

Asheville City Council  
Planning and Economic Development Committee

3:30 p.m., January 17, 2012  
City Hall, First Floor Conference Room

**Minutes**

Present: Vice Mayor Esther Manheimer, Chair; Councilmember Cecil Bothwell;  
Councilmember Marc Hunt

Staff: Gary Jackson, Judy Daniel, Bob Oast, Ken Putnam, Shannon Tuch, Sasha  
Vrtunski

The Planning and Economic Development Committee met on January 17, 2012, in the  
First Floor Conference Room, City Hall. Vice Mayor Manheimer called the meeting to  
order at 3:30 p.m.

**1. Approval of Minutes**

The Minutes from the November 15, 2011, meeting were approved as written.

**2. Updates**

**Clarification: Objective #7, Multi-Modal Transportation, 2011-12 Strategic  
Operating Plan**

Ken Putnam, Director, Engineering, gave the update (staff report attached). Mr. Putnam is the staff director on the Downtown Master Plan Transportation Committee. The Downtown Master Plan Transportation Committee is responsible to research the subject objective (Objective #7 under the Multi-Modal Transportation Focus Area: study alternative options for downtown parking, to include the creation of a downtown trolley). Mr. Putnam was before the committee to receive clarification and direction on Council's meaning of a downtown trolley. Councilmember Bothwell asked that the committee focus on shuttle options during large events downtown, as the shuttles during Bele Chere seem very effective. Councilmember Hunt requested building the Transit Commission into these discussions; that any recommendations go before the Transit Commission prior to bringing them before Council. All agreed with this suggestion.

Mr. Putnam was directed to bring broad recommendations to full Council, not specific suggestions, as the eventual model would most probably incorporate elements from a broad variety of options.

**Digital Billboard Update**

Shannon Tuch, Assistant Director, Planning, gave the update. She shared that an amendment to the standards governing digital billboards had originally been presented to the Planning & Zoning Committee with along with a collection of many other small amendments to the standards. P&Z separated it out from that collection of amendments. After much discussion of many options, P&Z ultimately decided on an amendment that would address some of the concerns that have come up recently, and

instructed staff to continue working on the amendment. Staff will bring their recommendations to P&Z at their February 1<sup>st</sup> meeting, and then it would move to full Council for consideration.

Mr. Oast clarified for the committee that as long as there were no pending applications for digital billboards, there was no issue in either repealing or suspending the ordinances to allow for further study.

### **DTMP: Business Improvement District**

Sasha Vrtunski, Project Manager, Downtown Master Plan, gave the update on the proposed Business Improvement District. Ms. Vrtunski provided the Committee with two handouts: the Interim Board Roster of the Downtown Asheville Business Improvement District and a draft City Council approval schedule (attached). The interim board has met twice, and is in the process of identifying a package of services and the boundaries of a BID. Joe Minicozzi, Executive Director of the Downtown Association, asked that Council include support for the process in their Strategic Goals; Ms. Vrtunski was asked to provide the language to be considered by Council. The importance of the schedule is that a BID would have to be adopted by July 1<sup>st</sup>, or within the first two week of the fiscal year, for it to go into effect in the coming fiscal year.

### **3. New Business**

#### **Planning Priorities and Strategic Items 2012**

Shannon Tuch, Assistant Planning Director, clarified that the list is what the Planning Department is looking at for the coming year, not just what might come before PED. The second list is those boards, commissions and committees supported by the Planning Department. Please see attached. Vice Mayor Manheimer asked that PED with a list of Planning priorities that might be considered by the PED Committee. Ms. Daniel suggested, and the Committee concurred, that PED, due to the shrinking size of the ETJ, discuss the composition of the Planning & Zoning Commission. Vice Mayor Manheimer voiced her support for studying the Merrimon Avenue Corridor by wrapping it into the consideration of a form based code on major corridors. Both Councilmember Hunt and Vice Mayor Manheimer support a complete streets concept applied to the Merrimon Avenue Corridor.

Councilmember would be interested in a discussion with a more consistent policy that would incentivize volunteer annexation; and a systematic approach to possible rezoning for obvious problems in the context of neighborhoods.

Vice Mayor Manheimer asked that any foreseeable Economic Development items for discussion by PED be added to the list of Planning items.

### **4. Unfinished Business**

#### **Haywood Street Property Direction**

Vice Mayor Manheimer explained that this item was on the agenda because the City had received an offer of purchase of the property across from the Basilica; Council referred the discussion to PED. Sam Powers, Economic Development Director, gave the

background of the City-owned property initiative, which Council began in 2006. (All documents pertaining to the background of the Haywood Street RFQ and RFP, as well as a history of the RFQ/RFP process, are posted on the City's website.) Two specific reasons were given for why the process has not moved forward since Council selected the McKibbon Hotel Group to specifically negotiate for the construction of a hotel and associated retail business on that site. Two primary reasons were given for the delay: the 51 Biltmore property became available, and the adoption of the downtown master plan 2008 which would affect development on the site. Mr. Powers concluded by stating that there is an offer on the table from McKibbon Hotels, and a development agreement process is in place, per Council direction.

Per the Vice Mayor's request, Mr. Oast, City Attorney, clarified the difference between the sale of the property through the RFQ/RFP process followed by the City and simply offering the property for sale. The RFQ/RFP process is a specific process contemplated by state statute for properties for economic development purposes in which "the city or county may convey interest or lease interest by property by private negotiation, and may subject the property to such covenants, conditions, or restrictions as the city or county may deems to be in the public interest or as necessary to carry out the purposes of the section." It would also require a detailed analysis of the project.

However, if a municipality simply offered a property for sale, there would be limited ability to impose conditions on the development and the sale would be subject to the competitive bid process.

Staff recommended that the City conclude the process recommended by City Council in 2008 before embarking on another process. The Committee supported that recommendation.

Matt Mores, Consultant for the Basilica, spoke in support of the offer by the Office of the Bishop of the Western Diocese of Charlotte to purchase the property for \$2 million. Wes Townson, Vice President, McKibbon Hotels, acknowledged the need to work with the Asheville community and the Basilica to make the project work, and reiterated McKibbon Hotels' offer dated September 12, 2008, of \$2.3 million to purchase the property (see attached letter dated January 13, 2012). Anne Fitzgerald Smith spoke in support of the offer by the Bishop of the Western Diocese of Charlotte.

## **5. Presentations and Public Comment**

### **Presentation: NC 10% Campaign**

Melinda Roberts, Buncombe County Cooperative Extension, explained the NC 10% Campaign (see attached NC 10% Campaign – Update) to encourage support for businesses, organizations and/or institutional partners to purchase 10% local food. The PED Committee recommended that Ms. Roberts forward a resolution/proclamation for full Council to consider. Mr. Powers spoke to a commitment by the Civic Center, through the renovations, to purchase 10% local food.

**Public Comment: Robert's Rules of Order**

Joe Minicozzi asked that there be more orientation of Planning & Zoning Commission members of the Robert's Rules of Order; Ms. Daniel, Planning Director, responded that the item has already been scheduled to discuss at the Commission's retreat.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:20p.