

EWEB Riverfront Master Plan Community Advisory Team (CAT)

Wednesday, January 13, 2010, 5:30 – 8:00 p.m.

EWEB Board Room

Present: Dave Hauser, Tom Hoyt (via conference call), Mark Johnson, Pat Johnston, Desiree Moore, Dean Pape', Mary Unruh, Anita Van Asperdt (via conference call) and Gary Wildish, members; Bob Cassidy, EWEB Commissioner; Mark Oberle and Jeannine Parisi, EWEB staff; Greg Brokaw, Lorri Nelson and John Rowell, Rowell Brokaw Architects; Margot Long, WRT Consultants (via Skype); Julie Fischer, T'NT Consultants; Bart Johnson and Justin Simms (Innovative Landscapes Consulting); Aryana Ferguson (Madrona Consulting); Gabe Flock, Tom Larsen and Nan Laurence, City of Eugene; Vicki Maxon, Recorder; Steven Asbury, Charles Biggs, Drew Johnson, Kaarin Knudson, Kevin Matthews, Brent McClure, Mary Morrison, Tom Snyder and David Sonnichsen, public.

1. Welcome, Introductions and Agenda Review

Pat Johnston welcomed the group and reviewed the agenda.

2. Minutes Approval

The November 11, 2009 and December 9, 2009 minutes were approved, with Pat Johnston (due to absence from that meeting) and Dean Pape' (due to time constraints for review) abstaining.

3. Comments from the Audience and CAT Comments

Kevin Matthews said it was a privilege for him to attend the December 18 field trip to the Corvallis and Portland waterfront areas, with good conversation and sharing of perspectives. He noted that he measured the various sites and that the South Portland and Corvallis waterfronts were both 160' wide from the top of the bank. He added that what he heard from CAT members was that those widths were nice for creating a linear park along the river's edge, but that it was not a big enough piece of open space. He said it is his feeling that option #4 does not reflect a balance but an absolute minimum, and that it is not nearly enough to create open space and focus. He said that EWEB being just another linear park is not a good opportunity, and to keep all but 50' and to allow for riparian trees to grow back and achieve restoration would not be a balance. He closed by saying that the master plan needs to be flexible and this issue needs to be discussed.

David Sonnichsen, a member of the governmental relations subcommittee for Alton Baker Park, referred to the West Alton Baker Park Development Plan map of July 1997 and read a description from the map. He related a past study of the courthouse district and recreation area and noted that Nan Laurence was the liaison planner at that time. He said that a similar bridge from the EWEB site to Alton Baker Park was proposed at that time, but was withdrawn. He read another paragraph from a different document that recommended that no additional bridges be built across the river. He closed by saying that it is his feeling that the proposed bridge would be a "boutique bridge" and would intrude on the natural riparian corridor, and he asked the CAT to reassess the idea.

Mary Morrison also voiced concern about the proposed bridge to Alton Baker Park, but stated that her concern was more for the river. She said she rides her bike or walks the bike path every day because she doesn't own a car, and that the need for this bridge doesn't seem plausible. She said it is her feeling that if the EWEB site is to be a destination, a bridge would break up the destination and create an intersection, and not allow for people to come in to the area easily. She also voiced concern about the 150' setback, which she feels is not nearly enough. She closed by saying that she is very much in favor of design option #2 with flood water coming in to interact with land and soil.

Steven Asbury said he is a long-time Eugene resident, born and raised in Eugene, who moved away but then returned to the area to raise his family because it is such a great place to live. He has three young children and wants to take advantage of the open space here, and that was the big reason he returned to Eugene. He voiced concern about the sustainability of economics and that Eugene lacks an urban core. As a small business owner, he was hit hard by the economy, and he feels that open space and parks are important, but that economic sustainability is also important. He urged the CAT to consider the master plan a unique opportunity to create a new urban core for Eugene.

Brent McClure, a downtown business owner, thanked the CAT for being bold enough to make a decision, because a lack of decision-making has hurt downtown in the past, i.e., the downtown pit, etc. He thanked the CAT for their time and making progress vs. stalling on a decision. He added that the CAT has his 100% support and that he appreciates what they have done.

Dean Pape' thanked Kevin Matthews for his analysis and said it is helpful. He said that the setback at the Portland South Waterfront was 100' – 120'.

Dave Hauser said he was cleaning out his CAT files recently and realized that there have now been about 30 CAT meetings, not including site tours, field trips, etc. and that he also appreciates the CAT's commitment, along with the EWEB staff and consulting team commitments, and that he looks forward to reaching consensus on the design recommendations.

