



APPROVED: October 15, 2014

**CITY OF ALBANY**  
**Central Albany Revitalization Area Advisory Board**  
**City Hall Council Chambers, 333 Broadalbin Street SW**  
**Wednesday, September 18, 2014**

MINUTES

Advisory Board Members present: David Abarr, Russ Allen, Rich Catlin, Bill Coburn, Floyd Collins, Loyd Henion, Rich Kellum, Sharon Konopa, Ray Kopczynski, Kevin Manske Dick Olsen, Mark Spence, Maura Wilson

Advisory Board Members absent: Bessie Johnson (excused)

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Rich Catlin called the meeting to order at 5:15 p.m.

SCHEDULED BUSINESS

Business from the Public

There was no business from the public.

Public Infrastructure Projects

Economic Development & Urban Renewal Director Kate Porsche said this discussion was the culmination of many months of work by this Board, including a public open house to receive feedback on what public infrastructure projects CARA should invest in first. She said the Board had carefully and deliberately stepped through the process to understand how to best leverage investment for change in the community. She said that CARA's borrowing capacity is between \$7 million and \$11 million, that bond rates are favorable, and that it is a good time to borrow and invest in projects.

Porsche introduced architect George Crandall and reviewed his firm's previous work for the City. She asked that Crandall help answer the questions of which public infrastructure projects CARA should invest in next, how the projects would compliment and help further the retail refinement plan of 2011, and the estimated costs and timing of the projects.

George Crandall, Crandall Arambula, Portland, Oregon, gave a presentation. He reviewed previous work done by his firm for other communities and for Albany, including the 2011 Retail Refinement Plan. The 2011 Plan includes a west anchor of the Albany Carousel Museum, a very unique feature and potential attractor to the community. The 2011 plan calls for an east anchor between Ellsworth and Lyon Streets which would rely on a slip lane off of Lyon Street; however, getting that slip lane access has proven difficult. While it would be possible to have successful retail in that block over the long-term without slip lane access, it would be most successful to have a slip lane and east anchor in that block. The 2011 plan also addresses parking needs, suggesting that an ideal place for parking would be the Eagles' site and that a parking structure could provide 280 additional spaces when needed in the future. He reviewed the results of the June open house when potential projects were presented to the public. The first place results were Downtown Streetscape and Water Avenue Streetscape. In his experience, these types of samplings have proven to be very legitimate. He recommended that the next steps be to authorize final design and cost estimates for Water Avenue and Second Avenue improvements, prepare a construction phasing plan, approve the final design, authorize preparation of contract documents, bid, and authorize construction. He recommended that the design work be done for Water Avenue and Second Avenue at the same time in order to best spur private investment in those areas.

Rich Kellum said one of the reasons to put in streetscape is to improve a rundown area so people want to go there. He said a limited number of cars go down First and Second Avenues, and he suggested that improvements on Lyon and Ellsworth Streets would get the most attention. Crandall said there is an opportunity on the two approach streets to signal that something special is going on downtown, perhaps through design elements or banners. He said a retail street needs to be pedestrian friendly; and, based on his experience, having over 15,000 cars a day creates a street that is pedestrian-hostile.

Kellum commented that most of the people who attended the open house were involved in the system as Advisory Board members, recipients of funds, or people opposed to CARA. He didn't think the input represented a good cross section.

Lloyd Henion asked how important it is to add parking downtown. Crandall said there is currently no parking deficit, but that will occur as the area becomes more successful.

Kevin Manske said people expect to park and walk several blocks to their destination in Portland; he asked why Albany is different. Crandall said the expectations are different in the bigger cities; his firm has found that convenient parking and easy access is extremely important in smaller communities.

Russ Allen said there is a perception that there is a parking deficit downtown; he asked what design elements could help people understand parking is available. Crandall said that the City could sign public parking that is clearly marked and easily accessible, and that it is helpful to have an employee parking strategy.

