

MINUTES
Warrenton Urban Renewal Agency
Warrenton Urban Renewal Advisory Committee
Joint Work Session
April 12, 2023
Warrenton City Hall - Commission Chambers
225 S. Main
Warrenton, OR 97146

Vice Chair Baldwin convened the Urban Renewal Agency joint work session at 4:02 p.m.

Commissioners Present: Chair Henry Balensifer (arrived at 4:11), Mark Baldwin, Tom Dyer, Paul Mitchell, and Gerald Poe

Warrenton Urban Renewal Advisory Committee Members Present: Karin Hopper, AmyLeigh Sutton, Tess Chedsey, Christie Coulombe, and Dennis Faletti

Excused: Cynthia O'Reilly

Staff Present: Executive Director Esther Moberg, Finance Director April Clark, and Secretary Dawne Shaw

Others Present: URA Project Consultant Mark Kujala

Executive Director Esther Moberg gave a summary of the Urban Renewal District's completed projects and improvements. She noted the agenda/discussion items for the work session. Brief discussion followed on the old Skipanon Marine & RV building. She noted the Open House that is taking place on May 4th. Ms. Moberg discussed the building repairs estimate, and noted the businesses that are interested in the building. Commissioner Mitchell noted the DEQ requirements that would come into play for an auto repair business. Committee Member Karin Hopper noted in their earlier work session, the committee talked about tying in the community aspect, and focusing on how the building or business can make money, but also facilitate the community.

Chair Balensifer continued, noting the urban renewal plan; he stated it is really up to the agency, with the committee's advice on what is the future of that building. He noted he would prefer to say that everything is on the table at this last rush. The question just becomes can we spend the money in the time frame we have, and as long as fits within the plan and is allowable usage of urban renewal funds and is that where we want to spend the money. Where are the strategic investments, how much will it cost, and can it be done in the timeframe we have left. Brief discussion continued. Chair Balensifer discussed the urban renewal plan and the plan amendment. He asked what the Advisory Committee would like to see in the downtown corridor area. He noted his thoughts on the possibility of buying and flipping buildings, or investments to improve downtown. Commissioner Poe asked if underground power is still on the table; it was noted the cost to underground the power would take the remainder of the funds for just three blocks. Discussion continued. Committee Member Dennis Faletti stated the committee discussed the fact that there is not much to work with in the downtown corridor, with the exception of private homes and the

Fenton building. He noted he would like to see the downtown improved, but it is frustrating. Discussion continued on the condition of the Fenton building. Chair Balensifer noted his thoughts on buildings and nuisance properties that could be purchased or obtained and then renovated for businesses; discussion continued.

Committee Member Christie Coulombe asked how we would purchase the properties while maintaining the good will of the property owners. Chair Balensifer responded, noting Urban Renewal is not subject to the same Charter restrictions as the City of Warrenton is, because it is a separate legal entity. He stated options include condemnation of nuisance properties or make an offer to purchase - which would be the best option. Discussion continued. It was unanimous to not move forward with undergrounding power and light poles.

Commissioner Baldwin stated we need to invest the necessary funds to fix the Skipanon RV building; there was consensus. Discussion followed on the Fenton building.

Committee Member AmyLeigh Sutton asked about the Peterson lot; Chair Balensifer noted half has been identified for parking and there has been a proposal from Spruce Up Warrenton to put a gazebo on the other half. He does not see us selling that property. Ms. Moberg noted the current IGA between the City and the Urban Renewal Agency. Commissioner Baldwin noted the charter amendment put a damper on the IGA; Ms. Moberg noted there needs to be an updated IGA. After further discussion, consensus was to have a public parking lot and a green space on the Peterson property. Ms. Sutton suggested instead of just a flat parking lot, you could build above ground parking with retail on the bottom. She noted the committee discussed not necessarily looking at Main street but shifting the focus a block off of the main street, building something that makes the area more desirable for all of the other spaces want to clean up theirs. She noted there could also be community space or a plaza; a good resource instead of just a flat parking lot. Ms. Hopper noted how the focus is on Main street, yet it is not owned by the city to begin with. Why are we focusing everything for that to be our main street when we don't have the facilities, don't have the businesses, and don't have the foot traffic; why not refocus it to another area, whether it the Skipanon RV building and make that more business-like and have a place people can go. She noted the thing that keeps coming up is the focus on community and she is not seeing that being the focus. A barbeque place or a brewery would bring the community in. Ms. Hopper continued discussing the community aspect and the need to make people want to come to downtown Warrenton. She emphasized the need to create the reason they want to come and reiterated the possibility of moving the focus to another area, and instead of S. Main. Discussion continued.

