

**RENAISSANCE ZONE AUTHORITY
MEETING MINUTES
October 21, 2014**

The Bismarck Renaissance Zone Authority met on October 21, 2014 in the David J. Blackstead Conference Room in the City-County Office Building at 221 North 5th Street. Chairman Walth presided.

Authority members present were Jim Christianson, Chuck Huber, Curt Walth and Todd Van Orman.

Authority members Jeff Ubl, Josh Askvig and George Keiser were absent.

Technical advisors Bruce Whittey and Katie Vasbinder were present.

Staff members present were Jason Tomanek (Planning), Hilary Balzum (Planning) and Charlie Whitman (Attorney).

Guests present were Kate Herzog, Madison Cermak and George Yineman.

CALL TO ORDER

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

MINUTES

The minutes of the September 16, 2014 meeting were distributed with the agenda packet. Chairman Walth pointed out that his name is missing from the vote on the boundary modification request.

MOTION: A motion was made by Mr. Christianson and seconded by Mr. Van Orman to approve the minutes of the August 19, 2014 meeting as amended and with corrections. The motion passed unanimously with members Christianson, Huber, Van Orman and Walth voting in favor.

Mr. Huber recused himself from the meeting at this time due to a conflict of interest with the following project.

RENAISSANCE ZONE PROJECT –

113 SOUTH 5TH STREET – BISMARCK REALTY CO.

Mr. Tomanek said the applicant is proposing to remodel and lease office space in a previously-designated Renaissance Zone project building (501 East Main Avenue – Project 02-B). The applicant has indicated he would be leasing 561 SF of office space and it will be

remodeled and used as professional office space for his real estate broker's office with Bismarck Realty Co. Remodeling elements include removing and relocation of interior walls, new lighting, carpet and new paint.

Mr. Tomanek said; based on the findings in the staff report, staff recommends approval of the designation of the lease at 113 South 5th Street by George Yineman doing business as a broker with Bismarck Realty Co., as a Renaissance Zone project with an exemption from state tax on income derived from the business and investment location for five years beginning with the date of occupancy.

Chairman Walth asked if the square footage of 619 is correct. Mr. Tomanek said it should actually be 561 square feet.

Mr. Christianson said the stated estimated state income tax exemption seems low. Mr. Yineman said it is possible that it could be more or could be less given the condition of the market lately.

Due to a lack of quorum, Chairman Walth continued the request until a special meeting with a full quorum can be held at a later date.

DOWNTOWN UPDATE PROVIDED BY THE DOWNTOWNERS ASSOCIATION

Ms. Herzog introduced the Downtowners new intern, Madison Cermak. She then distributed information on two upcoming events in Bismarck. One Million Cups will be held at Dakota Stage each Wednesday with an entrepreneurial speaker present to be a hub for new technology, product launches and anyone who is starting new businesses. She also gave out information on Start Up Weekend to be held in January which is an opportunity for people to spawn new businesses with other people over the course of a weekend. She said this has been very successful in Fargo in the past.

Mr. Christianson asked how many people attended the recent Downtown Conference. Ms. Herzog said approximately 220 people attended the speaking seminar by Doug Burgum and that she would love some input on what people thought.

Mr. Tomanek said Doug Burgum turned everybody in the room into a fan of downtown and that he presented his information very honestly. Ms. Herzog agreed that he was very good at making a concise case as far as the health and financial benefits of a strong downtown.

DOWNTOWN DESIGN REVIEW – DISCUSSION

Mr. Tomanek said he has researched multiple design review committee options and noted that some cities, such as Mandan, review everything that is mixed use as well as commercial use. He said they can specify in their composition requirements that at least one if not two architects is required as well as a landscape architect and multiple technical advisors. He said if the Renaissance Zone Authority is selected to take on the review duties, the ordinance

would have to be amended as it currently deals with recommendations on tax exemptions. He then said the change would also require the approval of the Board of City Commissioners. He said a set of design guidelines might be more appropriate in this situation rather than a whole new set of ordinance regulations. He said an ordinance could be used to prohibit designs that are not desirable and the guidelines could be used to direct towards preferred designs.

Mr. Whittey asked if this will apply to both new construction and rehabilitation of existing buildings. Mr. Tomanek said a dollar amount can be set to be used as a qualifier for reviews being required as well as all permit requirements being met.

Mr. Whitman said the authority level of the proposed committee also needs to be decided. Mr. Tomanek said the committee giving approval to a design review would be the end of the process. He then said an applicant could appeal the denial of a design review to the City Commission. He said a basis for guidelines should be prepared by December and that the existing design guidelines will be out of the City Ordinance by the end of November.

Mr. Christianson asked what the approximate number of applications in one year might be. Mr. Tomanek said it would probably be around six per year as they will not review signage or anything else.

Mr. Christianson asked if they should expand the review boundary further than the DC-Downtown Core and DF-Downtown Fringe districts as he feels many of the new projects going up, mainly at the major gateways to the community, are unsightly and should go through a review process.

Mr. Tomanek said the idea behind limiting the review area to downtown was because that is currently the only area in Bismarck that has design regulations.

Mr. Whitman said that regulating the aesthetics of a new design through a zoning ordinance would be complicated as it eliminates choices of the owners and would force cost on them. He said it can become very difficult very fast and could be met with a lot of resistance.

Mr. Walth asked that a special meeting be called for either this coming Wednesday or Thursday so that a quorum can be present to make a decision on Mr. Yineman's project as well as whether or not the request for the compilation of a downtown design review committee should be forwarded to the City Commission.

OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business to be discussed at this time.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Chairman Walth adjourned the meeting of the Bismarck Renaissance Zone Authority at 5:00 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,



Hilary Balzum
Recording Secretary



Curt Walth
Chairman