



**MINUTES
CITY OF LAUREL
LAUREL URBAN RENEWAL AGENCY
MONDAY, OCTOBER 18, 2021
11:00 AM
CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS**

Public Input: *Citizens may address the committee regarding any item of business that is not on the agenda. The duration for an individual speaking under Public Input is limited to three minutes. While all comments are welcome, the committee will not take action on any item not on the agenda.*

1. Roll Call

The Chair called the meeting to order at 11:02am.

Daniel Klien
Michelle DeBoer
Don Smarsh
Janice Lehman
Linda Frinkel
Judy Goldsby
Nick Altonaga (City of Laurel)

General Items

2. Approve Meeting Minutes: September 20, 2021

Don Motioned to approve the minutes from the meeting on September 20, 2021.
Daniel Seconded.
Motion Carried.

3. Partner Updates

Dianne Lehme of Big Sky EDA was not able to make it.

Jacy Head was present at the meeting. She replaced Steve Simonson as Economic Development Director.

New Business

4. State TIF District Presentation

Nick played the recording of the TIF District Presentation from the City Council session on October 5, 2021. Members discussed the pathway the LURA Board took and the current programs. How they see the grants fitting into the requirements presented in the TIF Presentation.

Have we been doing it correctly?

- Nick reported that it seems like previous city staff had a certain vision of the funds and presented that to the Board to follow. That has aligned with the regulations in some ways but not others.

Nick restarted the presentation.

Daniel: Property Acquisition?

The City being the entity investing time and funding into? Private property owners have direct skin in the game in their buildings or business, not the city.

Don: Does our large grant program comply with these regulations?

Nick: I think that many pieces of it are on the right track, but some of the ways we have gone about it has been incorrect.

- Structural work, façade work, work in the historic district, has all been spot on.
- Importance of removing blight, fire risk, and other serious items

Don: The word public is brought up a lot, but how do you define that? How do we deal with blight?

Don: If you have a property with blight, (Carl's Auto Clinic), why should there be a limit or stoppage on receiving funding?

Why should we limit the use of funds to remove blight? Does that NOT serve a public purpose?

Daniel: Who had put on the training previously in Miles City?

Nick: I recommend we start preparing a list of items to measure the outcomes of each grant, being able to directly state that it meets the parameters for public benefit.

Don: What Janet and her colleague have presented doesn't fit with what was previously presented to the LURA members in the past.

- If we can determine blight on someone's property, we should be able to utilize funds to remediate it
- Movie Theater – Sidewalk and entryway concerns – Should look into replacing hazards.

These are safety issues that need to be solved.

Richard Herr: If the problem is interior, does that constitute a public concern?

The split between public and private outcome.

Buckling concrete on the sidewalk versus buckling on the inside.

Daniel: Isn't it better when the property owner or direct recipient is taking the risk and doing the work themselves?

Also in regards to changing the taxable status? Grace Bible Church downtown was sold and is not used as a day/childcare operation, actively paying into the district.

Judy: Need to make sure that our decisions are standardized.

Daniel: We could possibly recommend a complicated lease to then do the work and maintenance. But then this would make issues (Rapid Tire) for the current operator.

Our work does not qualify under the presented rules, none of it appears allowable right now.

Richard Herr: How much was outside, and how much was inside the buildings? Need to set the bar.

How do we classify things? Fire risk? Structural work? Safety?

Michelle:

Three things would be helpful to know:

- What is the function of the LURA group?
- What is the function of the City Council?
- How does it all work together?

- The checklist you mentioned would be very helpful
- Right now it feels very frustrating for both parties.
- We need to get an idea of what our purpose is so we do not butt heads.
- It feels like there is a lot of checking and pointing fingers.
- Judy: It is up to the individual council members with their own idea of the TIF?
- Are there binders of all the information needed for when someone starts on a new board?
 - No, but Nick can prepare one specifically for the LURA Board.

Don: I look at things differently than city/downtown biz.

Back in 1993, Two hardware stores, movie house, candy store, plus other businesses.

Got on the board to try to draw more retail, or restaurants, or foot traffic on weekends.

Want to see more activity.

Want to see improvements in the buildings which could bring people in, which could lead to more activity which leads to more people, etc. etc.

The overall district has been improved so much and has potential to keep improving.

Don: would love to see Laurel as a tourist trap. Want to see people drawn in.

Janice: How does Billings TIF Operate? How does that work? Can check back with the Gazette on the numbers (In regards to a recent article discussing the use of Downtown funds).

Don: Compared to Miles City, is this something that we can look back and see how THEY did with their district?

Nick: We can also look into updating the Urban Renewal Plan to update the focus areas and goals of the District.

Judy: Consequential damage – Years and years of water damage due to the terrible roadway at Auto Clinic made the rear portion uninhabitable.

Don: To that point, why don't we have him make the case.

Nick: I can prepare a framework for review, with some parameters and we can talk about it at the next meeting.

Judy: Would be good to ALSO send them to the state to make sure we are on the right track.
Do we eliminate things like signage? Because it does not appear to apply?

5. Projects Discussion

Old Business

Other Items

Announcements

6. Adjourn

Don Motioned to Adjourn.

Daniel Seconded.

Meeting Adjourned at 12:26pm.

7. Next Meeting: November 15, 2021

The City makes reasonable accommodations for any known disability that may interfere with a person's ability to participate in this meeting. Persons needing accommodation must notify the City Clerk's Office to make needed arrangements. To make your request known, please call 406-628-7431, Ext. 2, or write to City Clerk, PO Box 10, Laurel, MT 59044, or present your request at City Hall, 115 West First Street, Laurel, Montana.

DATES TO REMEMBER