Dean Pape' asked if there has been any research done on the proposed bridge to Alton Baker Park. John Rowell replied that there has not. Mark Oberle noted that the bridge proposal came from the public charrettes that were conducted. Dean Pape' thanked David Sonnichsen for his comments.

4. Debrief December 18 Field Trip

Gary Wildish said it was very interesting how vibrant the Portland area is, not just on the waterfront but also the commercial/residential portion downtown. He said he thought what Corvallis has done is different than what the CAT has envisioned, but that it did speak to education and open space, and revitalized that portion of Corvallis. He said he feels ready to move forward with consensus based on the information that he gathered, and that he felt it was a great trip.

Mark Johnson said he liked the feel of the Corvallis site and that there was a good balance, except to be stuck with a road that runs right next to the river. He said he believes it is a nice people place with good seating areas and a good vision of the river, and is well done. He added that he liked the Portland features of the building around water and the stormwater treatment, and that he thought the parks and open space were interesting.

Mary Unruh said it was interesting to see the different ways that the concept of people place is handled. She noted that Corvallis incorporated education into the project with art embedded into concrete. She said she couldn't really get a sense of being close to the river and that it was unfortunate that where benches are located, it is like looking at a fence, and that didn't do much for her. She said she liked the feel of the shops in Portland and the way they were developed, but didn't like the housing right above the shops nor it being so close, and that it wasn't a place where she would want to live because the housing needs to be further back from where people congregate. She closed by saying that she hoped public art will be an integral part of the EWEB site and that people will want to come to experience what is here, which would enhance the project considerably.

Desiree Moore said she shares many of Mary's thoughts. She said the field trip was of great benefit from more than just an educational standpoint. She said if she had to pick a favorite, it would be the Corvallis site, and that it had similarity to Eugene in size. She thought they did a good job of blending the original architecture and some history along with some type of skateboard facility. She said she too felt the river was too far away and that she is curious about how successful the riverfront businesses are. She added that the Portland locations were a bit scary to her with some large glass units that might in some far off way represent commerce. She also thought the water features were nice but wonders how they could not see the down market coming and why they continued to build despite that.

Pat Johnston commented that she felt the south Portland waterfront felt privatized and that she is concerned about the narrow stretches and placing retail businesses on that. She said she thinks about McMenamin's North Bank in Eugene and how that stretch feels so privatized even though it's public, and how one doesn't feel welcome to stop unless one is going to a certain retail establishment. She said she wants to focus on establishing a place that is a destination, if you will, and that it is not so much about setbacks as it is about values around the space. She closed by saying that she would like to have a discussion about a bigger open space or have a destination be a part of that space.

Dave Hauser asked the CAT members and consultants to introduce themselves for the benefit of the audience.

Desiree Moore voiced concern about the budget for the ecological consultants who have been added to the design team and said she would like to have some discussion around that at a later meeting.

5. CAT Discussion of Emerging Framework: River Edge and Bike Path

John Rowell gave a Powerpoint presentation regarding the open space vision, the river edge, and the bike path. He began with a vision statement that featured green extensions from the river into downtown, and a variety of landscape types across an undulating open space plan. Lorri Nelson reviewed the water overlay zone land use regulations and summarized that there are exemptions for developed property; within regulated areas, bank realignment, vegetation improvements, bike paths, public access facilities and interpretive facilities are allowed subject to standard review.

Gabe Flock from the City of Eugene Planning Department also answered some clarifying questions regarding the application of the water overlay zone.

John Rowell continued the presentation with an open space conceptual plan from the design team that proposes 11 open space areas. He described each zone's function, showing illustrations, cross-section views, and examples of similar concepts:

- 5th Avenue Extension - green finger that gradually widens as it moves toward river with more structured plantings softening into a more native landscape at river
- Ferry Street Extension – wider than the 5th Avenue finger, enables view corridors and stormwater treatment facilities
- 8th Avenue extension – direct route to the river; a desirable green connection from downtown to site
- Hill - landmark element that can both tell story of site history and utility uses
- Riparian restoration – work with existing topography on site for riparian shelf demonstration project
- Native river landscaping – provides ecological continuity and helps manage invasives; opportunity to lay back upper slope and plant more meadow environment and increase views/access to river
- Riparian Shelf Demonstration – Manipulate the riprap below the ordinary high water mark in a short section and allow periodic flooding to demonstrate a dynamic river edge.
- Continuous bike path and boardwalk--inviting, safe public space that improves transportation connectivity and access
- The Boardwalk – A promenade connecting 5th Street Plaza to the steam plant; a transition from active urban open space to natural river edge and native landscape.
- 5th Street Plaza & Restaurant Row – On grade shops with green roofs. Network of walkways.
- Millwalk – an interpretive path to the river honoring millrace history, with opportunity to include artistic and historic elements to site

In response to a question regarding moving the waterway from in front of the steam plant, John said that the design team looked at several alternatives, and that they are leaning toward an option that moves the easement to the south / west side of the street.

