APPROVED: October 20, 2010

CITY OF ALBANY
Central Albany Revitalization Area Advisory Board
City Hall Council Chambers, 333 Broadalbin Street SW
Wednesday, August 18, 2010

MINUTES

Advisory Board Members present:	Rich Catlin, Jeff Christman, Floyd Collins, Loyd Henion, Gordon Kirbey, Sharon Konopa, Ray Kopczynski, Dick Olsen, Cordell Post, Ralph Reid, Jr., and Mark Spence
Advisory Board Members absent:	Bill Coburn, Chuck Leland, and Bessie Johnson (all excused)
Staff present:	City Manager Wes Hare, Community Development Director Greg Byrne, Urban Renewal Manager Kate Porsche, and Administrative Assistant Teresa Nix
Others present:	Consultant George Crandall and eight others in the audience

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Cordell Post called the meeting to order at 5:17 p.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

July 21, 2010

MOTION: Ray Kopczynski moved to approve the July 21 minutes as presented. Ralph Reid, Jr., seconded the motion, and it **passed** unanimously.

SCHEDULED BUSINESS

Business from the Public

None.

Mikesell/JC Penney Building Contract Extension

Urban Renewal Manager Kate Porsche drew attention to the written staff report. Rick Mikesell is requesting an extension through December 31, 2010, to complete work on his building. Construction is well underway and tenants are scheduled to move into the building in September. This extension does not pertain to the forgivable loan related to bringing a restaurant to the space on the first floor; that deadline is December 3, 2013. Staff recommends approval of the request.

MOTION: Floyd Collins moved to extend the Mikesell/JC Penney contract terms to December 31, 2010. Loyd Henion seconded the motion.

Post said he will abstain; he is one of the tenants who will be moving into the building next month.

Reid asked if the basement issues have been corrected. Porsche said yes; the space under the sidewalk has been backfilled, and the City has inspected and signed off on the project.
In response to an inquiry from Dick Olsen, Porsche said that she worked with the City Attorney to craft the contract related to bringing a restaurant to the space; the contract addresses size, seating, and length of time that a restaurant must be in place before the loan is forgiven.

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

Crandall Presentation and Retail Refinement Proposal

Porsche drew attention to the written staff report. She said that George Crandall assisted with the Central Albany Land Use and Transportation Study (CALUTS) Plan in 1995; the CALUTS Plan was the inspiration for the CARA Urban Renewal District. After a presentation from the Main Street Economic Development Committee last February and agreement from the CARA Advisory Board, an RFP was put out for a market study to be used as a tool to guide policy and decision making for CARA funding. Six proposals were received, ranging from $42,000 to $171,000; the committee reviewing the proposals felt that none really hit the mark. The committee subsequently reached out to George Crandall for advice on three points of information – What types of businesses are needed to create a more vibrant and economically viable Central Albany? What steps do we take to get to where we want to go? How do we make a framework of policy to ensure that CARA money is funding projects that will drive Central Albany's vitality and economic viability? Crandall has presented a proposed scope of work and budget which are provided in the staff report.

George Crandall gave a PowerPoint presentation which included information from the 1995 CALUTS Plan and the 2009 Broadalbin Streetscape Plan. He reviewed items that are necessary for the best downtowns, two of which are great retail and great public spaces. Regarding retail, people want convenience, bargains, and a retail experience. Only about two percent of retail is currently done in downtowns. Lifestyle centers are being built in many communities at the expense of the downtowns. The retail recipe for success includes the right retail configuration, attractive retail presentation, a high-quality pedestrian environment, shopper-friendly parking, and convenient automobile access. He showed various downtown areas and how they match up to this recipe for success.

Crandall said that another important element is great public space. He talked about catalyst projects which spur private development. He quoted from the book *American Cities – What Works and What Doesn't* by Alexander Garvin: "Urban design should be defined as the identification of public actions that will produe a sustained and widespread private market reaction." He reviewed work his firm has done in Lake Oswego, Springfield, and Medford, Oregon; Oak Park, Illinois; Racine, Wisconsin; Fairbanks, Alaska; and Lincoln, Nebraska, all of which involved public investment projects that generated private investment. Crandall reviewed his proposed Scope of Work as detailed in the staff report. He invited questions.

Henion asked what would be the best place for a public square in Downtown Albany. Crandall said he would recommend going ahead with the Albany Square at the end of Broadalbin at the river, as suggested in the CALUTS Plan.

Sharon Konopa said that she has heard suggestions that the Albany Square should include a water feature; she asked if that would be an attractor. Crandall said that water features are wonderful attractors for children and adults; they can also be expensive to build and maintain.

In response to an inquiry from Kopczynski, Crandall said that this proposal is a refinement of the CALUTS Plan; the concept has not really changed.

In response to an inquiry from Henion, Crandall said that a carousel is a great asset. Olsen suggested that Crandall visit the downtown carousel.

Collins noted that the Downtown Albany core includes a blend of retail, commercial, and governmental uses. Crandall said that the shift to aggressive retail happens over a period of time and that retail doesn't have to encompass the entire area. An option is to identify a critical zone for retail as part of developing a retail strategy.
Mark Spence said that successful revitalization often occurs in high income communities with a lot of tourism. He asked how demographics would factor into the proposal. Crandall said that demographics are important; however, everyone is attracted to places that are pleasant. All successful retail environments follow a similar formula. He suggested that an economist be brought on board as a retail strategy is developed to synthesize the plan to Albany's demographic.

