

MINUTES
CITY OF STEVENSON COUNCIL /SKAMANIA COUNTY COMMISSIONERS JOINT MEETING
October 08, 2019
5:30 PM, Courthouse Annex

1. CALL TO ORDER: Present: Skamania County Commissioners Richard Mahar and Bob Hamlin. Commissioner Tom Lannen participated via telephone. Stevenson City Administrator Leana Kinley, Stevenson Mayor Scott Anderson, Stevenson City Councilmembers Matthew Knudsen and Paul Hendricks, Casey Roeder, Skamania County Public Works Director Tim Elsea, Skamania County Prosecuting Attorney Adam Kick, Skamania County Clerk of the Board Debbie Slack. There was no quorum of councilmembers present.

2. COURTHOUSE PARK PLAZA RENOVATION PROJECT:

The discussion led off with Marie Perez with the Stevenson Downtown Association (SDA) thanking everyone for coming. She appreciated everyone's time and asked for everyone to be proactive. She explained her role as being a resource for fundraising and coordinating information between agencies. She agreed there would be no decisions made tonight, but future action items would be determined.

She explained the site is county land and the county needs control in its development. Items such as a site survey, cultural review, geo-technical, stormwater and sewer needs and others get incorporated into the overall site engineering. The engineering is needed to get site-specific accurate costs which in turn can help determine grant requirements.

Commissioner Hamlin asked how much money has been raised for the project. Marie responded that she believed 23% of the project costs were in hand, based on preliminary cost analysis. As much of the building material is columnar basalt, a cost engineering analysis could determine ways to save money.

Marie Perez stated she sees the project as an opportunity for the City of Stevenson and the County to improve livability in the city and build long term value in the county property. She noted the SDA was reimbursing the county for project costs associated with use of its associate engineering staff.

City Councilmember Matthew Knudsen asked how the reimbursed costs were paid for. Maria Perez stated the SDA used LTAC (Lodging Tax Advisory Committee) funds. Knudsen questioned how the county could claim there was cost sharing when their costs were being reimbursed? He also asked questions regarding possible lease agreements, noting the property would still belong to the county. He noted several times he wanted to make sure the terminology was clear.

Skamania County Public Works Director Tim Elsea provided information regarding restrictions on the county road funds. Reimbursement is required for staff time as the county road department cannot spend funds on projects outside that scope.

Following this information, the group held a substantial discussion on the structure of the project. Much of the discussion centered on clarifying how the city and county would work together. Mayor Anderson stated that he believed the arrangement had always been that in exchange for the county providing the land the city would then provide maintenance and operations. The SDA would work with the city regarding funds for construction, maintenance, insurance, etc. There was consensus from the group regarding that understanding.

Questions arose about the future of the project-if in 20/30 years the project was not seen as viable how would the shared project be terminated? Other questions arose as to who would be responsible for installing and paying for water, sewer and storm water and power? Who would select the contractor-would there be joint input? Adam Kick, Prosecuting Attorney for Skamania County suggested it seems unlikely that in the future the county would want to put a large building on the property, but it is hard to predict what will take place in 30 years. He noted parks tend to serve the local populace in the areas they are located.

He offered a number of scenarios that could be used for conveyance of the property. Long term leases, provisional gifts with reversion clauses, inter-local agreements, Memorandums of Understanding, etc. were presented as options. The agreement would be written to address responsibilities, funding terms, work distribution, timelines and other items. Commissioner Hamlin asked PA Kick if lease arrangements were binding. Kick replied it is based on whatever is written into the agreement.

Tim Elsea noted there would be expenses only associated with the project-no revenue would come to the county from sales taxes. Mayor Anderson stated there would be event fees generated from use of the site. Marie Perez shared information on a revenue projection that was based on traffic flow and the % of visitors stopping for meals or lodging. Those visits do result in sales taxes, lodging taxes and employment opportunities. She agreed the SDA was not a parks maintenance organization and the resources needed to carry out all phases of the project need to be in place to ensure adequate upkeep, with details spelled out in any agreement (lease, etc.) developed.

City Councilmember Paul Hendricks asked if the agreement could include a clause that provides the City of Stevenson first refusal if the county ever decided to sell the land. Councilmember Knudsen suggested a gift whereby the park would be held in perpetuity for the public good could be another avenue to consider.

Commissioner Hamlin offered an example of a similar project, in which the State of Washington gave Skamania County a former corrections camp, which in turn is now operated by the Kiwanis. The county still owns the land but the Kiwanis operate and maintain the site under an agreement with Skamania County.

PA Kick noted any agreement could contain language that any activities have to align with courthouse usage, e.g, loud music concerts could not be held while court is in session.

Commissioner Hamlin noted that parking is an issue, and the city is conducting a parking study to find solutions.

Casey Roeder asked for participants to define who would work out the agreement details. PA Kick asked what the timeline would be for the city and county to develop an agreement. Marie Perez stated having one in place by the end of December 2019 would be helpful. She shared there are funds available for initial work on the project, but they expire as of July 2021. She also noted that having agreements in place would be beneficial to the SDA as it plans to ask for state Recreation and Conservation Office funds, as well as private donations and grants.

PA Kick related his office would draw up a draft interlocal agreement. Mayor Anderson noted the details to be addressed are on the agenda from tonight. The agreement would then be presented to the city for follow up conversations. The SDA and the city also need to work out details. Kick asked participants to email him with ideas or suggestions regarding any details they would like to see addressed.

Commissioner Lannen asked about the development of an interlocal agreement regarding the SDA's use of county engineering manpower to address items on the agenda. PA Kick reported there was already an interlocal agreement in place for that purpose, and Marie Perez added there was a separate pot of money for that portion. PA Kick noted a right of first refusal may be complicated and a conditional gift may make more sense. Commissioner Lannen asked if a provision could be included that the property would revert to the county if city could not meet its obligations. Commissioner Hamlin asked that it be made clear the property is to be used as intended.

Commissioner Hamlin asked if the Russell Street project was to be included in the Park Plaza construction. City Administrator Kinley noted they are waiting on funds for the upper part of Russell Street, and having the Plaza details sorted and agreed on would help with the progression of the Russell Street project.

3. PROPOSED NEXT STEPS

It was determined that PA Kick would research items discussed and draw up a draft agreement to present to the City of Stevenson by November 15th, 2019. That would allow the City Council time to review, discuss, approve or amend the agreement at their November 21st Council meeting, with final approval to be made by December 19th, 2019.

A follow-up meeting was scheduled for January 14th, 2020, to be held at 5:30 p.m. at the Courthouse Annex.

4. ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Mahar closed the meeting at 6:43 p.m.

Casey Roeder thanked everyone for coming and staying within the timeline.

Approved _____; Approved with revisions _____

Name

Date

Minutes by Johanna Roe