

Asheville Area Riverfront Redevelopment Commission Meeting

December 13, 2012

Location: Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce Board Room

Member Attendees: Chairman Ricky Silver; Vice Chairman Joe Ferikes; Pattiy Torno; Terry Meek; Woodfin Mayor Jerry Vehaun; Asheville City Councilman Jan Davis; Pam Turner; Karl Koon; Cindy Weeks; Robert Griffin; Dan Hitchcock; George Morosani; Stephanie Brown

Absent from meeting:

Staff: Shannon Capezzali; Stephanie Monson; City Manager Gary Jackson; City Attorney Bob Oast

Other attendees: Kate O'Hara

Chairman Ricky Silver opened the meeting at 4:05 pm.

ADMINISTRATIVE:

- The meeting has a quorum
- A motion was made by Davis to adopt the November minutes. The motion passed unanimously.
- The Bylaws Committee is prepared to bring forward a slate of Officers for the Annual Election. Pattiy Torno is being recommended for the position of Chairman of the Commission. Joe Ferikes is being recommended for Vice Chairman. No additional nominations have been made.
 - Silver asked for a vote in favor of the slate as proposed. Vote passed unanimously.
- A report has been sent to the appointing boards to provide an update on each of the Commissioner term expiration dates, attendance rate, and request for reappointment for those whose term may be expiring. Stephanie Monson can provide information about term expiration dates, and Ricky Silver is available for questions about reappointment.
- A written survey was provided to Commissioners regarding the accomplishments of the Commission. The answers will be provided to the incoming Chair.

NEW BUSINESS:

- Stephanie Pankiewicz has sent a request to the Commission asking for official support of the RADTIP preferred alignment.

R. Griffin as chair of the Planning subcommittee provided the following update to help the Commission in its consideration.

- The Planning Subcommittee noted several recommendations that they made to the previous RADTIP project team which are not reflected in the illustrated drawings of the preferred alignment. For example, the road realignment does not shift away from the historic Cotton Mill remnants, providing for potential of an increased developable area in the future; there is still some boulevard median proposed near 14 Riverside Drive, and not enough parking. The

planning subcommittee would like to propose a back-in diagonal parking solution that Commission member Koon recorded in Chattanooga. This type of parking could solve issues related to visibility and safety during maneuvering in and out of traffic.

- The Planning Subcommittee recommends adopting a resolution to support the preferred realignment (that was already accepted by City Council), and to also send comments to Council and project staff to further consider the Commission's recommendations.
- A motion was made by Griffin to approve the following resolution of support. Seconded by Dan Hitchcock. The motion passed unanimously.

Resolution of Support

The Asheville Area Riverfront Redevelopment Commission supports the preferred route for realignment of Riverside Drive and Lyman Street as shown by the River Arts District Transportation Improvement Project team at their December 6, 2012 public meeting and as adopted by Asheville City Council on December 11, 2012.

Recommendation to Asheville City Council, Project Team, and Partners

In addition to supporting the preferred alignment as shown, the Riverfront Commission affirms its intention to promote that high quality design details continue to be incorporated into the project. The AARRC thus recommends that the following items be explored during upcoming phases of the project:

Inclusion of additional dispersed parking opportunities:

- *Increase opportunities for on street parking along Riverside Drive, specifically from the Craven intersection to the intersection of Lyman Street (at proposed roundabout), to support the vibrancy of businesses and future access to the riverfront*
- *Consider an innovative parking solution that is successfully demonstrated in other communities we have visited: back-in angled parking. This design would be ideal in tight spaces like the area just north of the proposed roundabout and adjacent to what is currently the 12 Bones Restaurant. The design also addresses public safety, as it minimizes potential conflicts between bicyclists, pedestrians, and automobiles.*

Consider opportunities to create or maintain land that contributes to tax base:

The creation of over two miles of greenway, open space, and 5 acres parkland provides an incredible city amenity and a corresponding need for increased city revenue that supports its creation and maintenance. Public sector fiscal sustainability can be promoted through thoughtful design. Two examples of how to create additional value for a taxable private parcel and/or reduce the burden created by nontaxable property are:

- *Shifting the road slightly to the west in front of the historic Cotton Mill remnants (and sufficiently far enough south on Riverside Drive to allow for Craven Bridge turning radius alignment) provides a future developer with a more attractive development site*

