

**RENAISSANCE ZONE AUTHORITY
MEETING MINUTES
May 21, 2013**

The Bismarck Renaissance Zone Authority met on May 21, 2013 in the David J. Blackstead Meeting Room in the City-County Office Building at 221 North 5th Street.

Authority members present were Chuck Huber, Jim Christianson, George Keiser, Brenda Smith and Curt Walth.

Authority member Kevin Magstadt was absent.

Technical advisor Bruce Whittey was present.

Technical advisor Jeff Ubl was absent.

Staff members present were Jason Tomanek (Planning), Charlie Whitman, Steve Saunders (Transportation Planner), Rachel Drewlow (Transportation Planner), Kim Lee (Planning Manager), Carl Hokenstad (Director of Community Development) and Hilary Balzum (Planning).

Guests present included Katie Vasbinder, Jenn Jackson, Patrick Jackson, Pete Conlin, Kate Herzog, Dawn Kopp and Morgan Andenas.

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Walth called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.

UPDATE ON DOWNTOWN SUBAREA STUDY – CRANDALL ARAMBULA AND UBL DESIGN GROUP

George Crandall and Don Arambula gave a brief overview of the downtown subarea study including highlights of new bike paths, pedestrian mall areas and a pedestrian tunnel underpass. Details of the study can be found here:

<http://www.downtownbismarckstudy.com/public-meetings/>.

Bruce Whittey said it appears that emphasis is being given to a new pedestrian square near Fiesta Villa and asked if the newly proposed parking ramp will be the replacement for the parking lot that is there now and Mr. Arambula said yes, it will.

Mr. Whittey then asked how snow removal would be managed in the area that is proposed to be a pedestrian underpass. Mr. Arambula explained that there are options such as heated sidewalks, slopes instead of stairs and also the use of smaller snow removal machines when necessary.

George Keiser asked if reducing Main Avenue to three lanes as proposed in the study would be sufficient to manage the flow of traffic. Mr. Arambula answered that the Traffic Engineer believes it is feasible and some of the traffic will be distributed to new routes onto to Bowen Avenue and Thayer Avenue.

Mr. Keiser then asked if new growth projections have been taken into account. Mr. Arambula explained that SRF Consulting Group will take all new developments into consideration and that parallel routes will compensate to help distribute traffic.

Mr. Whittey asked if business improvement districts will be discussed and Mr. Arambula said that yes, all possible sources of revenue will be considered.

Jason Tomanek asked if they could please give an overview of their upcoming schedule and Mr. Arambula said that they will be presenting this information to the Planning Commission on May 22nd followed by a workshop and meeting with the project stakeholders and interest groups and then a public meeting at the Civic Center on May 23rd at which public input will be accepted.

MINUTES

The minutes of the April 16, 2013 meeting were distributed with the agenda packet.

MOTION: A motion was made by Mr. Huber and seconded by Mr. Keiser to approve the minutes of the April 16, 2013 meeting as received. The motion passed unanimously with members Huber, Christianson, Keiser, Smith and Walth voting in favor.

CORE INCENTIVE PROGRAM PROJECT – PUBLIC HEARING

A. 411 EAST MAIN AVENUE – CORE Technical Assistance Bank

Authority Member Christianson excused himself from the meeting at this time.

Mr. Tomanek gave an overview of the request by Conlin Restaurants, Inc. for assistance from the Technical Assistance Bank, a CORE Incentive Program, to secure services of an architect for an update to the interior of Fiesta Villa restaurant. The applicant wishes to work with JLG Architects to develop a concept using the existing southwest theme along with Northern Pacific Railroad elements to tie the interior elements and themes of the lounge, dining area and patio together.

Mr. Tomanek listed the following findings for the proposed CORE Incentive Program Project:

1. The building is located within the Downtown Tax Increment Financing District.

2. Technical Assistance Bank grant funds may be used to secure professional services to assist with the preliminary review and design of improvements to a building, as well as feasibility studies, renovation vs. restoration opinions, and preliminary cost estimates. The grant amount is limited to 30 hours of work with a rate of \$110.00 per hour, and a total dollar amount not to exceed \$3,300. Applicants will be responsible for a 25% matching contribution. At this time the finite dollar amount has not been established due to the fact that design work will not commence until the final approval from the Board of City Commissioners has been received.
3. The applicant has requested to work with JLG Architects. JLG has committed to offering design and drafting services as part of the CORE Technical Assistance Bank.

Mr. Tomanek said that based on the above findings, staff recommends approval of the request for a Technical Assistance Bank grant, which would allow the applicant to procure the services of a licensed architect for design and drafting work. The maximum grant amount of \$2,475.00 is based on an hourly rate of \$110.00 for a maximum of 30 hours and a 25% match provided by the applicant.

Chairman Walth opened the public hearing.

With there being no comments, Chairman Walth closed the public hearing.

Mr. Huber asked if there has been technical assistance given to an existing business for an interior concept remodel in the past and Mr. Tomanek said that this is the first and that all others have been for exterior improvements.

