



JOINT CITY COUNCIL/PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING

Wednesday, March 16, 2022

APPROVED MINUTES

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT

Mayor Rick Scholl
Council President Doug Morten
Councilor Patrick Birkle
Councilor Stephen R. Topaz
Councilor Jessica Chilton

PLANNING COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT

Dan Cary, Chair
Russ Hubbard, Vice Chair
Jennifer Pugsley
Sheila Semling
Steve Toschi
Audrey Webster

STAFF PRESENT

John Walsh, City Administrator
Kathy Payne, City Recorder
Lisa Scholl, Deputy City Recorder
Mouhamad Zaher, Public Works Director
Jacob Graichen, City Planner
Jenny Dimsho, Associate Planner/Community Development Project Manager

OTHERS

Tina Curry	Carmin Dunn
Ali Hasenkamp	Art Leskowich
Brady Preheim	Keith Buisman, OTAK, Inc.
Jane Garcia	Shannon Simms, Mayer/Reed, Inc.

CALL JOINT CITY COUNCIL/PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING TO ORDER – 5:30 p.m.

DISCUSSION TOPICS

1. Update on Street and Utility Extensions Project for S. 1st Street and Strand Street through the St. Helens Waterfront Property to Plymouth Street

City Administrator John Walsh welcomed everyone and gave introductions. The primary focus tonight is the streets.

Keith Buisman of OTAK, Inc. and Shannon Simms of Mayer/Reed, Inc. reviewed their report and drawings. A copy is included in the archive packet for this meeting. Some highlights were:

- Shift of project focus to downtown

- Create consistent urban form at center of city, which will set up the development to the south
 - Connect existing historic downtown to new mixed-use development
 - Utilize existing street network to create improved access to river
 - Focus festival street and gateway toward existing event and public spaces
 - Create cohesive project with first phase of riverwalk and improvement to Columbia View Park
- 1st and Tualatin Intersection
 - Standard treatment is asphalt pavement through intersection
 - Curb extensions at intersections designed to reduce pedestrian crossing distance and form parking
 - Single curb ramp at each corner to be provided
 - Planters distinguish each intersection with some including seat walls
- 1st and Cowlitz Intersection
 - Similar to 1st and Tualatin in geometry
 - Concrete treatment (not raised)
- Strand Street Conversion to one-way north between Cowlitz Street and Plaza Square
 - Increase safety at blind corner created with City Hall building
 - Increases pedestrian accessibility by concentrating parking along Strand Street and opening up pedestrian plaza above Columbia View Park
 - Raised intersection at Cowlitz/Strand and raised portion of Strand Street near City Hall and Courthouse create more opportunities for pedestrian crossing
 - Revised grading along Strand Street allows for ADA parking stalls to be compliant with maximum ADA grades
 - Reduced amount of vehicle control signage (stop signs) to enable more fluid vehicle movement

Walsh credited staff for their tireless work on the project. They are currently soliciting RFQ's for a master services developer to partner with the City. They are trying to be good stewards of public resources by planning ahead. The presentation included just a couple of the intersections and does not include every single one. Columbia View Park and the Plaza area is the core of what brings people to the community.

Councilor Topaz tends to look 25 years into the future, and this is a disaster. The community came together and said they wanted activity at the center of the Veneer property. They would have to build it, which would require getting equipment in and out. One-way roads are nice but will plug things up when heavy trucks are unloading. The biggest problem is going from the Plaza to First Street. The sewer plant has to change, which will take time. It will take a lot of equipment to clean out the lagoon, which will affect the Connector. That's all connected to this property. The proposal is pretty but it's not what the community wanted a few years ago. If they rip out the lagoon, where will it go? What is the timeline for this? If they use the lagoon for the Portland Harbor dumping place, that's a 10-year process. He'd like to see what the whole thing will look like. It's not in the proposal. Getting a garbage truck down here plugs up traffic. The overall picture is the problem. The community wanted the end of the Veneer property to be the center of activity.

Mayor Scholl talked about the blue part of the map including storm, sewer, and power. Walsh added that it will also include the First and St. Helens Street intersection. It was very intentional to connect the old and new. They are working with Columbia River PUD to get as much underground power as possible. Commissioner Webster asked if the natural gas lines can be laid at the same time as the sewer. Keith said they are looking into that.

Councilor Chilton understands Councilor Topaz's concerns about shifting to a one-way. However, they are adding intersections, so the flow will shift. Trucks will still be able to access businesses with the

additional intersections. Mayor Scholl added that trucks are an issue everywhere you go, including Portland.

Councilor Birkle talked about Councilor Topaz's comments about what the community wanted. That was always conceptual. As far as shifting the center of the community to the Veneer property, that was never intended to take away from what they currently have. They've never had anything that said this what the people have agreed upon. Councilor Topaz argued that the people agreed with the architects. The City was going to take over the more detailed design. There are several Codes that would have to be changed to update the city. The City has always used the word "conceptual." There used to be a lot of public involvement. Council President Morten said the public meetings were to establish goals. It needs to be sustainable for commercial, residential, and environmental. No one knows the exact details. It's conceptual. He really appreciates the input from citizens and consultants.

