

**RENAISSANCE ZONE AUTHORITY
MEETING MINUTES
November 17, 2015**

The Bismarck Renaissance Zone Authority met on November 17, 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 Jim Christianson, George Keiser, Todd Van Orman, Jeff Ubl, and Curt Walth.

Authority members absent were Josh Askvig and Chuck Huber.

Technical advisors Bruce Whittey and Steph Smith were present.

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

Guests present were Kate Herzog and Madison Cermak of the Downtowners, and Jack Glasser of Glasser Images.

CALL TO ORDER

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

MINUTES

The minutes of the October 20, 2015 meeting 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 October 20, 2015 meeting as received. The motion passed unanimously with members Christianson, Huber, Keiser, Van Orman and Walth voting in favor.

RENAISSANCE ZONE PROJECT

Mr. Jack Glasser of Glasser Images, LLC requested designation of the lease space at 510 East Main Avenue as a Renaissance Zone project utilizing the 3rd floor as a photography studio and office. The property is owned by Gulch Holdings II, LLC and is legally described as Lots 13-15, Block 46, Original Plat. The proposed improvements include receptionist and waiting area, restrooms, meeting and conference rooms, studio and workspace effectively tripling their physical size from the current business location on Tacoma. The benefit would be a State business income tax exemption of \$5,000 over five years. Build-out costs are \$40SF equaling a \$140,000 build-out investment in the leasable area.

MOTION: A motion was made by Mr. Christianson and seconded by Mr. Keiser to recommend approval of the designation as lease of space at 510 East Main Avenue by Glasser Images, LLC, as a Renaissance Zone project with an exemption from state tax on income derived from the business location for five years beginning with the date of occupancy. The motion passed unanimously with members Keiser, Van Orman, Ubl and Walth voting in favor.

RENAISSANCE ZONE BOUNDARY MODIFICATION GUIDELINES –DISCUSSION

Chairman Walth suggested the Authority summarize and review last month's decisions and to make any clarifications necessary.

Mr. Tomanek clarified that that new term "guidelines" is now being used rather than "criteria", that the three statements were discarded as too project specific and instead kept the guidelines in general terms.

Mr. Christianson was concerned about how information would be circulated and he suggested placing information on the website. Mr. Tomanek stated it can be posted on the City's website but that it was his understanding that the information was intended as in-house guidelines.

Mr. Tomanek reminded the Authority that Staff has until May 2016 to submit a memorandum of agreement to request a five year renewal of the Renaissance Zone program designation by the State, by updating the goals and objectives of the Renaissance program in Bismarck. The process will begin in January 2016. Mr. Tomanek stated that it will take five to six months to complete the modifications while Chairman Walth stated that he would like to receive updates. The approval process will be reviewed and then addressed at a later date.

Chairman Walth requested final comments or questions regarding any aspect of the guidelines process, with no further comments made, the general consensus of the Authority was to adopt the guidelines as amended.

OTHER BUSINESS – CORE PROJECT UPDATE - 223 East Main Avenue

Chairman Walth asked what the status was on the exterior design on the J&R Vacuum & Sewing building. Mr. Tomanek addressed his memorandum to Joe Larrivee and Jim Barnhardt regarding the color selection and the choice to compliment the original brick color and furthermore approving the colors chosen for the façade. He stated that Planning staff reviewed the final color swatch in March and April of 2015. Mr. Tomanek noted that Mr. Larrivee had indicated the desire to utilize a single color of panel once the condition and color of the existing brick was realized. Mr. Tomanek noted that the original brick is tan with accents of dark brown. The dark brown panels were intended to complement the speckled brick. Mr. Tomanek concluded that based on that information, Planning staff raised no objections to the final color selection.

DOWNTOWN UPDATE PROVIDED BY THE DOWNTOWNERS ASSOCIATION

Kate Herzog and Madison Cermak representing the Downtowners Association reviewed the bike share program that has been implemented in Fargo and described the immensely successful bike station program weighing heavily on NDSU ridership. She mentioned the rail-trail bike plan for Bismarck and its hopeful connection to the FiveSouth planned development project. Mr. Whittey asked how many bike stations were built at NDSU with Mr. Tomanek answering. Ms. Herzog noted the flexibility of different bike share programs to cater to Bismarck's specific needs noting corporate sponsorship and different recreation or commuter needs, that bike stations are solar powered and the infrastructure would not disturb sidewalks. Mr. Tomanek noted the need to discover a critical mass of users noting University of Mary as possibly being a large influence for a project, along with future FiveSouth residents. Mr. Tomanek noted the low-maintenance of the bikes presented in Fargo.

OTHER

Mr. Tomanek stated that an application for a Purchase with Improvements Renaissance Zone project will be submitted for the meeting in December. He stated the applicants would also like to apply for the CORE Technical Assistance Bank. Mr. Tomanek asked the Authority members if they would be comfortable reviewing the purchase with improvements application to allow the group to move forward on the purchase of the property with the knowledge that once they own the building they would also apply for assistance from the CORE Technical Assistance Bank.

Mr. Kaiser offered that any assistance they receive could be used for a future project, should they not purchase.

Mr. Tomanek clarified the two requests are two separate applications.

Mr. Ubl questioned the intent of the Technical Assistance Bank application and that perhaps in this case the potential owners would be abusing the program to simply do their own due diligence regarding property improvements rather than staying true to the spirit of the application. Mr. Tomanek clarified that they want to do exterior improvements and work with the Building Official on how to add an internal stairway. Mr. Tomanek stated that his concerns with not doing both applications together would be that the Purchase with Improvements application would not be as complete without the itemized list which Technical Assistance would produce.

Chairman Walth suggested that perhaps the investment level may not meet the requirements for application. He mentioned that precedent guides the Authority to only offer Technical Assistance to owners. The general consensus was to have the buyers apply for the Purchase with Improvements first and then have them apply for Technical Assistance once they're the owners of the property.

Chairman Walth asked when the Authority would see the Block Expansion Study. Mr. Tomanek stated that he had not yet contacted property owners in the search area. He continued by saying that he has considered three scenarios; an online survey and a website, a public information meeting, or sending direct letters in an attempt to get more responses from more owners.

Chair Walth stated that the Renaissance Zone program might not be completely understood by many and that time should be spent to advertise the program.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Respectfully Submitted,



Sandra Bogaczyk
Recording Secretary



Curt Walth
Chairman