John Rowell told the CAT that his goal tonight is to work toward the appropriate level of detail in preparation for the February EWEB Board presentation, and that he would like their thoughts on the zones in general, any problems they see with them, and if there should be more development. Following that, the design team will revise the design and bring it back for CAT approval.

Julie Fischer asked for clarifying questions or comments regarding the open space vision, river edge and bike path.

Mark Johnson asked if the design assumes a minimum 100' setback including streets. John Rowell replied that streets are an allowable use within the 100' setback. Mark Oberle commented that in his mind it is not a regulation question, but a values question.

Pat Johnston voiced concern about the 100' setback as a minimum threshold and said that seeking exemptions from the regulations is the wrong stance to take. She pointed out that riparian restoration looks at the tallest tree, various heights, etc., and their relationship to the river. She feels there is a need to clarify what complete restoration involves, and that if the reason for setbacks is for clean water and/or

filtration, we might be talking 250-300' setbacks. She added that this also depends on the soil, the riverbank, and other issues. She said she would like the CAT to discuss their values around these issues but that she is not suggesting that the property become all park. Pat noted that despite what some may think, Eugene does not have a lot of riverfront parks (she mentioned Delta Ponds and Alton Baker Park).

Dave Hauser reminded the CAT to flush out any questions or clarifications so that the ecological experts present tonight could address them. Pat Johnston reiterated that she wants to know what full restoration looks like, and how to define and determine its value for the property.

Gary Wildish asked for clarification of the elevation of the 100-year flood. Lorri Nelson replied that we have some information on the 20-year flood, but that the ecological team will come back with more information on the various flood levels. Gary then asked if the reduction in bank height of 8' is something the Corps of Engineers will approve. John Rowell replied that their riparian expert recommends a maximum of 10' for slope manipulation at the site.

Mary Unruh commented that the biggest impact on what can be done with the riparian edge is the bike path. She noted that if the bike path were moved away from the river and ran alongside of the proposed road, it would give more flexibility around the river edge experience and bring people into the site.

John Rowell replied that Rowell Brokaw has another drawing that shows the bike path up higher on the slope but further away from the river, as Mary suggested. He cautioned that the problem is that even though it would bring people closer to the river, some bicyclists travel at a high rate of speed along the path and there have been instances of pedestrians being hit by bicyclists. He asked the CAT to keep in mind that in the future the bike path may become wider to accommodate more people and non-motorized vehicles.

In response to a question from Gary Wildish, John Rowell said that the green space amounted to eight acres of the 27 acres of property.

Dean Pape' confirmed that the secondary streets are required to be designated in the master plan. Tom Larsen, City Engineer, reiterated that the east/west streets, particularly if the festival street is closed off for an event, need to be the alternative streets. He added that there could be some alleys or private streets, but then the regulations would get into street standards and maximum block lengths.

Dean then asked Tom for confirmation that what that means is that there needs to be a public access corridor and that it doesn't have to be designated on the plan, but there needs to be an alternative route if the main street is considered a festival street. Tom replied that is correct.

Desiree Moore asked if the drawing that showed the bike path, elevation and a pedestrian walkway meant that pedestrians wouldn't be on the bike path. John Rowell replied that there needs to be a more detailed discussion about that, and that there isn't space to do separate paths for bikes and pedestrians in the existing bike path location. He emphasized that he anticipated that pedestrians would use the bike path, but there were safety issues that made separate paths more desirable.

Dave Hauser voiced concern about the bike path as it relates to the Riverfront Research Park and a proposed route from Alder Street to the site. Tom Larsen replied that that is more directed at the railroad crossing and that there is no issue with connectivity to the EWEB site.

Julie Fischer asked the CAT for a thumbs up or thumbs down in order to get a sense of CAT members' comfort with the open space zones as presented. Thumbs up from Dave Hauser, Mark Johnson, Desiree Moore, Mary Unruh and Gary Wildish.

Pat Johnston reiterated that there needs to be honesty about what a truly restored riparian area consists of, and that she would like those answers from Bart Johnson (one of the ecological experts), i.e., what is its width and what does it serve. She said she would like to see a bigger open space connected with the riparian area, such as a bulbed space that could be a park destination. Pat noted that in the AIA design charrettes at least one drawing had a wider swath in the middle of the property, maybe something with a radius of about 250' that bulbs out, but not the whole area. John Rowell agreed that there was a scheme with a larger swath of green space in the middle of the property, but that when brought to the public, people preferred to have more active space close to the river. He asked the CAT if they would prefer the City Green design, as the design team would need to know that now.

