apartments proposal. Reimers said she wants the Board to carefully consider the overhang issue as there are several sites in downtown Albany that would be impacted if a precedent is set which allows construction in the right-of-way. Olsen said he would like to encourage the developers to consider alternate heating and cooling methods.

Christman noted that the only reason this is before CARA is due to the \$135,000 grant; otherwise, the developer is free to build as desired, as long as it is to Code. Chair Norman said he would like to try to reach a compromise so that CARA has at least some voice into how the project is developed. Reid noted that the overhang issue is a Council-level decision.

#### NEXT MEETING DATE

The next meeting of the CARA Advisory Board is scheduled for Wednesday, July 18, 2007, at 5:15 p.m. in the Council Chambers.

#### ADJOURNMENT

Hearing no further business, Chair Norman adjourned the meeting at 7:03 p.m.

Submitted by,

Reviewed by,

Teresa Nix  
Administrative Assistant

Kate Porsche  
Urban Renewal Coordinator