



City of Oregon City

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Meeting Minutes - Draft Planning Commission

Monday, September 15, 2014

6:00 PM

Commission Chambers

REVISED

1. Call to Order

Chair Kidwell called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

Present: 7 - Paul Espe, Zachary Henkin, Damon Mabee, Denyse McGriff, Charles Kidwell, Tom Geil and Robert Mahoney

Staffers: 2 - Tony Konkol and Christina Robertson-Gardiner

2. Public Hearing

[PC 14-109](#)

Willamette Falls Legacy Project
Master Plan: CP 14-02, Zone Change and Text Amendment: ZC 14-03,
Comprehensive Plan Map Amendment and amendments to ancillary
documents of the Comprehensive Plan: PZ 14-01, and creation of a
Multi-modal Mixed Use Area (MMA)

Chair Kidwell opened the public hearing and read the hearing statement. He asked if the Commission had any conflicts of interest, ex parte contacts, bias, or statements to declare including a visit to the site since the last hearing.

Chair Kidwell had a brief conversation with a co-worker in his architectural office who worked at Metro and had some involvement in the historic building inventory at the Blue Heron site. His co-worker expressed excitement for the project to move forward because there was a lot of potential for this very historic place. Chair Kidwell had agreed with his sentiments. His boss, who was nearby, joined in the conversation and expressed similar opinions about the unique nature of the site. There was no discussion regarding the process beyond that.

Carlotta Collette, Metro Councilor, said the City had done an incredible job of managing the vision plan that developed into this Framework Plan and zoning change. She was speaking on behalf of the Metro Council that this was the most exciting thing to come along to the region and State in a very long time. She thought staff had done a good job in the Comprehensive Plan changes and mixed use multi-modal zoning because of the complexity of the site. It would allow for protections as well as flexibility for developers. Metro was honored to be a partner in the project and she hoped it would move forward. Metro was negotiating an easement for a substantial portion of the property that would be public access.

Catherine Comer, Business and Economic Development Manager for Clackamas County, had served on the project management team for this project. The County had been focusing on the economic redevelopment of the site. Clackamas County thought this was a good plan and gave opportunities for private investment. They supported the River Walk as a catalyst for private investment and were working to

seek additional funds for the site. The County supported this plan. Many people in and out of the State were excited for this project to move forward.

Michael Williams, Business Development Officer for Business Oregon and representative for the Governor's Regional Solutions Team, said this was the result of a broad public engagement process that was synthesized very well. The plan would help alleviate the many obstacles to development of the site, and this development had tremendous upside to the region and State. The State made a commitment to invest up to five million dollars into securing public access to the site. Passing this master plan and zoning would help the process along and present a vision to the market. There was job potential on the site that could coincide with the site's history, recreation, and commercial benefits.

James Nicita, resident of Oregon City, entered a booklet of information he had put together regarding the mill site into the record as Exhibit A. He discussed the historic preservation aspect of the site. Some of the structures on the site merited preservation. The plan called for five sites to be preserved, and he thought all of the buildings that were called out in the 2012 document by the State Historic Preservation Office except the water filtration plant merited some kind of protection under the Framework Master Plan. He thought the booklet he provided could supplement the inventory information already assembled. He thought the Mill D warehouse first unit on 4th and Water Street and the woolen mills polary building should be First Tier status and the rest merited at least a Second Tier status. He called out Goal 5 State Planning Rule and OAR 660-023-0200 which applied to this proceeding.

Elaine Dorset, resident of Milwaukie, was representing the Board of Directors of the Oregon Archeological Society. They appreciated the efforts of historic interpretation on the site. This was a highly significant site, however review of the management plan showed it primarily dealt with the built environment. They were advocating for careful assessment and circumspect actions towards the likely presence of archeological resources that were eligible for the national register. It was unknown what soils and sediments were at the site, however it was highly possible that prehistoric and mid-nineteenth century artifacts and features were contained below the surface. Historic photos indicated fill was brought in as early as 1865 which also might contain artifacts and features. They supported the condition for archeological monitoring if any archeological deposits were suspected to be present. They strongly suggested an archeological testing project be conducted on the overall site before any ground disturbance, demolition, or development. They also suggested the possibility that the archeological testing project could be an opportunity for public outreach and education and could be partially funded through educational preservation grants. They would be pleased to assist with archeological projects on the site.

Janine Offit, resident of Oregon City, thanked everyone who had been involved in this effort. She was concerned that the plan would leave the door open to development in the flood plain. If they were truly serious about flood plain management and protection they would avoid building in the flood plain and recreate natural habitat there. She discussed how the Willamette would flood again and how the climate was changing and bringing intense weather with those changes. She gave examples of record flooding over the past two years and destruction of developments in the flood plain. She thought they should respect the power of nature and not put lives and property at risk by keeping development out of the flood plain.

Jonathan Stone, Executive Director of Main Street Oregon City and resident of Oregon City, said downtown was thrilled with the project and the degree of public

involvement. They recently completed a branding project where they identified a small town feel was the key differentiator of Oregon City and they saw the mill site as symbiotic with the rest of downtown. He wanted to make sure downtown and the mill site worked together. The recent letter from Main Street was in support of the mill bringing much needed development space to downtown and would address the issues of housing and contiguous office space. The mill site was incredibly important to tourism development in Oregon City. Downtown was just getting on its feet from the bridge closure and reconfiguration of Main Street and downtown businesses needed to succeed in spite of future development of this site. Anything the Planning Commission and City Commission could do to mitigate the interim and long term impacts of the site development would help. They looked forward to being downtown's liaison to the project.