Jeff Christman asked if the process includes an analysis of market demand. He noted that there has been discussion about making the St. Francis a hotel again, but there is no market demand for that use. Crandall referred to the work that was done in Racine, Wisconsin, where there was initially no demand. The idea is to create a framework that people want to get next to; to induce the market and attract it to your area.

Gordon Kirbey asked if there is a formula for on-street and off-street parking; he further asked for information about the cost per space and return on investment for a traffic structure. Crandall said that there should generally be five parking spaces for every 1,000 square feet of retail space. Approximately 30 percent of that can be provided on the street; the rest must be provided off-street. Planning could be done for a future parking structure to be constructed as the downtown becomes more successful. Parking structures can be designed to fit into the historic nature of the area.

Christman said that the proposal appears to be focused on a small concentrated area. He asked about the rest of the CARA District and funding requests that come from outside of the focus area. Crandall said he is suggesting that CARA might want to put together a policy framework that prioritizes taking care of the heart of the district and that it might choose to evaluate projects in terms of how they strengthen the center. Brief discussion followed.

Porsche said that staff recommends approval of $49,983 for Crandall's firm to complete the retail analysis and $7,500 for Urban Advisors to complete the economic analysis piece, for a total allocation of $57,483.

MOTION: Rich Catlin moved to authorize the proposed scope of work. Kopczynski seconded the motion.

In response to an inquiry from Spence, Porsche noted that the Board has directed that any funding requests be put on hold pending this policy-making process.

Kirbey suggested that the AVA Director be included in the steering committee. Porsche noted the suggestion.

In response to an inquiry from Kirbey, Crandall said that stakeholders will be determined in the early meetings and should include anyone who is impacted or interested – the more the merrier.

Reid asked if this process meets governmental bidding laws. Porsche said that she has worked with the City Attorney and Purchasing Coordinator to ensure that the process does meet the law.

Christman said that he is still concerned about this being such a focused area; CARA has funded very good projects outside of the focus area that have removed blight and created good tax increment. Collins said that the consultant can't really answer the question of how to handle requests for projects that fall outside of the focus area; the CARA Advisory Board will have to struggle with how make that balance. Catlin said that the ADA's Economic Development Committee supports Crandall's proposal. As a CARA Advisory Board member, he is concerned about the outlying areas of the CARA district; this is part of the larger policy discussion that the Board will have over the coming months.

City Manager Wes Hare said that the Crandall proposal is consistent with what he has seen during his career in city building. Similar processes were used in Ashland and Bend, and he thinks that the concept is sound. Regarding the issue of what happens to outlying areas, in his experience, there is a ripple effect as you make a community a more attractive place. The key is to find something that creates the impression of a positive place to live, work, and be. He thinks this investment makes a lot of sense and offers hope for a better return.

Spence spoke in support of the motion. As a historian, he said that he cannot think of any city in the United States that didn't require public investment to become a successful city.
The motion **passed** unanimously.

Transportation Enhancement (TE) Grant

Porsche reviewed the TE grant information as detailed in the written staff report. Transportation Systems Analyst Ron Irish has had discussions with an ODOT representative about two possible projects – the Broadalbin Promenade and four blocks of Water Avenue. The ODOT representative appeared to have a stronger preference for the Broadalbin Promenade project. Staff recommends the CARA Advisory Board apply for TE funds in the amount of $1,345,950 to complete the remaining two blocks of the Promenade. If the Board moves forward as recommended, the second question is the amount of match that CARA would like to commit. The required minimum match is 10.27 percent, or $154,050. A higher match may increase the likelihood of the City receiving the grant. Brief discussion followed.

MOTION: Kopczynski moved to proceed with the grant application as outlined in the staff report. Catlin seconded the motion.

Christman said that major improvements are needed to buildings and empty lots in the Broadalbin block between First and Water; he questioned whether it would make sense to proceed with the Promenade in that area before those improvements are planned. In discussion, Porsche said that she believes there will be flexibility in the design process. She reviewed the time lime, noting that design money will not be available until October 2011.

The motion **passed** unanimously.

Discussion followed regarding the matching amount that the CARA Advisory Board would be willing to commit.

MOTION: Kirbey moved to authorize a 15 percent match, equal to $225,000. Christman seconded the motion.

In discussion and in response to inquiries, Porsche reviewed the grant criteria and noted that the application will be written in such a way to call out the amounts that the City has spent on improvements in Downtown Albany, including First Avenue improvements, the Crandall work, and the Broadalbin Promenade pilot project.
The motion **passed** 10 to 1, with Olsen voting no.

BUSINESS FROM THE BOARD

Olsen said that he attended a neighborhood meeting at the Pfeiffer Cottage Inn. The proprietors noted that many of their customers are people who are doing business in Corvallis and who enjoy staying at a bed and breakfast in Downtown Albany. He was pleased to hear this, and he thinks that this is an indication that consideration should be given to funding requests from bed and breakfast establishments.

NEXT MEETING DATE

The next meeting of the CARA Advisory Board is scheduled for Wednesday, September 15, 2010, at 5:15 p.m. in the Council Chambers.

ADJOURNMENT

Hearing no further business, Chair Post adjourned the meeting at 6:58 p.m.

Submitted by,

Teresa Nix

Teresa Nix
Administrative Assistant

Reviewed by,

Kate Porsche
Urban Renewal Manager