

MINUTES

FAIRGROUNDS REVITALIZATION TASK FORCE

MAY 7, 2009

CONVENED: 6:12 p.m.

Task Force Members Present:

Tom Brian, Washington County Board of Commissioners Chair

Jerry Willey, City of Hillsboro Mayor

Matt Pihl, Fair Board Chair

Lyle Spiesschaert, President of Fair Boosters

Andy Duyck, Washington County Commissioner and Current Vice Chair

Delna Jones, Representative for southwestern Washington County

John Leeper, Representative for northeastern Washington County

Jim Darr, Representative for City of Hillsboro residents

Jack Franklin, Representative for eastern Washington County

Rob Massar, Assistant County Administrator for Washington County, facilitated this meeting and Rod Rice, Washington County Senior Deputy County Administrator, assisted with the PowerPoint presentation.

The Task Force consulting team and staff attended the meeting, along with approximately 25 people from the public. Jill Smith, reporter for the Oregonian, was also present.

1. WELCOME AND MEETING OBJECTIVES

Task Force introductions were conducted.

2. REVIEW MASTER PLAN AND ELECTION RESULTS

- Co-Chair Tom Brian said that the Master Plan is still the guideline for the Task Force and its goal.
- Co-Chair Brian commented that the election results were not what the Task Force had hoped for as the bond measure failed with a resounding “no” vote. He observed that the results were very similar across the county.

3. DISCUSSION OF MASTER PLAN ELEMENTS

Grant Street Extension

- Co-Chair Willey reported that the proposed extension passes through 1) an FAA flight path and 2) some Port of Portland property and will require both Port property and FAA approval. He thinks the project is still doable but more planning is needed. Co-Chair Willey told the Task Force that the City of Hillsboro has money set aside for this project.
- Rob Massar narrated a PowerPoint presentation, which included a map of the fairgrounds, a list of funding for Phase One, and Phase One project costs.
- Co-Chair Brian reported that the Renaissance Fair has made a commitment to Puyallup, Washington and no longer plans to locate on the Washington County fairgrounds.
- Co-Chair Brian stated that the National Guard is still interested in siting a new armory on the fairgrounds property. He said that two options being considered are to locate the armory either to the east or west of the light rail station.
- Co-Chair Brian identified the ball fields as Washington County property.
- Co-Chair Willey stated that the ball fields provide much needed access for activity to citizens. He explained that the problem is that because of the wear and tear, the city would have to invest significant dollars to bring them up to speed. Co-Chair Willey added that anywhere near market value for the land would be too high of a price tag for the city to rent the ball fields; then that will probably not work due to budgetary reasons.
- A representative from Hillsboro Park & Recreation Department affirmed from the audience that the ball fields definitely need renovation.
- Delna Jones wanted to know if the armory would need the entire field and was told that this is uncertain; the National Guard could select a parcel as small as 6 acres or as large as 10 acres. The ball fields occupy 20 acres.
- John Leeper was informed that the Guard could locate and there could still be 10 acres of ball fields.
- Co-Chair Brian said that the good news is that the Grant Street Extension may be able to be built without a bond. He remarked that we are continuing to explore funding options for the next steps but pointed out that these are not eligible for stimulus money. Co-Chair Brian stated that we may have to do something to generate funds, such as a long-term lease or development of the ball fields. He stated that the Board of Commissioners is aware of the public's desire not to sell off the fairgrounds property or to lease it for non-community activities.
- Delna Jones learned from Co-Chair Brian that TIF funds are sequestered for the Grant Street Extension project.
- Co-Chair Willey clarified that the money for Grant Street is earmarked and available but said it depends if it looks like the next steps will be taken. He noted that there are other places this money could be used.
- Co-Chair Brian responded to a question from Delna Jones by stating that the National Guard typically budgets infrastructure needs.

