

**RENAISSANCE ZONE AUTHORITY
MEETING MINUTES
October 20, 2015**

The Bismarck Renaissance Zone Authority met on October 20, 2015 in the David J. Blackstead Meeting Room in the City-County Office Building at 221 North 5th Street. Chairman Walth presided.

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

Authority member absent was Jeff Ubl.

Technical advisor Bruce Whittey was present.

Technical advisor Steph Smith was absent.

Staff members present were Jason Tomanek (Senior Planner), Brenda Johnson (Real Property Appraiser), Sandra Bogaczyk (Community Development Office Assistant) and Hilary Balzum (Community Development Administrative Assistant).

No guests were present.

CALL TO ORDER

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

MINUTES

The minutes of the September 15 meeting were distributed with the agenda packet.

MOTION: A motion was made by Mr. Christianson and seconded by Mr. Askvig to approve the minutes of the September 15, 2015 meeting as received. The motion passed unanimously with members Askvig, Christianson, Huber, Kesier, Van Orman and Walth voting in favor.

RENAISSANCE ZONE BOUNDARY MODIFICATION CRITERIA – DISCUSSION

Mr. Tomanek said the maps distributed with the meeting packet shows analytical data compiled to best determine the most appropriate qualifications for Renaissance Zone boundary modification as well as the addition of an island block. He said he looked at the assessed values of the suggested parcels to find the per-square-foot value and compared those with the parcels already in the Renaissance Zone. He said he found that most of the suggested parcels are valued between \$10 to \$30 per square foot compared to some blocks within the Renaissance Zone that range between \$50-\$110 per square foot. He said suggestions have

been provided for what qualifications a block would need to meet before it can be added to the Renaissance Zone.

Mr. Askvig said given the recent discussions, adopting some sort of criteria makes the most sense at this time. He said some of the highly assessed parcels in the Renaissance Zone have reached that value because they have received benefits already and could be considered as completed in the future.

Mr. Christianson suggested finding a test project to see if requiring a certain number of criteria being met would be the best way to go in order to remain subjective. He said the Development Plan would still be applicable to all projects.

Mr. Whittey said a good framework of suggestions has been provided, but there should maybe be a minimum requirement, score or conditions that need to be met in order to qualify.

Mr. Askvig said with an island block, it would be difficult to convince the Authority of where the need for one is unless it is a very specific instance where meeting the criteria would not be an issue.

Mr. Van Orman said having some minimum requirements in place to legitimize why an island block was approved would be beneficial when it comes to the issue of 'project chasing' being questioned by the State.

Mr. Tomanek said the criteria could be weighted with a minimum score to be met.

Mr. Keiser said he feels the criteria of impacts on existing adjacent land uses not being impacted and the one relating to traffic impacts should be reconsidered. He said most projects in some way do inadvertently impact both adjacent properties as well as traffic and there could potentially be some opposition to that criterion.

Mr. Christianson said both the adjacent land use and traffic impact criteria are more project-specific and should maybe come off the list.

Mr. Huber said those impacts should be considered when there is the potential for a retail use next to a residential neighborhood, which is also more of a specific project issue in the event an entire new block or island block is added.

Mr. Askvig said the remaining criteria suggestions seem applicable but giving weight to each individual requirement or the need for a minimum score to be met probably is not necessary.

Chairman Walth asked if the traffic impact criteria could be specific to a project according to the zoning district.

Mr. Tomanek said in the event a property owner wanted to have a different use allowed, they could initiate a zoning change in which case different criteria would apply.

MOTION: A motion was made by Mr. Christianson and seconded by Mr. Askvig to recommend approval of the proposed Renaissance Zone Boundary Modification Criteria as presented, with the modifications that they be changed from 'criteria' to 'guidelines' and with the guidelines of 'redevelopment' and 'traffic impacts' removed. The motion passed unanimously with members Askvig, Christianson, Huber, Keiser, Van Orman and Walth voting in favor.

Chairman Walth said now that criteria are in place, a discussion can be held on which contiguous blocks are most qualified to be added to the existing zone as well as where a potential three block island could be added.

Mr. Tomanek said those blocks shown as 1-8, 14 and 28-32 on the map provided previously are those that were surveyed for interest in being added to the Renaissance Zone.

