CITY OF OREGON CITY
URBAN RENEWAL COMMISSION
MINUTES

Virtual Meeting

Monday, April 19, 2021 at 7:00 PM

VIRTUAL MEETING OF THE URBAN RENEWAL COMMISSION

CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Chair Denyse McGriff called the meeting to order at 7:01 PM.

PRESENT: Commissioner Frank O'Donnell, Commissioner Shawn Cross, Commissioner Denyse McGriff, Commissioner Doug Neeley, Commissioner Rachel Lyles Smith, Commissioner Rocky Smith, Jr.

STAFFERS: City Manager Tony Konkol, City Recorder Kattie Riggs, Economic Development Manager James Graham, Finance Director Matt Zook

CITIZEN COMMENTS

There were no citizen comments.

DISCUSSION ITEM

1. Alternatives Analysis – Study of Urban Renewal

James Graham, Economic Development Manager, introduced Anais Mathez, Andy Parks, and Sam Brookham from Leland Consulting.

Since the project began in August 2020, the consultant team led by Leland Consulting Group, has conducted a variety of engagement activities to review general information about urban renewal and the District, collect questions and concerns, and become familiar with the overall project. These engagement activities provided an important baseline of information the consultant team used to solicit feedback from representatives of overlapping taxing districts, community members, and opponents to Tax Increment Funding (TIF). Engagement activities included stakeholder interviews with taxing districts, a community meeting, presentations to community groups, town hall drop-in sessions, and an online survey.

Sam Brookham, Leland Consultant, kicked off the presentation with a brief background on the purpose, the recap of the last meeting regarding current plan, overlapping taxing districts, educational engagement, and alternatives. The current Urban Renewal Plan regarding the purpose of Urban Renewal was to eliminate blight, to improve the area as a commercial and employment center and stimulate private development as part of the Comprehensive Plan and to fulfill the Metro Region 2040 Growth Concept Plan. Mr. Brookham provided an update on the presentation that was provided to the Oregon City Business Alliance members. He provided a few statistics from the polling gathered during the meeting.

There was discussion on some of the polling response questions/categories and how they were composed.

Mr. Brookham mentioned that they had conversations with opponents of Urban Renewal including Craig Danielson and John Williams. They were not opposed to urban renewal but opposed to the way in which *it had been used. Opponents supported putting an Urban Renewal Plan to a vote of the people and they would prefer projects that would broaden the tax base and shorten the timeframe. Also, they supported not removing District-owned properties from the tax rolls, so they can be used to grow the tax base. Additionally, the opponents supported revisiting the governing structure and were supportive of the "right" projects.*

Commissioner Lyles Smith asked for more clarity on what would be put out to a public vote. Mr. Brookham explained that the Urban Renewal Plan could be sent to voter for approval and that the Plan be re-written to have a more community focused direction. Andy Parks, Leland Consultant, commented that many cities take their urban renewal plans to a public vote. Commissioner Smith asked if the opponents were concerned about urban renewal funds being used for staffing and administration.

Commissioner O'Donnell felt the Urban Renewal Commission needed to develop a Plan that encompassed what the Commission and the community would like to see and what projects they would like to accomplish. He also thought elected officials with a few community members should be the governing structure and should not include non-elected board members.

Chair McGriff did not support the current Urban Renewal Plan as written but supported updating the Plan and it should include small and large projects. She supported having staff for implementing the Plan. She felt the McDonald's Restaurant project adjacent to Clackamette Park was not done correctly. Chair McGriff supports projects focused on properties currently owned by the Commission.

Commissioner Neeley disagreed that urban renewal projects be limited to strictly properties owned by the Urban Renewal Commission.

Mr. Brookham continued with the presentation by posing the question, does the City want to use urban renewal? If yes, does the current Plan meet the current needs. If no, then the City could close the District. If the City wants to use urban renewal, the options to move forward would be to retain the District as is, or, amend the Plan.

Chair McGriff felt there should be an additional option of updating the Plan.

Commissioner O'Donnell felt there should be an end date to the Urban Renewal Plan.

Commissioner Lyles Smith asked the clarifying question of would any change to the Plan be an update or an amendment to the Plan.

Commissioner O'Donnell asked if a minor amendment would be to alter the reduction in collection, add an end date, and a boundary adjustment.

There was discussion with Mr. Parks regarding what constitutes amending the plan. Also discussed was the mechanism of reducing taxes on properties for periods of time.

Mr. Graham asked about establishing an end date of the District and Mr. Parks commented that he had not seen that done in Oregon. Mr. Graham also commented about reducing greater financial returns because of a shorter timeline. Mr. Parks provided some further explanation on return on investment, as it related to urban renewal.

Mr. Brookham continued with the presentation by providing the advantages and disadvantages of three options: retaining the District as is, retain and refreeze the tax base income, and closing the District. Mr. Brookham reviewed the current status of the District.

Commissioner O'Donnell asked Mr. Parks regarding the disadvantages of increasing the frozen tax base and Mr. Parks provided explanation of how doing so extends the timeline by three years.

Commissioner Neeley wanted to know how much the Downtown Main Street project generates in taxing base and if that was closed-out, what would be the impacts. Chair McGriff indicated she did not support closing out the Downtown project.

The Commission, Mr. Konkol and the consultants had discussions on what would happen if the District were closed and what would happen to District-owned properties.

Commissioner Lyles Smith supported updating the Plan and retaining the tax base. Commissioner O'Donnell wanted maximum flexibility and supported the temporary reduction in tax rate and establishing an end date. Commissioner Smith supported smaller projects and updating the Plan and reducing the tax rate. Also focus on the downtown and then work to outer properties. Commissioner Cross supported retaining the District as is. Also, add a quiet zone for downtown and not move on any existing properties. Commissioner Neeley supported adding seismic upgrades for buildings in the downtown.

Chair McGriff suggested all the Commissioners review the current Plan and make their review edits and bring them back to the Commission. Commissioner Lyles Smith had concerns about slowing down the process if too much time is spent on rewriting the Plan. Chair McGriff felt that the Plan updating could happen concurrently with working on existing properties.

Commissioner O'Donnell supported placing a parking structure downtown; utilizing multiple small projects that will demonstrate success.

Mr. Konkol suggested refreshing the Plan, re-examining the tax rate, and providing ideas for existing properties as immediate focus points. Commissioner Smith asked if the focus is more residential or commercial in nature. How would the Commission determine the vision? Commissioner O'Donnell supported developing upper residential units in downtown buildings.

Mr. Konkol suggested staff would come back to the Commission with the following focus points: how to look at refining the Plan, create the vision and establish a project list. Mr. Konkol asked the Commission how much public participation was expected in the process.

Chair McGriff suggested to utilize existing processes to engage public at a dedicated meeting. Commissioner O'Donnell felt that public engagement would be largely through a public vote. Commissioner Neeley felt there needed to be presentations to the public. Chair McGriff felt there needed to be discussion on how to move forward.

Mr. Graham commented developing a vision was important and there needed to be a framework in order to make decisions.

COMMUNICATIONS

There were no communications.

ADJOURNMENT

Chair McGriff adjourned the meeting at 8:58 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Kattie Riggs

Kattie Riggs, City Recorder