- *Removing the center median proposed for the area between the West Asheville-RiverLink Bridge and Lyman Street eliminates the need for grounds maintenance in the middle of a street and reduces the overall width needed as use for public right of way. Additionally, access to properties on either side of the road will be enhanced and pedestrian needs will be supported by a well designed crosswalk at the roundabout.*

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Ice House - 91 Riverside Drive

- Griffin reports that a straw vote occurred at the last Planning Subcommittee regarding the disposition of the Ice House structure. The majority of votes were in favor of demolishing the Ice House building while preserving the Chimney/smokestack portion.
 - Hitchcock asked if preserving the smokestack would allow rehabilitation tax credits to be obtained. Monson stated that once the building is demolished, tax credits are lost.
 - Brown asked if there are any indications that a historic preservation-based redevelopment would occur in the future. Monson stated that City of Asheville staff does not see any indications (interest from developers) of this occurring.
 - Ferikes asked how much of the exterior of the building would have to remain intact in order to gain rehabilitation tax credits. Griffin stated that around 70% + of the exterior would have to be maintained.
- A motion was made by Griffin to accept the Planning Subcommittee recommendation to demolish the building while preserving the smokestack.
 - Torno stated that demolishing the building while preserving the smokestack is supported by RADBA and WECAN organizations.
 - Davis stated that the River District Design Review Committee is in charge of the design review process, which includes consideration of demolitions. They met and were undecided about this issue. AARRC Commission member Meek is the Chair of that Committee. On Tuesday, the issue of preservation vs. demolition will be re-reviewed by City staff with the RDDRC Chair Meek. Meek will present a concept for redeveloping the structure using historic preservation. The Asheville Buncombe Preservation Society, a local non -profit, feels that saving the building as a piece of local history should be the priority.
- Meek presented an overview of his redevelopment concept which is based on example from Peoria Illinois. The proposed use would be a Museum of Cultural and Natural history focusing on the French Broad River Basin to include static and interactive exhibits that would draw a variety of people, such as school groups and visitors to the Biltmore. Detailed information is available to anyone wanting it. It is suggested that demolition be postponed roughly 6 months for further review. Staff reports say this delay could cost between fifty to sixty thousand dollars in security and maintenance costs. The potential cost for all work related to the redevelopment of the site into a museum are based on examples from Chattanooga and are estimated to be around \$42

million dollars for construction or a total of \$86 million dollars for all work including parking facilities and infrastructure.

- Brown asked if the City of Asheville would be responsible for the cost of maintaining the site while the funds were being raised for redevelopment. Davis stated that yes, and a private sector developer would have to take on or partner on the project.
 - Silver stated that the risk of maintaining the building in its current state is much greater than the small potential that a developer could come forward in the next six months.
 - Weeks stated that from a redevelopers perspective, the building should be demolished and a historical marker showing the significance of the ice plant to the development of Asheville should be placed on site.
 - Morosani stated that the main focus of the Commission should be to get the road realignment complete in order to spur further development in the area.
 - Turner stated that other agencies, such as the Performing Arts Center and the Health Adventure, are struggling for funds, and this should be taken into consideration when talking about the viability of funding a new museum project.
 - Griffin stated that a local history museum had been tried in the past during better economic times, but despite having state funds and a building in better shape compared to the Ice House, the museum was not constructed.
- The motion to recommend to Council to pursue demolition of the Ice Plant building while preserving the Smokestack passed 11 to 1.

OUTREACH

Silver pointed out that Commission members are scheduled to appear before their appointing boards in 2013, and to keep in mind that progress in the area of redeveloping the riverfront should focus on the 'right' progress, not necessarily 'fast' progress.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

- Kate O'Hara announced the death of Land of Sky Planner Jim Stokoe, who many remember as an early advocate and friend of the riverfront. There will be a celebration in his memory held at Jubilee on Saturday, December 15 at 2pm. Jim pioneered improving public access to the river in 1978. He created the first fifteen public access points in the four county region.
- Kate O'Hara stated that she will be the new Land of Sky Regional Council client services liaison for the City of Asheville. If the Commission has any special requests, they should direct them to her beginning in January.

Meeting adjourned at 4:59 pm.