Commissioner Baldwin discussed the current Public Works property and the possibilities there if urban renewal paid for them to move to another location. It was noted that urban renewal money has to be spent within the district. Chair Balensifer discussed improving Quincy Robinson park and making it the 'community avenue' that the committee suggested; improve all the entryways to the park and give a sense of place. Commissioner Mitchell stated that when Astoria was looking to revitalize, they used urban renewal funds to revitalize the Liberty Theatre. That changed the whole aspect of downtown and other businesses were rebuilt from there. All that came because they found a hub that would drive people in. He supports the idea of creating an area that revitalizes who we are as a city and makes people want to drive and come, and not just pass through. Discussion continued. The Advisory Committee noted their focus is to make people come and shop, stay and enjoy. Ms. Hopper noted the objective is to get people to want to come; there is no reason to walk around.

Chair Balensifer noted the vision plan that is in place and stated we do not necessarily have to time to

modify it. He suggested we look at the current vision plan and see how we convert that into projects that we can complete by 2027-2028. He suggested undergrounding the power on the gateways to the park.

Ms. Coulombe stated her thoughts, noting there is already a little momentum on Main, and a few properties have been identified that could really move the needle, namely the Fenton building. She emphasized the need to bring in a coffee shop to the downtown area. Discussion continued on the old gas station and the nuisance aspect. Chair Balensifer noted there are two main things that seem to be the focus – the development of the Peterson property beyond just a parking lot and creating that sense of place, and then also either purchase or private/public partnerships to renovate key buildings so they are usable. He asked if that is where the focus is; there was consensus. Discussion continued on the Fenton building. Chair Balensifer suggested to finish the sidewalks into Quincy Robinson park, that could tie into the 4th street project; and to pave the SW Main Court side of the Peterson property. Further discussion followed on sidewalks in downtown. Commissioner Baldwin made a suggestion on the Public Works lot; discussion followed. Chair Balensifer summarized and asked the agency and committee members if they agree on the path of improving corridors to the park, with beautification that could include lights, undergrounding power, and pedestrian improvements; and getting buildings ready for commercial shops.

Ms. Hopper refocused on the time constraints and need to get moving. She also noted the need to focus on areas other than Main street. Chair Balensifer came back to prioritization – getting buildings to turn around and to provide a sense of place – primarily the park; and asked which is the priority of the committee. Discussion continued; Chair Balensifer noted the committee members had agreed to improve strategic buildings on Main street – namely the Fenton building and the old gas station, and the Skipanon RV building; then also creating a sense of place, perhaps the park or the Peterson lot. He noted he is looking for a consensus; Ms. Hopper noted concerns on getting the building owners to agree to move forward and accomplishing the goal in the allotted timeframe and suggested focusing on the Skipanon building and noted the need for a coffee shop. Discussion continued on wetlands/flood plains.

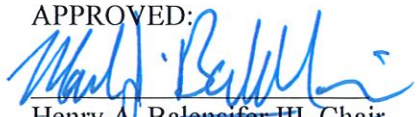
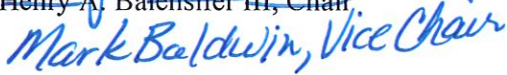
Ms. Moberg stated she could be tasked with identifying specific buildings and bringing them forward to the agency. She summarized the goals – 23/24, updating the Skipanon RV building so it can be turned into a lease right away; 24/25, working on buildings to move forward on, with either a purchase or lease agreement to update and make ready for businesses; 25/27, put together a project with a scope of work regarding the corridors to the park, with lighting and sidewalks. She noted that will most likely take up the majority of the remaining funds, along with continued façade grants. She noted it may be necessary to pivot within the last two years if the building owners are not willing. Ms. Moberg also noted the Peterson parking lot would be in 23/24. Mr. Faletti agreed with Ms. Moberg's list; she noted the figures for each project. Commissioner Baldwin noted his thoughts on the project list and the estimated costing for the building improvements and projects. Brief discussion continued on improvements at the park area near the kayak launch. Chair Balensifer asked if the advisory committee would be open to meet more than quarterly; consensus was yes, they can meet as needed.

There being no further business Chair Balensifer adjourned the URA meeting at 5:22 p.m.

ATTEST:


Dawne Shaw, Secretary

APPROVED:


Henry A. Balensifer III, Chair

Mark Baldwin, Vice Chair

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