Mr. Keiser said the improvement plans could be kept and used in the future in the event the current owner does not use them and Mr. Tomanek said that is correct.

Mr. Huber said this would be a nice improvement but his concerns are of where to draw the line if all of the offices and restaurants in the area decide they want to do an interior remodel and he questions if it would fit into the program.

Ms. Smith asked if the CORE Incentive program is a one-time program and Mr. Tomanek said the regulations that are written don't specify one way or the other.

Mr. Huber went over the uses of the CORE Incentive program and said they seem developmental but not necessarily for an interior remodel.

Chairman Walth said that time is going to be spent today clarifying the guidelines of the CORE Incentive program and he shares the concerns of what the appropriate uses are.

Mr. Keiser said he thought the intended use was to give new developers the option to upgrade before buying an existing business but this is more of updating current features, such as the outdoor patio.

MOTION: A motion was made by Mr. Huber and seconded by Ms. Smith to continue the discussion to the next meeting to allow time for the Renaissance Zone Authority members to evaluate the guidelines of the CORE Incentive Program. The motion passed unanimously with members Huber, Keiser, Smith and Walth voting in favor.

CORE INCENTIVE PROGRAMS – POLICIES AND GUIDELINES DISCUSSION

A discussion was held regarding the CORE Incentive Program policies and guidelines. Mr. Tomanek started by explaining that changes made from notes taken after last month's meeting are underlined in item number 5 of the packet.

Chairman Walth said that each program would be discussed and then voted on separately and asked if regarding the Sidewalk Subsurface Infill Grant Program, a project maximum should be put in place.

Ms. Smith said because of the safety issues involved, a 50% cost split seems reasonable and Charlie Whitman said that these projects have come to be much more expensive than originally anticipated.

Mr. Keiser said he would not support a maximum on the cost of a project where safety is such an issue.

MOTION: A motion was made by Ms. Smith and seconded by Mr. Huber to approve the changes to the Sidewalk Subsurface Infill Grant Program as proposed without a cap on the grant amount and the motion passed unanimously with members Christianson, Huber, Keiser, Smith and Walth voting in favor.

Ms. Smith said in regard to the Technical Assistance Bank Grant Program, clarification is needed as what classifies as a remodel versus a renovation.

Mr. Huber said tenant versus owner should be considered and that the intent should be better defined.

Mr. Keiser said a person can build and be successful or buy an existing property where there is the option for different levels of support for improvements potentially available.

Mr. Christianson suggested an amendment be made to the language to state that property tax exempt projects are not eligible for this program. He asked if Mr. Whitman could look at it to apply the appropriate language and Mr. Whitman said that would be fine.

MOTION: A motion was made by Mr. Christianson and seconded by Ms. Smith to approve the changes to the Technical Assistance Bank Grant Program with the change that those properties exempt of property tax are not eligible and the motion passed unanimously with members Christianson, Huber, Keiser, Smith and Walth voting in favor.

Mr. Christianson said to apply the same statement of property tax exempt properties not being eligible for all the CORE Incentive Programs.

Chairman Walth asked if everybody is comfortable with stating that every story on all sides of the building including the street sides must be addressed and Ms. Lee said to add that all sides must be structurally sound.

Mr. Keiser suggested to remove the signage portion altogether and no longer provide assistance for signage projects.

MOTION: A motion was made by Mr. Keiser and seconded by Ms. Smith to approve the changes to the Façade & Signage Incentive Grant Program with the amendments that property tax exempt properties are not eligible and the removal of the signage portion of the program. The motion passed unanimously with members Christianson, Huber, Keiser, Smith and Walth voting in favor.

Mr. Keiser suggested that it be explained in the guidelines of the Housing Incentive Grant Program that non-profit agencies are not eligible.

Chairman Walth said the per household dollar amount as well as 1 to 3 unit dwelling compared to 4+ unit dwellings should also be changed.

Mr. Keiser said a limited amount of improvements can be done for the current \$20,000 offered and that they should be encouraging people to want to make updates and changes.

Mr. Whittey suggested that questions be asked of the Assessing Division and Technical Advisor Jeff Ubl as to what improvement costs are at for a minimum and maximum investment in order to make an educated recommendation.

Mr. Walth said changes need to be made to the Technical Assistance Bank Program guidelines before taking further action on the Conlin Restaurants requested. The general consensus of the members present is to remove the language that would allow remodeling of interior spaces from the list of eligible work from the CORE Technical Assistance Bank. Mr. Walth then tabled discussion of the Housing Incentive Grant Program to the next meeting to allow questions to be asked of Mr. Ubl and the City of Bismarck Assessing Department.

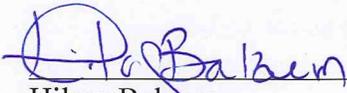
OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. Tomanek distributed a list of year to date completed CORE Incentive Programs in order to assist with budgeting for the 2014 fiscal year.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Chairman Walth adjourned the meeting of the Bismarck Renaissance Zone Authority at 5:10 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,



Hilary Balzum
Recording Secretary



Curt Walth
Chair