

**RENAISSANCE ZONE AUTHORITY
MEETING MINUTES
September 20, 2016**

The Bismarck Renaissance Zone Authority met on September 20, 2016 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, Joe Fink, Chuck Huber, Todd Van Orman and Chairman Walth.

Authority member George Keiser was absent.

Technical Advisors Bruce Whittey and Steph Smith were present.

Staff members present were Kim Lee (Planning Manager), Will Hutchings (Planner), Hilary Balzum (Administrative Assistant), Jason Tomanek (Assistant City Administrator), Daniel Nairn (Planner), Carl Hokenstad (Director of Community Development), Charlie Whitman (City Attorney) and Brenda Johnson (Senior Real Property Appraiser)

Guests present were Kate Herzog, Madison Cermak, Rolf Eggers, David Diebel, Cole Johnson and Carson Nordgaard.

INTRODUCTION OF NEW RENAISSANCE ZONE AUTHORITY MEMBER

Chairman Walth introduced Joe Fink as the new member of the Renaissance Zone Authority, appointed to fulfill a term to run through December of this year. Mr. Fink said he works for North Dakota Housing Finance Agency and is looking forward to contributing to this Authority and working with the members.

CALL TO ORDER

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

MINUTES

The minutes of the August 16, 2016 meeting were distributed with the agenda packet.

MOTION: A motion was made by Mr. Christianson and seconded by Mr. Fink to approve the minutes of the August 16, 2016 meeting as distributed. The motion passed unanimously with members Askvig, Christianson, Fink, Van Orman and Walth voting in favor.

CORE INCENTIVE GRANT PROGRAMS

214 EAST MAIN AVENUE – VOLD TIRE COMPANY, LLC

Mr. Nairn said the applicant, Vold Tire Company, LLC, was awarded a technical assistance grant to help design façade improvements to 214-216 East Main Avenue on January 26, 2016. He said the final design for this work has been completed, and the applicant now requests a Façade Incentive Grant to cover 50% of the costs of the improvements. He added that the Renaissance Zone Authority awarded \$3,575 for a partial façade renovation to this property in 2009 and the CORE program guidelines allow a maximum of \$30,000 in reimbursement for façade improvement. He said after deducting the amount already disbursed, a total of \$26,425 is available for the match. Mr. Nairn then said two bids have been received for construction of the proposed design and the façade program guidelines require three bids. He said the applicant claims to have contacted many contractors with only two interested in providing an estimate and both estimates are close to each other. He then said this applicant is also requesting approval of Downtown Design Review for the project.

Mr. Askvig asked if there has ever been a case where an applicant has been awarded additional grant money in the past or if there has ever been a second applicant request funds and been denied.

Mr. Tomanek said he cannot recall a time when a second applicant has applied for the remaining balance of an incentive grant, so technically nobody has ever been denied a request like this.

Mr. Nairn said that on the CORE application it states that there is a two year window for new applications for a property and this request was originally approved in 2009, so there would not be a precedent set as far as that limitation goes.

Mr. Whittey said he wanted to clarify for the owner that one of the bids included work to be done on the east side of the property, but these funds can only be used on the Main Avenue side, since that is the façade side, and added that signage cannot be paid for with this matching grant either.

Mr. Askvig said a façade improvement grant proposal makes sense here, but he could see an additional grant being awarded raising some red flags.

Chairman Walth asked if this can be allowed, because the proposal does have merit and he is not hearing or seeing anything that says it cannot be allowed.

Mr. Whitman said he would take concern to the request if staff has issues with it, which they do not seem to have.

Ms. Smith asked if there are samples of the fiber cement panels available. Cole Johnson, EAPC, distributed some samples and said everything will be painted to match accordingly.

Chairman Walth asked if the masonry will match according to the Downtown Design Review guidelines. Mr. Johnson said those will match as well.

Mr. Fink asked if there are issues on the structure with peeling paint. Mr. Johnson said a brick parapet has been designed to help with that problem and that the paint has just weathered in some places. He said lead based paint testing was negative there but that there is some lead in the existing buffalo board.

Mr. Nairn added that the property did previously receive a signage grant of \$532 back when those were still being awarded, and that amount could be deducted from this request as well.

Mr. Huber joined the meeting at this time.

Chairman Walth opened the public hearing.