Peggy Siegler, Oregon Field Officer for the National Trust for Historic Preservation, thanked everyone for recognizing the historic significance of the site. They concurred with Commissioner McGriff's recommendation for an intensive level survey of the site as well as archeological assessment and monitoring. They urged national register listing of all eligible properties and authentic restoration and interpretation to the Secretary of Interior's standards. This was an important site and they appreciated the Commission was working in the right direction.

Christina Robertson-Gardiner, Planner, discussed the three main issues that had been brought up by the public. They were historic resources, parking, and stepping down development towards the river.

Matt Brown, consultant for the project, gave a developer prospective for the project approach. The positives of the project were the assets on the site, the ongoing improvements in the downtown area, and strong political commitment on all levels. He then discussed the challenges to the site and how the Framework Plan helped overcome those challenges. He explained the current market conditions for development and strategies for closing the gap. He then discussed pedestrian access to the site. Regarding historic resources, it was important to create a sense of place where the historic fabric and character of the site was incorporated. The historic resources would be an important part of that. There were many structures with no immediate obvious use and they needed to allow the developer some flexibility in determining what kinds of buildings needed to be saved and if they were very important resources they would have more stringent standards associated with them. Regarding building heights, they had recommended an 80 foot height limit which would allow them to accommodate five over one development. The approach was to allow 80 feet anywhere on the site, but there were also design guidelines and development standards for these buildings. Regarding traffic and parking, parking would be needed to serve the development and to serve visitors. Development parking was expensive, so developers would try to do the least amount of parking that still met what the market said they needed to provide. For visitor parking, there was a plan being developed for the River Walk that included planning for the number of visitors to the site and how to accommodate for visitor parking. Traffic was addressed in the Framework Plan and the needed improvements had been identified with ODOT. Adopting the Framework Plan did not solve every issue, but removed a number of barriers.

George Kramer, consultant for the project, discussed how the decision had been made for identifying the buildings that were of historic significance. He explained the evaluations that had been done on the site including an evaluation of each building individually for reuse potential. A six point review process was developed to look at the historical character, reuse, and rehabilitation of each building and all the buildings collectively. Even if it was historic, if it had no capacity to be reused, it would be

dropped down in score. After the evaluation, four structures were found to be of historical significance that had potential rehabilitation opportunity and were economically viable structural opportunities. The fifth was the foundations for the woolen mill. They did not think that was all that should be kept. They expected that many of the non-identified buildings around those five structures would be retained. He agreed they should do an intensive survey and look at archeological testing. He was hesitant to modify what needed to be saved as a baseline. By establishing this minimum historic preservation plan of the buildings they had to keep, it provided a level of knowability and tools to move forward that he fully expected to result in the saving of more structures. Regarding Mill C and the digester, they were very historic elements, however they were not good for reuse potential as they were enclosures of a machine. He hoped someone would come up with a way to reuse them.

There was discussion regarding the options for developers and redeveloping these buildings while still focusing on historic and environmental preservation. There was further discussion regarding pedestrian connections to the site, whether or not to include more buildings to be preserved, and other necessary investments on the site.

Ms. Robertson-Gardiner added the written public comments received that day and an amendment to the Willamette Falls Downtown District which specifically identified food and beverage production as part of light industrial as Exhibit B.

The Commission consensus was to allow for more public testimony.

Mr. Nicita thought there was a simple compromise. He thought all of the national register eligible buildings should be delineated on the map in purple. It would still allow flexibility and emphasize the community value of the buildings.

Jesse Buss, resident of Oregon City, asked that the record be left open so more comments could be submitted. Commissioner Mabee confirmed the record would be open until next week's hearing.

Ms. Dorset said statements had been made that not much more than industrial deposits were on the site and possibly not much in the way of sediment. Archeology was a science and she would like to see the data that supported that opinion. She thought it was just an opinion and without testing they did not know. That was why she recommended an archeological testing project on the site before development. She explained how the testing would be conducted and the possible outcomes depending on how significant the deposits were. She would be willing to work with the City to provide guidelines for areas that were being demolished or excavated to make sure no artifacts were destroyed.

Commissioner Mabee asked questions about the staff report. He expressed concern that there were no street and sidewalk standards for 3rd, 4th, and Water streets. He also asked if they could rename the streets. Mr. Konkol clarified this was a guiding document and applications would have to come back to the Commission for review.

Commissioner McGriff wanted to see the historic names of the streets be maintained.

Commissioner McGriff thought for conditional uses in the new District to delete a, b, and c and separate the uses of live/work and work/live.

There was discussion regarding the conditions of approval. The Commission agreed to the historical significance of the site and to view demolition with great caution and before any buildings were taken down they needed to know it was the right decision.

The hearing was continued to September 22, 2014.

3. Adjournment

Chair Kidwell adjourned the meeting at 8:45 PM.