Floyd Collins asked if substituting additional retail for the east anchor would provide as much synergy for other businesses. Crandall said that being able to provide access and make the site attractive for an anchor would be preferable but not being able to do so is not a fatal flaw. Collins asked if an east anchor and its symbiotic relationship with other retail would generate more tax increment financing than additional retail; and Crandall said that is typically true.

Collins said he recently drove through Lebanon, Sweet Home, Sisters, and Redmond. The work that ODOT has done on the highways through those communities and the complimentary work done by the communities have made very attractive streets. He thought that treatment of the intersections on Ellsworth and Lyon Streets could send a signal that this is a special area.

Catlin asked what has been envisioned for the east anchor. Crandall said he had thought of a single use such as a Walgreens or a combination of similar uses such as two or more home stores. Catlin asked if it is possible to stack uses and generate the same amount of activity. Crandall said that most anchors want a big, flat floor plate, but there are exceptions.

Catlin expressed appreciation to Crandall for the update and invited comments from the public.

Barbara Doolan, 5328 Ermine Street SE, encouraged the Board to finish what was started on Second Avenue and Broadalbin Street, finish widening the sidewalks, and fix the sidewalk across from the Eagles. She said the merchants have waited a long time for the improvements. In response to a question from Konopa, Doolan said she had a business in Downtown Albany for 22 years and it did quite well. She would not have a business on Ellsworth or Lyon Streets because of traffic and car speeds.

Denise Bigner, co-owner of Pix Theater, said she and husband came to Albany from Orange County, California, because they wanted to do something they were passionate about. When they first visited Albany on a Sunday evening, the town was dead. The next morning as they walked down First Avenue and saw all the businesses and the charm, they were inspired to buy the movie theatre on Second Avenue. She spoke in support of extending the improvements and charm that exists on First Avenue to Second Avenue.

In response to inquiries from Collins, Transportation Systems Analyst Ron Irish reviewed potential ODOT improvements at the intersections at First Avenue and Lyon Street and Second Avenue and Ellsworth Street. He said changes behind the curb such as benches, landscaping, and lighting would probably not be of much

concern to ODOT. For improvements between the curbs, ODOT would be more involved. ODOT recognizes that those corridors have some commercial and retail activity and that future designs will not be based solely on auto capacity but will make extra consideration.

Ray Kopczynski thought that some improvements could be made on Lyon and Ellsworth Streets in conjunction with improvements downtown, especially on Second Avenue, based on the design and planning.

Mark Spence said improvements to Ellsworth and Lyon Streets and signage on I-5 are important to draw people to the area. He said it is important to finish First and Second Avenues so businesses that are traffic drivers will want to locate there.

Manske said he has heard from people that they want to see the waterfront developed. He said a lot of successful cities, such as Bend and Astoria, have nice waterfronts. Porsche noted that the Board previously agreed to fund some of the Monteith Riverpark expansion and discussed that construction of Water Avenue was a great first step toward setting the stage for public use in that area.

Collins suggested that the Board authorize staff to move ahead with the design process to be funded out of existing cash flow. By the time the design comes back and the Board is ready to move forward with improvements, construction will realistically begin in 2016 or later, by which time he expects that the Carousel will also be moving forward.

Maura Wilson suggested that Second Avenue should take priority over Water Avenue because of the existing businesses that are waiting for improvements.

Sharon Konopa said she would also like to consider improvements on Third Avenue. The new owners of the Growler Garage put significant investment into that structure and have asked when the City would provide lighting and sidewalk repairs.

Spence commented that Carousel representatives have indicated that they expect parking will be a problem in the future. He noted that this conversation has been mostly about the downtown. While he isn't forgetting about the remainder of the CARA district, he feels it is important to finish one area and then work through the district zone by zone.

The Advisory Board had additional discussion regarding priorities and timing issues.