There being no comments, Chairman Walth closed the public hearing.

MOTION: A motion was made by Mr. Christianson and seconded by Mr. Van Orman to recommend approval of the request for a grant from the Façade Incentive Grant Program for improvements to 214-216 East Main Avenue, waiving the requirement to obtain three bids, as recommended by staff, and subject to the elimination of any funds for work done on the east side of the structure, and a deduction from the maximum allowable grant for both the previous façade and the previous signage grant, which results in a maximum allowable reimbursement of \$25,892. The motion passed unanimously with members Askvig, Christianson, Fink, Huber, Van Orman and Walth voting in favor.

MOTION: A motion was made by Mr. Christianson and seconded by Mr. Van Orman to recommend approval of the requested design under Downtown Design Review authority for the property located at 214-216 East Main Avenue, as recommended by staff. The motion passed unanimously with members Askvig, Christianson, Fink, Huber, Van Orman and Walth voting in favor.

212 EAST MAIN AVENUE – RIVER ROAD PARTNERS, LLC

Mr. Nairn stated that the applicant is seeking funds from the Technical Assistance Bank and, if approved, the grant would provide a 75% match for architectural services up to a maximum of \$2,475 or 30 hours of work. He said the work must be performed after approval to be eligible for reimbursement.

Chairman Walth opened the public hearing.

Mr. Huber said he is happy to see this block being vastly improved.

Chairman Walth said he would like to see some CORE program guidelines drafted to be followed in the event a request comes in similar to the one for 214-216 East Main Avenue. He asked staff to present a recommendation at the following Renaissance Zone Authority meeting.

There being no further comments, Chairman Walth closed the public hearing.

MOTION: A motion was made by Mr. Huber and seconded by Mr. Askvig to approve the request for a Technical Assistance Bank grant, which would allow the applicant to procure the services of a licensed architect in the CORE Technical Assistance Bank, to assist with exterior façade improvements, design, drafting and other architectural services with a maximum grant amount of \$2,475 based on an hourly rate of \$110 for a maximum of 30 hours at 212 East Main Avenue, as recommended by staff. The motion passed unanimously with members Christianson, Fink, Huber, Van Orman, and Chairman Walth voting in favor.

DOWNTOWN DESIGN REVIEW

400 EAST FRONT AVENUE – BISMARCK PARKS AND RECREATION DISTRICT

Mr. Nairn stated that the applicant is requesting approval of the design for a sign for the Bismarck Parks and Recreation District office building, replacing an existing sign of the same nature and said this request is for approval of the design only and not a request for funding.

MOTION: A motion was made by Mr. Askvig and seconded by Mr. Huber to approve the proposed design for the replacement of the existing sign of the same nature at 400 East Front Avenue, as recommended by staff. The motion passed unanimously with members Askvig, Christianson, Fink, Huber, Van Orman, and Chairman Walth voting in favor.

109 NORTH 4th STREET – THE CAPITAL GALLERY

Mr. Nairn stated that the applicant is requesting approval of the design for a sign for The Capital Gallery in the form of an awning and four banners. He said the dimensions of the awning would be 47 feet 9 ¾ inches in length and 48” in height and that the banners would be evenly spaced above the awning. He said they would each be 42 inches in height and project 36 inches from the wall and would be reinforced with a steel frame.

Mr. Whittey asked what type of material the awning would be because he does not feel metal or fiberglass would be appropriate here. Mr. Christianson said the Lewis and Clark Foundation has already specified that it will be a fabric material.

Mr. Askvig said the sign ordinance says one projecting sign is allowed per occupant and this design shows there would be five if you include the awning. Ms. Lee said the ordinance does state one projecting sign which would allow then one banner and the awning only.

MOTION: A motion was made by Mr. Askvig and seconded by Mr. Van Orman to approve the request for a sign for The Capital Gallery, with the approval limiting the occupant to place one awning and one banner on the structure located at 109 North 4th Street, and limiting the material of the banner to fabric. The motion passed with members Askvig, Fink, Huber, Van Orman, and Chairman Walth voting in favor. Member Christianson neither supported nor opposed the motion.