Vice Chair Hubbard asked if the design provides for future utility laterals. Keith said yes. They are prepared for future utilities. Vice Chair Hubbard asked if they are prepared if someone comes in with a different idea. Keith said there will be opportunities to make changes. City Planner Graichen added that there is no finality on the blocks. Public Works Director Zaher explained that it is designed with flexibility. Vice Chair Hubbard asked why they didn't use a master design. Zaher said the risk is too high for a master developer right now. They hope to attract that as infrastructure is developed.

Chair Cary loves the turnaround to the water. How will someone driving down South 1st Street know to go down there? Mayor Scholl said they can use wayfinding signage. Shannon agreed that signage will help direct them. It will be very visible as you enter the area. It's also about people who live here and not just visitors. Councilor Topaz suggested directing traffic from Old Portland Road to Plymouth Street. Chair Cary agreed that it's included in the Master Plan.

Commissioner Pugsley loves the concept. The Riverfront District is a historical asset. She hopes the project is seamless and developers follow guidelines to make it fit architecturally. Walsh added that they are considering that for First Street landscaping, furniture, and lighting.

Council President Morten said there has been a lot of talk to integrate Houlton with the downtown area. It's important to not forget Columbia Blvd. It's a beautiful drive.

Mayor Scholl is amazed at the rendering of the one-way on Strand Street between City Hall and the Courthouse. Chair Cary is concerned about the bollards during events. Associate Planner Dimsho explained that the sidewalk space will be pulled past the restrooms. Vice Chair Hubbard asked about the location of food carts during events. Discussion of putting them on the sidewalk area above the park or in the street if it is closed.

Councilor Topaz said the restroom is ugly. He suggested sinking it to the level of the park or move the entrance to the park side. Shannon said they are going to make it more aesthetically pleasing with a bench and plants. They could also add a large sign or mural to block the entrance. Councilor Topaz said there is power in the restrooms for the area.

Council President Morten asked if there was a crosswalk from City Hall to the courthouse. Keith said there is not a dedicated crossing. He pointed out the crossing area that could be utilized between the buildings. Commissioner Pugsley wondered if it will be obvious that drivers can travel through there. Mayor Scholl asked how wide it is. Keith said it is between 16-18 feet. Chair Cary asked if the bollards are there to protect pedestrians from vehicles. Shannon said that it helps with visual safety.

Commissioner Pugsley asked about interpretative signage for history. Shannon said they have identified a few locations in the streets area, two at First and Tualatin Street, one further down the block, and then several more as part of the Riverwalk project.

Council President Morten asked about artwork. Keith said there is potential at the turnaround. Councilor Topaz said artwork in the turnaround is a safety concern for pedestrians trying to view the art. Chair Cary pointed out that people drive very slowly at the turnaround in Seaside.

Councilor Chilton is concerned about losing public parking spaces around City Hall and the Courthouse. Keith pointed out parking areas that will be available. Dimsho added that the current parking does not meet standards. It's dangerous with people backing up and people walking between in drive aisles. They are making it safer and providing as much parking as possible. Commissioner Semling asked if they could add a second level for parking in the lot across from theater. Walsh agreed it would be a good location.

Commissioner Toschi said this is a consistent vision with the Riverwalk plan. It's important to get started and keep it moving. Councilor Topaz's concerns about moving traffic and large trucks is important to address. People come here for events. There is also a lot of room for people to live down here.

Councilor Topaz said getting people in and out of town must be addressed. A lot of people come down Columbia Blvd. They somehow need to close Gable Road to Highway 30. Columbia Blvd. needs to be improved to tie together the Houlton area with downtown. Mayor Scholl said that was done with the Connector Plan. They are addressing one problem at a time. This helps enhance the whole city. This development feeds the Urban Renewal. All the taxing agencies were on board with the Urban Renewal.

Mayor Scholl talked about the public land space available and the importance of access to the water. Dimsho elaborated on the urban trail on the bluff. It provides additional access to the Riverfront.

Council President Morten talked about when Boise Veneer was selling their property 14 years ago. All the "what ifs" came to fruition. He feels good about serving on the Council. Mayor Scholl thanked Council President Morten for his service over the years. Council President Morten said the room is full of brilliant minds.

Mayor Scholl announced that there will be a Boards and Commissions Appreciation Reception on April 28 at the Community Center.

Walsh reported that they actively began this project in 2014. Many of those in attendance were part of the process. It's amazing to see the similarities from then to now. The project value with public access, reserving the cultural heritage, desire for sustainable development, and private investment of the property has always been there. The project is planning to bid later this year.

ADJOURN – 6:46 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Lisa Scholl, Deputy City Recorder.

ATTEST:

/s/ Kathy Payne
Kathy Payne, City Recorder

/s/ Rick Scholl
Rick Scholl, Mayor

/s/ Dan Cary
Dan Cary, Planning Commission Chair