Dean Pape' said he is still concerned about access to the river and making sure it is accessible for all, including ADA, wheelchair, or the fully mobile, in order for people to visually see the river and access it the length of the site. He said he would like to ask the ecological consultants to give the CAT an understanding of the armoring of the edge that was done to allow EWEB to build there. He added that in talking to a professor of dynamics recently, that person said the armoring of that edge could have a major effect on other parts of the river.

Gary Wildish recalled an earlier discussion regarding a 100' setback as a guideline for the amount of riverfront as relates to the Willamette Greenway, recognizing different impacts but also an opportunity for it to move. He recalled that Nan Laurence had asked the CAT to decide what they want, and Gary said that is where he is coming from. He added that after seeing the Portland and Corvallis riverfronts, his sense is that the EWEB riverfront will have significantly more open space than Corvallis. He added that the fact that the water could go in and out is very responsive to what was heard in the public meetings, and he said if the CAT asks for something that will work for the community, they can probably get it. He noted that he doesn't think the 100' setback is locked in and that the designs are going beyond that.

In response to Gary's comment, Lorri Nelson clarified that the Corvallis setback varied from 160' to at least half that in some areas. Gary said he recalled that it was 60' at the south end, and that he guessed if it was totaled up and divided into pieces, it would be close to 100' width.

Jeannine Parisi reiterated that the design team is looking for thumbs up or thumbs down in order to move forward, and to deliver this concept with a couple of outstanding questions to Bart Johnson for more analysis about functionality ecologically, wider areas, landscape components, etc. She reminded the CAT that a thumbs up is about forwarding this concept to the next level of expertise review and feedback, and does not necessarily indicate their final approval.

Dean Pape' asked John Rowell for an idea of where the end of the restaurant row would be, in general depth and size. He added that he would consider that a good open space. Lorri Nelson replied that the entire open space is eight acres, and that the restaurant row area is only a portion of that. Dean commented that that is a pretty big plaza.

John Rowell said that the design team heard far more positive comments at the last public event about being able to get closer to the river and a strong desire for quality open space. In response to Pat Johnston's comment about the private feel of various riverfront areas in Eugene (i.e., McMEnamin's North Bank), he commented that what contributes to that feeling is the back side of buildings along the river. He added that we need to be careful about the balance between visually experiencing the river vs. public and green space. He asked Margot Long of PWL Partnership (via Skype) to address the question of setbacks.

Margot replied that open space doesn't need to be entirely green, but the ecological balance desired and the ecologic/natural side of the river's edge needs to be true to the form of the river, and not only in order to achieve more width. She noted that comments at the public meeting reflected a desire for activity at the river's edge, but that there needs to be a variety of experiences—some entirely natural and others more urban. She added that the design team is still trying to move beyond the framework of the plan and hasn't gotten into the design detail of that yet, but that she believes there can be a variety of different spaces within a natural area.

Tom Hoyt (via conference call) voiced his support for a stairstep design down to the riverbank, green grass open space, the bike path, and a boardwalk along the restaurant row. He added that he likes the idea of people being able to put a toe into the water, then step onto green grass, up onto the bike path abutting the boardwalk, and then to the patio of restaurant row for refreshments, and then proceed to the road if desired.

Pat Johnston referred to the City of Eugene's riverhouse in the Whiteaker neighborhood in terms of amount of setback from the river, and John Rowell noted that the river operates entirely differently there than it does at the EWEB site.

6. Discuss General Uses and Parking Strategies

Greg Brokaw said that the design team has been evaluating different use scenarios and testing parking strategies needed to serve the different configurations. He reviewed the types of parking strategies and showed diagrams where these parking options would most likely be sited:

1. On-street parking – could accommodate about 300 spaces, mainly along the railroad street
2. Off-street parking for housing – assumes 1:1 self-parked spaces under building or below grade within footprint of building
3. Interim surface parking – lots that support commercial/office uses

4. Structured parking - three potential sites for parking garage supporting office or institutional uses. Development of structured parking for office use is not considered feasible at this time without subsidy.

Desiree Moore asked what the ultimate goal is for parking on the site. Greg Brokaw replied that will be dictated by density, and probably won't be specified in the plan. Pat Johnston noted that it also depends on use, i.e., parking for a museum or a theater.

In response to a question regarding what kinds of uses would represent institutional use as listed in the parking strategy scenarios, Greg Brokaw replied that could include the EWEB administrative building, a museum, City Hall, or a theatre, etc.

