

**RENAISSANCE ZONE AUTHORITY  
MEETING MINUTES  
July 21, 2015**

The Bismarck Renaissance Zone Authority met on July 21, 2015 in the David J. Blackstead Meeting Room in the City-County Office Building at 221 North 5<sup>th</sup> Street. Vice Chairman Huber presided.

Authority members present were Jim Christianson, Chuck Huber, George Keiser and Jeff Ubl.

Authority members absent were Josh Askvig, Todd Van Orman and Curt Walth.

Technical advisor Bruce Whittey was present.

Staff members present were Jason Tomanek (Planner), Kim Lee (Planning Manager), Brenda Johnson (Assessor), Will Hutchings (Transportation Planner), Charlie Whitman (City Attorney) and Hilary Balzum (Office Assistant).

Guests present were Kate Herzog, Madison Cermak, Chris Sievert, David Mason and Rick Lynam.

**CALL TO ORDER**

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

**MINUTES**

The minutes of the June 8, 2015 and July 8, 2015 special meetings were distributed with the agenda packet.

**MOTION:** A motion was made by Mr. Keiser and seconded by Mr. Christianson to approve the minutes of the June 8, 2015 and July 8, 2015 special meetings as distributed. The motion passed unanimously with members Christianson, Keiser, Huber and Ubl voting in favor.

**RENAISSANCE ZONE BOUNDARY MODIFICATION - DISCUSSION**

Mr. Tomanek explained that the Renaissance Zone Authority, at their July meeting, directed staff to explore the potential blocks to be added to the Renaissance Zone. He distributed maps showing the various uses of those blocks contiguous to the current Renaissance Zone and said emphasis is focused on blocks of commercial uses as opposed to residential uses, as residential project applications have been limited in the past. He said the blocks are labeled one through thirty-five and color coded according to their current use. He said he spoke with the North Dakota Department of Commerce and they informed him that there are currently 54 cities in North Dakota utilizing Renaissance Zone benefits successfully. He said some of

them are communities of less than 15 blocks total, so islands are more probable in those cities. He said they have not been favorable to undeveloped lots in the past if they are not annexed, have no municipal utility services or are not platted. He then said they advised that potential blocks or an island be favorable according to the Renaissance Zone Development Plan and if one of those is away from the downtown area, overall benefits to the community need to be specified. Mr. Tomanek said he found the word 'downtown' in the Development Plan 45 times and it also specifically states that the Renaissance Zone should be located in the downtown area, so it does concentrate on that specification but the downtown area technically is not clearly defined except by the Downtown Core and Downtown Fringe zoning districts. He said support from the current owners in the potential blocks is needed before the Zone can be modified.

Mr. Whittey asked if a block can be put back in once it is taken out, even if it has never had any designations or benefits received. Mr. Tomanek said once a block is removed from the Renaissance Zone it cannot be added back in, regardless of if it had projects or not.

Mr. Whittey asked if the Development Plan would have to be modified if the boundaries are modified. Mr. Tomanek said it would have to be amended to support the modification of the boundary, adding that there is an inventory and description of the added blocks as well as letters of owner support to be added to the Plan to supplement the changes.

Mr. Christianson asked what the time frame would be to survey the owners in the potential new blocks. Mr. Tomanek said two to three weeks would be allowed for owners to give responses to the surveys, but those letters could go out right away and responses could be provided at the August meeting of the Renaissance Zone Authority. He said historically approximately 25% of those contacted have responded with interest.

Mr. Keiser said he feels the entire Development Plan should not be modified to accommodate an island but rather written to include an addendum for it. He then asked if the mobile home park located on East Broadway Avenue and North 26<sup>th</sup> Street could be included in the potential blocks, as that area is in need of some improvements.

Mr. Tomanek said he is unsure of how it would qualify for designation, as it is a commercial use, but there are specific provisions for redevelopment because it is a mobile home park.

Mr. Whitman said if a mobile home park is dissolved the owner is required to assist in relocating the tenants. He said the City chose to focus on the downtown area and downtown style development and redevelopment, but there is not anything in the North Dakota Century Code specifying where the blocks and islands have to be located. He said the Development Plan would have to come into compliance with the expanding focus of the Renaissance Zone.