Mr. Whittey asked if any interest was shown from the block containing Kelly Inn. Mr. Tomanek said they are not interested in being added at this time because of the minimum improvement value required but some interest was expressed by the owner of the building at 1911 North 11th Street (Enchanted Garden Child Care Center).

Mr. Keiser said he would not support the potential previously discussed island being added at the intersection of State Street and Divide Avenue given the outstanding traffic issues in that location. He said more information is needed before it can be added and the traffic issue being resolved first is crucial.

Mr. Askvig said he does not see there being anywhere to add all of the 11 new blocks allowed at this time, but the Authority should add at least some of them while they can.

Mr. Tomanek said Planning staff could not support the development as originally proposed at the State Street and Divide Avenue location; however, a modified request has been submitted with a reduced size approximately half of what was originally proposed. He said a new traffic study was also received with the modified request with a final determination to be made at the City plat review meeting on November 2nd, as far as whether or not it will move forward for a public hearing to be held by the Planning and Zoning Commission meeting in November. He said the neighborhood could give comments and express their concerns at that time as well.

MOTION: A motion was made by Mr. Keiser and seconded by Mr. Askvig to table discussions of expanding the Renaissance Zone to the area requested at the intersection of State Street and Divide Avenue until the traffic impact study has been received by the City Traffic Engineer. The motion passed unanimously with members Askvig, Christianson, Huber, Keiser, Van Orman and Walth voting in favor.

Chairman Walth asked if the message should be sent out to those who might be interested in being added to the Renaissance Zone when the time does come to expand the boundaries on what the qualifications are for being added or if they should just wait for projects to come in.

He said there is a multitude of areas in the City needing improvements and contact to those interested should be made broadly.

Mr. Keiser said a good amount of time should be spent on developing guidelines for a qualifying island first, as there might be some areas that are not able to be developed appropriately.

Mr. Askvig said they could inadvertently put themselves in a position of deciding who gets what locations among developers and desirable locations.

Mr. Van Orman said it seems other cities have their islands in closer proximity to their downtown at half of a mile or less as well.

Chairman Walth said there are more things to consider for now but it might be beneficial to do some more surveying for interest. He said he would like to see the area north of the railroad tracks and over to 26th Street be surveyed so the most due diligence is being done.

Mr. Tomanek said those blocks shown as numbers 11 and 12 are the hospitals; and that block shown as number 33 is the new Bismarck Motor Hotel.

The general consensus of the Authority was to continue discussion of a boundary modification at a later date.

DOWNTOWN UPDATE PROVIDED BY THE DOWNTOWNERS ASSOCIATION

There was not an update to be given by the representatives of the Downtowners Association at this time due to the 2015 North Dakota Downtown Conference taking place today.

OTHER

CURRENT RENAISSANCE ZONE AND CORE PROJECTS – UPDATE AND DISCUSSION

Mr. Christianson said he has concerns about the project being done on J & R Vacuum not matching what was reviewed by the Authority.

Mr. Askvig said they should be contacted regarding the differences in the previously submitted building renderings that showed a two-color scheme.

It was decided by the members that contact needs to be made with the owner and representatives to discuss the changes made to the building.

Mr. Tomanek said a request was received from Dr. Rick Becker asking that his approved project benefits be rescinded for Humpback Sally's, LLC. He said no benefits have been awarded yet so it would not be an issue to rescind the request for a five year tax exemption on

his three businesses if it is deemed appropriate by the Authority. The Authority gave an overall approval for the project approval to be rescinded as requested by Dr. Becker.

MOTION: A motion was made by Mr. Keiser and seconded by Mr. Christianson to grant the request of Dr. Becker to rescind his previously approved request for Renaissance Zone designation for project 95-B. The motion passed unanimously with members Askvig, Christianson, Huber, Keiser, Van Orman and Walth voting in favor.

Chairman Walth asked if it would better suit the Authority to meet on a different day as there are two members with conflicting meetings at the same time as the Renaissance Zone Authority. Mr. Tomanek explained that moving the meeting time back further could cause conflicts with the getting the project requests to the Board of City Commissioners in a timely manner but moving it up could be considered. It was decided to keep the meeting date and time as it is for now so as to avoid conflicts with the timelines for approval of projects.

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