- Ellen Conley, staff for City of Hillsboro, clarified that the Grant Street Extension is on the City of Hillsboro's Transportation Plan. She said that, at a minimum, the city would need to get FAA approval and then could start working on right-of-way and alignment issues. Ms. Conley stated that the question is when this will be done.
- John Leeper asked about the relocation of the ball fields. He was informed that the land to the west of light rail is likely more valuable and this factor could affect if the National Guard can move there.
- Jim Willeford, Oregon Military Department, reported that the government won't pay for location or acquisition costs associated with acquiring property; these must be paid by the State. He said that the sooner the National Guard can site the facility and acquire property, the project can move up the priority list.
- Delna Jones regarded the National Guard Armory as a wonderful benefit for the public, with its community activities.
- Co-Chair Brian has found it great working with the National Guard. He brought up the possibility of leasing property to the Guard but Jim Willeford explained that the Guard greatly prefers to purchase property and, failing that, would have to have at least a 25-year interest in a property. He added that the Guard facility must be used as a community-based space.
- Jack Franklin said that if a lease with the National Guard is possible, then perhaps the lease could cover general obligation bonds to be used for the buildings we want to build. He thought a lease might be easier for the State to stomach and that there may be enough revenue to fund a bond. Mr. Franklin wanted to explore this further.
- Delna Jones felt that approach would create a problem.
- John Leeper stated that Hillsboro might be willing to give up the ball fields for use by the National Guard and other uses the county might come up with.
- Co-Chair Brian reviewed that Washington County owns the land but said it is a matter of what is practical for the City of Hillsboro to do relative to the ball fields.
- Co-Chair Willey stated that the City of Hillsboro's responsibility as to the ball fields is to make sure the city has as adequate facilities as it can afford. He intended for the city to look at ways to replace these ball fields in some fashion in the future. Co-Chair Willey agreed that the city and county must develop the fairgrounds.
- Deanna Palm asked about the possible sale of the fairgrounds property and was informed by Co-Chair Brian that it is still the preference not to sell but said that we will always examine opportunities.
- Andy Duyck remarked that the fairgrounds are dear to the community and should not be easily parted with. He said that it does depend on what we would get in return and that that would need to be looked at on a case by case basis.
- John Leeper wondered about the status of the Plaza and was informed by Co-Chair Brian that it is still in the Master Plan and still valued.
- Co-Chair Willey could not speak to the Plaza status and said he needs more information.

- Delna Jones asked if this was part of the bond that the City of Hillsboro was planning to pass and was told that these are not bond proceeds.
- Jack Franklin observed that Intel has tax advantages in Washington County. He wondered if the Board could distribute these funds (i.e. the amount that Intel pays in lieu of taxes) as one arm of a funding advantage. Co-Chair Brian did not think this would work and explained how the SIP program operates. Andy Duyck divulged that the amount of funds that the Board has authority over only amounts to about \$20,000. He added that this is the last year of a six-year deal.
- Lyle Spiesschaert preferred to address what exists on the fairgrounds now. He explained that the Fair Board's big job is to maintain the buildings. Mr. Spiesschaert stated that the Cloverleaf Building is used a lot by the public and wondered if it is on the Master Plan.
- Rod Rice provided the information that the Cloverleaf Building is scheduled for a tear-down and a rebuild. Rob Massar clarified that this will occur during Phase 3.
- Steve Mileham, Principal, LRS Architects, displayed architectural drawings on easels. He, too, verified that the Cloverleaf Building is not slated to be kept and will go down during Phase 3.
- Co-Chair Brian summarized that without a bond, the Cloverleaf Building stays for a while; without funds for Phase I, the building should be reviewed for improvements.

4. FAIRGROUND BUILDING INFORMATIONAL ITEM

- Co-Chair Brian announced that Andy Duyck is serving as liaison to the Fair Board and asked him for a report.
- Andy Duyck spoke of how the Fair Board, the Board of Commissioners and others had hoped the bond measure would pass but it did not. He noted that time wears buildings down.
- Andy Duyck reviewed that the Fair Board commissioned an architectural study of the condition of the existing buildings on the fairgrounds. He reported that there are seismic issues with all of the buildings.
- Andy Duyck said that when the results of the study came to the Fair Board, some of the buildings were safety hazards. He recalled that the Fair Board recommended that some of the structures be removed before the fair and some later. Commissioner Duyck noted that these were not worth putting money into.
- Andy Duyck told the audience that on Tuesday, May 5, 2009, the Board of Commissioners decided to accept the Fair Board's recommendation for removal of buildings, except for the Meeting Room. (The Board of Commissioners is awaiting further information about this structure and will take this up on May 19, 2009.) He said that the Boosters can possibly work on this particular structure to bring it up to a reasonable standard.

- Andy Duyck said that there has been no recommendation on a lot of the other structures yet. He indicated that the Fair Board budget has significant dollars in its next cycle to perform a lot of repairs. Commissioner Duyck emphasized that it is important to take care of significant life and safety issues.