MOTION: Wilson moved to authorize the final design and cost estimates for Water Avenue, Second Avenue, Third Avenue, Lyon Street, Ellsworth Street, and the connecting streets to be paid out of existing cash flow. Allen seconded the motion.

Allen asked if there is an understanding of what it means to authorize final design for Lyon and Ellsworth Streets given that those are not included in the 2011 Plan. Porsche said that gateways to downtown are included in the CARA Plan and she would recommend relying on Crandall's firm to recommend how to get the best value in terms of investment.

Henion asked when consideration would be given to the parking question as it relates to the Carousel. Porsche said the City has a design in place to reconfigure First Avenue and the blocks surrounding the Post Office building to create about 50 additional parking spaces in that area, and staff is continuing discussions on an option to buy the Eagles building. Additional discussion followed regarding parking.

Collins called the question. The motion passed 13-0.

## Main Street Roundabout

Porsche reviewed the request that CARA consider participating in costs required to furnish design features in the center of the Main Street Roundabout, as detailed in the staff memorandum. Staff recommends a combination of typical landscaping components along with gateway signage that highlights the entrance into Downtown Albany. The approximate cost for the way sign is \$50,000; the approximate cost for landscaping and design is \$20,000.

Staci Belcastro, Engineering Manager/Assistant City Engineer, reviewed staff work and considerations related to the Main Street Roundabout. She said that landscaping provides both safety and aesthetic enhancements to the center of roundabouts. For this particular project, staff recommends landscaping features that would compliment some sort of a gateway sign. The landscaping features could be similar to those constructed in the North Albany Roundabout, but that is up for discussion.

Konopa said she had comments from a citizen who would like to have a flagpole in the center of the roundabout. She asked staff to explain why that may be difficult to maintain and manage given that flags need to be raised and lowered each day. Belcastro said staff would want to ensure that regular maintenance concerns are considered with any landscaping or art that is selected. There may be people in the general public who would want to volunteer to do that work but, for safety reasons, staff would not want the public going to the center of the roundabout.

Wilson asked if there was some way to incorporate art in with this idea. Porsche said yes; however, there are many different opinions about art and the Parks & Recreation Director strongly urged that any decision about art should involve the Arts Commission. She said including art could result in significantly higher costs and she had heard from the Board that it wanted its participation in this project to be fairly modest.

Kopczynski said he likes the idea of seeing the lighted gateway sign where traffic from Salem Avenue is entering, but he questioned whether the three additional signs are needed.

Kellum suggested that it might be possible to get a local metals company to donate materials that an artist could use. He noted that the roundabout is not really the gateway to Albany. Konopa agreed that having a sign that says welcome to Albany seems out of place; she suggested that it could instead welcome people to Albany's Hacklemann Historic District. Collins said he liked the idea of emphasizing the historic districts, and he thought that getting the metal industries to participate would be great. Spence said he would not want CARA attached to artwork that even some people hate; he likes the idea of the signage. Brief discussion followed.

MOTION: Collins moved that the Advisory Board is interested in a sign concept for staff to develop in detail and bring back to the Board. Manske seconded the motion, and it passed 13-0.

## Staff Updates and Issues

Porsche gave brief updates on the Edgewater Village and Woodland Square projects.

## **BUSINESS FROM THE BOARD**

Catlin said the Main Street Roundabout was an important project that does a lot to improve the appearance, feel, and safety in that area. He requested that when there are public works projects in the CARA district in the future, the Board have an opportunity to be involved earlier in the process. Brief discussion followed.

## **NEXT MEETING DATE**

The next meeting date is Wednesday, October 15, 2014.

ADJOURNMENT

Hearing no further business, Chair Catlin adjourned the meeting at 7:20 p.m.

Submitted by,

Reviewed by,

*Signature on File*

*Signature on File*

Teresa Nix  
Administrative Assistant  
Director

Kate Porsche  
Economic Development & Urban Renewal