RENAISSANCE ZONE PROGRAM

RENAISSANCE ZONE PROGRAM SELF-EVALUATION

Mr. Nairn said, in response to requests from the Renaissance Zone Authority during their July meeting, staff drafted a supplemental document to assess how well Renaissance Zone goals have been achieved to date. He said this report uses the standardly provided information on projects, assessment values and census data as well as housing goals. He said maps are also included showing the zone expansion and a summary of year to year growth, as well as spatial distribution and overall growth. He said a chart showing the net building taxes exempted on projects was added showing that by 2019 there will be an overall net gain. He said this information can be revised if desired by the Authority.

Mr. Askvig asked why the corner of North 3rd Street and Main Avenue shows a loss of 109 units. Mr. Nairn said the former Prince Hotel was vacant at the time the census was taken but that occupancy has since been reestablished.

Mr. Askvig asked if the running total shows that we are back in the positive for taxes gained or lost. Mr. Nairn said the chart showing the amount exempted would be the one to reference that information. He said it shows how those taxes have been regained and should continue to increase as the 5-year exemption periods for projects come to an end.

Chairman Walth said an executive summary similar to this could be considered for the future. Mr. Nairn said that has been considered in the past with some ideas explored, but nothing has been finalized.

Mr. Christianson said the summary of realization shows a bulk of the projects were completed in 2015 and asked if that is due to the number of applications at 100 West Broadway Avenue. Mr. Nairn said that is correct.

RESOPNSE FROM DCS REGARDING RENAISSANCE ZONE TIMELINE

Chairman Walth asked for further information on the letter received recently from the Division of Community Services (DCS).

Mr. Nairn said a letter was just received from DCS advising the Renaissance Zone Authority that a project must be given tentative approval by DCS by August 1, 2017 in order to be considered approved by the time the Renaissance Zone would potentially be terminated. He said this could potentially change depending on decisions made by the Legislature and added that those tentative approvals are typically received from DCS with one to two weeks after approval of a project by the City Commission, and sometimes it has been even a shorter period of time.

Chairman Walth turned the meeting over to Vice Chairman Huber at this time.

DOWNTOWN UPDATE PROVIDED BY THE DOWNTOWNERS ASSOCIATION

Ms. Hertzog said members of the Downtowners Association were surveyed regarding the recent road diet and design on Main Avenue. She said an overwhelming response was received with the general opinion being very positive. She said some improvements suggested included better traffic light timing, protected left turns and changing Broadway to two-way traffic.

Mr. Askvig said having the railroad so close-by complicated the traffic signal issues. Ms. Herzog said that is very true but that overall, people seem satisfied with the change.

Mr. Whittey asked if there is any Downtowners Street Fair attendance information available yet. Ms. Herzog said she has not seen any attendance numbers yet but that Saturday was very busy and their vendor count was around 180.

OTHER BUSINESS –

Mr. Nairn said he would like the Authority to explore the possibility of moving their regular meeting date up in order to accommodate a new City Commission agenda submittal deadline. He said the new deadline of Tuesday at 12:00 Noon the week prior is difficult to meet with the Renaissance Zone Authority not meeting until 4:00 PM that same day. He said this is resulting in a very quick turnaround time and they do want to avoid having to postpone action on projects because of this. He said Monday the day prior was discussed in the past but it did conflict with the schedules of a couple of members, Vice Chairman Huber, and suggested it be considered and discussed further in October.

Mr. Christianson asked for a few meeting dates to be put together and either emailed to the members or polled. He then asked if there is any new information on the completion of the quiet rail project.

Mr. Askvig said he has not heard anything new recently.

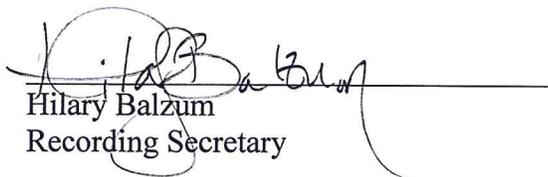
Mr. Whittey asked if anybody has visited with J & R Vacuum regarding the awning on their building not being placed as they stated it would. He said a letter should be sent asking them to state when it will be completed.

Mr. Nairn then distributed copies of the print of the “Murderer’s Gulch” wet plate, provided by the artist, Shane Balkowitsch. He said a print has been provided for each of the members and this is the one that has been placed in the alley way.

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,


Hilary Balzum
Recording Secretary


Curt Walth
Chairman