5. PUBLIC COMMENT

- Don McCoun stated that, while marvelous, the Master Plan probably won't happen because the voters did not support it. Therefore, he believed that we will have to accomplish it ourselves.
- Mr. McCoun proposed having a Main Exhibit Hall of 55,000 or 65,000 square feet, which need not cost more than \$5 million. He felt that the facility could be rented 52 weeks of the year and would be very profitable. Mr. McCoun favored downsizing the Master Plan in this manner.
- John Leeper liked Mr. McCoun's idea but urged everyone to remember that the new building would be there for a long time. He stated that it should be constructed such that it could be expanded. Mr. McCoun agreed with that idea.
- Jim (last name not captured) said that the bond should not be entitled "Washington County Fairgrounds" because people think of the fair—an event once a year—rather than the year-round possibilities.
- Jim stated that Oregon has the best tax situation relative to renewable energy and suggested that we could get an entire new solar roof for free. He explained that an investor puts up the funds for the roof in return for the solar electricity, which he then sells to a utility company. Jim added that the larger the roof, the better the chance of succeeding.
- Commissioner Andy Duyck acknowledged that solar is a changing industry and that it presents opportunities. However, he pointed out that we still have to get the rest of the building up, aside from the roof. Commissioner Duyck felt that it would be a mistake to enter such a contract for 20-25 years and reminded everyone that you have to buy back the power during that time.
- An unidentified lady spoke from the audience and identified herself as a planner with the Oregon Military Department. She suggested that the County could likely get compensation from either Metro or Tri-Met relative to the Transit Oriented District.
- Co-Chair Brian stated that an arrangement with MAX is a long shot but agreed that we should look at Transit Oriented Development funds. In fact, he said, we should look at everything and constantly monitor all possibilities.

6. TASK FORCE DISCUSSION OF NEXT STEPS

National Guard Armory

- Co-Chair Brian polled the Task Force members regarding next steps for the National Guard Armory.
- Jack Franklin did not care which side of light rail the National Guard Armory is located on as long as the Guard can be maintained on these grounds.

- Co-Chair Brian agreed that the National Guard Armory is a great community asset. He said that if either location is okay, then whatever works out best for all parties is the way to proceed.
- Delna Jones concurred that we should do what is best for everyone.

Grant Street Extension

- Co-Chair Brian asked if the Task Force is comfortable with working with the City of Hillsboro to proceed with the Grant Street Extension.
- Jim Darr opposed the Grant Street Extension going through the fairgrounds and splitting this property.
- Delna Jones said that the Grant Street Extension may not be her preference but pointed out that it is on the City of Hillsboro's Transportation Plan. She stated that the Grant Street Extension has been debated so much that the topic is beyond debating.
- Lyle Spiesschaert said that he shares the sentiments expressed by Jim Darr but has gone along with the majority in supporting the Grant Street Extension. He commented that if the Grant Street Extension is the one element that gets the National Guard facility completed, then he is okay with it. Mr. Spiesschaert just did not like the fairgrounds being split.
- Co-Chair Brian noted that we will need more than only the current 34th Street to get in and out of this area if we build an Exhibit Hall, National Guard facility, etc.
- Lyle Spiesschaert recognized that the fairgrounds will eventually be a busy area and agreed that we do need more ways to get in and out of the area.
- Commissioner Duyck summarized that we are all disappointed that the bond did not pass. He regarded the Grant Street Extension as a step in the right direction.

Closing Remarks

- Co-Chair Brian thanked the National Guard personnel for being here this evening and thanked his new Co-Chair, Mayor Jerry Willey. In addition, he expressed gratitude to Matt Pihl, Chair of the Fair Board, and Lyle Spiesschaert, President of the Fair Boosters.
- Co-Chair Brian characterized the Task Force as *on-call* in the future. He said that the Task Force will convene if some new development calls for a meeting. Co-Chair Brian expressed appreciation for the good work done on the Master Plan.
- Jack Franklin stated that every major city in the county is on board with the Master Plan. He said we must do all we can to keep this plan alive. Mr. Franklin urged the Task Force to keep meeting and to keep enthused about the Master Plan and to not let it die.
- John Leeper seconded Mr. Franklin's comments. He did not want to see the Master Plan die on the vine. Mr. Leeper supported doing variations on the Master Plan.
- Co-Chair Brian concluded that the Task Force is committed to the Master Plan, the pursuit of the National Guard Armory, and the pursuit of the Grant Street Extension. He suggested that we pursue downsizing the Exhibit Hall and designing it for future expansion.

- Co-Chair Brian said that if a serious conversation regarding downsizing the Exhibit Hall arises, then the Fairgrounds Revitalization Task Force will be contacted by email. He said that in the future, the Task Force can either meet or keep in touch via email.
- John Leeper believed that the Task Force should look at any appropriate redevelopment of all areas except for the area used by the Armory south of Grant.
- Co-Chair Brian intended to pursue all opportunities. He promised to advise the Task Force of significant movement on any relevant topic.

ADJOURN: 8:00 p.m.