Mr. Whittey said just because the City has the option to add 11 blocks does not mean the City has to utilize all of them. He said there is not any relevance in designating a block if it is not going to be used. He then said there is park land and public space along Broadway Avenue,

but having it contiguous to the existing zone presents a problem if they have to pick up less desirable blocks and add them to the Zone to get to the ones they want.

Mr. Keiser said he believes the area surrounding the Bank of North Dakota will see some major construction to include a new commerce center in the next few years and the layout of the location will change drastically.

David Mason said he feels if they want to revitalize any location there is no reason to not utilize the option of having a three block island and thinks a larger area should be surveyed to allow for the full three block island. He said blocks diagonal from the location to be potentially developed as a bank on the corner of State Street and East Divide Avenue could be added to allow a Zone further north.

Mr. Keiser asked if an island could be approved now and when it is done, it can be marked completed and removed to allow for a new one somewhere else. Mr. Tomanek said that can be done but they are only allowed one designated island at a time until it is completed and removed.

Mr. Huber asked how they would like to decide who to survey first. Mr. Tomanek said there will be a lot of contacts to be made if all of the owners in all 35 potential blocks are surveyed. He added that he even had an owner approach him after the July meeting who said if they are adding blocks outside of the downtown area then he would like to be considered as well.

Mr. Keiser said a criteria plan needs to be created that states the qualifications for being an island block so a precedent is not set.

Vice Chairman Huber said he favors blocks 1, 14 and 28-32 to be surveyed first.

Mr. Christianson said he would also like the properties around the Kelly Inn north of East Divide Avenue to be included.

Mr. Keiser said he would like to see those blocks directly contiguous to the existing Renaissance Zone be surveyed first.

**MOTION:** A motion was made by Mr. Keiser and seconded by Mr. Christianson to request the owners in proposed blocks 1-8, with the exception of block 3 and blocks 10, 14, 28-32 and that block containing the Kelly Inn, Liechty Homes and adjacent commercial and apartment uses be surveyed first to obtain input as it relates to their property being added to the existing Renaissance Zone. The motion passed unanimously with members Christianson, Huber, Keiser and Ubl voting in favor.

## **DOWNTOWN UPDATE PROVIDED BY THE DOWNTOWNERS ASSOCIATION**

Ms. Herzog said the façade project taking place at J & R Vacuum is making progress and the removal of the original façade revealed transom windows and decorative brick. She said she encourages a discussion be had amongst the Authority to consider maintaining consistency when these discoveries are made and would suggest a request to be made to the owners to keep the original features when at all possible.

Mr. Tomanek said other discoveries of this nature have been made such as with the current Lillian's location and Peacock Alley. He said Lillian's has a drop ceiling so the transom windows would not benefit the interior but with an interior design like that of Peacock Alley with a high ceiling, the transom windows could be beneficial to the interior appearance and overall design. He said it depends on the interior design of the building and can be looked at on a case by case basis.

(Secretary's Note: Chairman Walth, Technical Advisor Whittey and Mr. Tomanek met with Jim Barnhardt (owner of J & R Vacuum) and Joe Larrivee (architect) to discuss the potential to modify the design to allow the design to allow the preservation and exposure of the transom windows. After reviewing the construction progress, the general consensus was that the work done to that point would have to be removed and interior modifications to the building would also be required. The final decision was to keep progressing on the exterior renovation project as previously reviewed and approved.

## **TECHNICAL ADVISOR VACANCY – DISCUSSION**

Mr. Tomanek said a request for applicants for the vacant technical advisor position was made and one application was received from Steph Smith who is employed at JLG. He said JLG is part of the Technical Assistance Bank but they have had technical advisors in the past that also belonged to the Technical Assistance Bank and have not had any issues. He said the technical advisors are non-voting members with unlimited terms.

**MOTION:** A motion was made by Mr. Christianson and seconded by Mr. Keiser to appoint Ms. Smith as the new technical advisor to the Renaissance Zone Authority. The motion passed unanimously with members Christianson, Huber, Keiser and Ubl voting in favor.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, Vice Chairman Huber adjourned the meeting of the Bismarck Renaissance Zone Authority at 5:05 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,



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Hilary Balzum  
Recording Secretary



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Chuck Huber  
Vice Chairman