

MINUTES
URBAN RENEWAL AGENCY
May 17, 2007

Commissioner McCabe called the Moscow Urban Renewal Agency meeting to order at 7:00 a.m. Thursday, 17th May 2007 in the Moscow City Council Chambers.

Attendance:

Commission Members	City Staff Present	Others Present
John McCabe, Chair	Gary J. Riedner, City Supervisor	B.J. Swanson
John Weber	Don Palmer, Finance Director	Margaret Howlett
Mike Thomason	Anne Clapperton, Community Dev.	Aaron Ament
	Bryn Booker, Administration	Shelley Bennett
	Stephanie Kalasz, City Clerk	John Campbell

Chairman McCabe said he wanted to let people know that the URA does not have a hidden agenda and their goal is to help businesses with infrastructure.

1. Potential Downtown URA Project – Gary J. Riedner

Riedner displayed a map of the proposed project area with a possible “phased” plan mapped out. He said it is possible for the URA to have a smaller project area and district which could then be amended to include other adjacent areas as necessary and he explained how it would be handled and what some limitations are for that option. He displayed another map that offered another option which included the same areas however in the Central Business District, only the public right-of-way areas would be included. He said it is a little unorthodox but is not prohibited based upon review of the Idaho Code. Thomason confirmed that the configuration would preclude the URA from doing any façade restoration on buildings as these would be located outside the plan area. Riedner explained what has been done in other cities. He said there needs to be some economic development and/or public purpose. It cannot just benefit a private owner. He said staff is looking for direction from the Board.

Thomason asked if valuations were done on the first model and Riedner said no, none have been done yet. Riedner said there is some flexibility there. There was discussion about the areas on the first map. Thomason said initially forming the district in a smaller area which could then be amended would allow us to improve façades as well. Riedner discussed some options.

Thomason asked if either plan would be faster. Riedner said he didn’t think there was a difference.

B.J. Swanson, private citizen, said she thought phasing was better. She said if the public rights-of-way are improved downtown, the other areas would be subsidizing it because there would be no tax allocation coming from that area.

Margaret Howlett, Executive Director of the Latah Economic Development Council, discussed many of the projects that could be completed with only including the public right-of-way downtown. She asked if it is the URA’s job to fix other people’s buildings. Riedner said it depends upon whether the improvements serve a public purpose. He said the smaller district

area works but doesn't serve all of the purposes to help downtown that the URA and Council discussed. Weber said the URA is only going to be involved on any project to a certain point. Swanson said if the public infrastructure is improved downtown then private owners will probably be more inspired to do something to their buildings.

John Campbell, Chair of the Historic Preservation Commission, asked if tying the areas together in the beginning, will help tie together the character of the entire project area. Riedner said he thinks so because it allows planning throughout. He said it would also help people to the north to feel like they are more a part of downtown.

Ament asked if A could be the main area and have just the public right-of-ways in B, C and D. He said that way, all of the areas could be included from the beginning and more would remain on the tax rolls. Riedner said area B can be justified for certain reasons and he would rather go in with something he can explain. Ament said development is allowed to come in with phased plans so that make a difference. Riedner said the question is if we get challenged on the plan. He said there will be almost no increment generated downtown, as improvements will likely be primarily remodels, etc.

Thomason one of the areas that needs to be addressed is the northern area of Main Street and he wondered why that was not included. Riedner said we do have the limitations of assessed value.

Don Palmer said if he was a property owner, he would want to be included in the URA project area because of the money being invested. Swanson said her concern would be the overlay of the taxing districts. She would want to be in an area that would be improved. Shelley Bennett, Team Idaho Realty, said there are improvements to buildings planned for downtown and perhaps the URA could help with the cost of the project. Weber discussed some of the improvements that could be done to help the property owners and it might inspire them to put more money into a façade program. He said the URA would be taking the money from a place that is not being used commercially at this time.

Riedner said he wouldn't recommend that the URA do any routine maintenance on streets, but focus on improvements. Bennett said the whole purpose of the URA is to help redevelopment. Riedner said downtown sidewalks, Friendship Square, the fountain, etc. could all be considered for improvements. Howlett said in many downtowns, they do an interest free loan fund for business owners to improve a façade and she wondered if the URA could fund something like that. Riedner explained how Coeur d'Alene has fostered façade programs. Howlett asked if the fund could be the project. Riedner said he would have to look into it.

Thomason said when he first started looking at this, it was all about area A because it has needed improvement for so long. He said any façade restoration program has been a minor piece of the urban renewal focus. He said there is a certain amount of urgency. He asked how to move forward. Riedner said the purpose of urban renewal is to improve areas that are underdeveloped and have challenges. He said the URA could help existing businesses move out so the entire area can be developed. He said within a few weeks there will be another four commissioners sitting on the Board. He suggested having another meeting to inform people about the project. He said an eligibility study would be the next step. Slum and blight (public improvements) are needed in all of these areas. He discussed the process for the plan. He said a resolution of the URA will be necessary to use the current funds toward this project.

Ament said he thinks the second option which captures all of the areas seems like it would be the best way to start.

Weber moved to have staff draft a resolution to hire Mr. Harlan Mann to do the eligibility study and for the money to come out of Alturas to be paid back when a new district is up and running. Thomason seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

Riedner said Kendig Keast is meeting with the downtown property owners this morning to get their ideas for what they want in that area.

2. Update on Refinance of URA Bonds - Don Palmer

Riedner explained why some of the bonds were not tax exempt from the beginning which was due to a bond guarantee required by Bank of Pullman when the initial financing was obtained but now that guarantee has been removed and bond counsel indicates that the taxable bonds could be converted. Palmer explained what needs to be done to convert the bonds.

3. URA Lunch Meeting with Kendig Keast Collaborative - Gary J. Riedner

Riedner explained what would be done and that it will be followed by a walking tour of downtown.

4. Schedule Next Meeting - Gary J. Riedner

The next meeting will be next Thursday, May 24th.

5. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 8:06 a.m.