In summary, Greg indicated that they believe there are parking solutions that would work with different build-out scenarios (mixed use, institutional, low-rise residential, etc.)

John Rowell then referred to a list of general uses allowable in the C2 land use code, which he felt was a good starting place for the discussion. He suggested that the C2 zone, which has a lot of flexibility, could be overlaid with additional restriction for areas of the site where more public space would be desired, i.e., restaurant row. He said that tonight's goal would be to go over the list of uses and discuss certain areas where guidelines would be more restrictive, and then to discuss the steam plant block and possible descriptions.

Julie Fischer asked for clarifying questions and comments regarding general uses and parking strategies. It was clarified that the reason for this discussion was to satisfy the requirements of the Memorandum of Understanding. The CAT began the discussion by reviewing uses in the existing C2 zoning that the design team recommended not to allow on the site.

Dean Pape' questioned why a driving range and arena sports would be prohibited, as they could be sized appropriately to the site. John Rowell proposed that those types of uses be shifted to conditional use.

Desiree Moore wondered if a Park & Ride should be allowed. John Rowell said that these facilities usually require a lot of parking for riders, and that did not seem appropriate for the site.

Jeannine Parisi noted that one item on the list at which to take a closer look might be the prohibition of single family/duplex. Desiree Moore asked why that would be ruled out. John Rowell replied that it was a matter of whether a certain density would be promoted.

Dave Hauser reminded the CAT of their earlier discussions regarding economic feasibility and that overwhelming public support is desired, and that sometimes people assume the worst regarding a project such as this. He noted that one could argue that the uses that are listed in red (i.e., assumed to be not feasible) offer some assurance to the public of what it is that the CAT is trying to get accomplished.

Kaarin Knudson reminded the CAT that there are connections between the list of uses and the Guiding Principles and Assumptions approved earlier in the process. Margot Long reminded the CAT that the land use needs to respond to and reflect sustainability (as one of the Guiding Principles).

Tom Larsen noted that some of the uses listed could be problematic due to peak traffic demands, for example, a day care center or a school, and that those would cause major traffic issues with only local road network support.

Dean Pape' said he would prefer that none of the uses be prohibited outright, but be moved to a list of conditional uses instead. He said that the CAT could not predict what future development might look like on the site, using the Honda car sales facility in Honolulu that is part of a hotel as an example. Mark Johnson replied that there are certain uses that just do not make sense for the property, and that the CAT should be prepared to identify those.

Pat Johnston said there is real value in certainty when people make investment in a building, and that a conditional use permit provides less assurance for the people who make that investment. She used the example of someone investing in a restaurant and then years later, a correctional facility is built next to the restaurant. She urged the CAT to think about what they want this place to be, because that is part of why the CAT was formed, and not to totally back away from that issue and take the easy road with a conditional use permit.

Mary Unruh said it is okay with her to make value judgments and that the CAT needs to make some choices. She added that the community has weighed in and that we've asked the public what they want, and to say that "anything goes" would fly in the face of the entire process. She said that it is her feeling that what is listed in red should stay in red.

Dean Pape' commented that in his mind it comes down to trust, and that the community often has a trust problem with projects like this. He added that he doesn't want to burden the developer with restrictions when they may have a different plan for the property.

Dave Hauser asked how these uses might play into the Master Plan document. John Rowell replied that there might be allowable uses within standard development code language, and that the correct guidelines should be made about what the buildings could contain, certain heights, etc.—sort of a hybrid of regulating use and form together.

John Rowell asked for thoughts about the items listed in green – recommendations for uses to be allowed and even encouraged in the restaurant row block (items more critical to the project). Pat Johnston said she believes the green uses speak to values and vision, and noted that she often hears from the public, "how is this thing ever going to happen once the CAT has fulfilled their responsibility for the project?" She added that sparking ideas from the community would help to define the items listed in green.

Mark Oberle asked what the difference is between the items listed in green and those listed in black. John Rowell replied that only the green items are allowed in those specific zones, and that the black and red items are not allowed.

In response to a question from Dean Pape' about whether an artist studio could occupy the second floor of the restaurant row portion, John Rowell agreed that mixed uses within the building should be taken into account.

Julie Fischer then asked for thumbs up or down on the general concept of prohibited uses, conditional uses, and special areas with more restrictive uses, as presented. Thumbs up from Dave Hauser, Mark Johnson, Pat Johnston, Desiree Moore, Mary Unruh and Gary Wildish. Dean Pape' commented that he is still having a hard time with it. There were no other comments.

6. Closing Comments/Next Steps

Jeannine Parisi noted that there will be a 4:00 p.m. site walk-through prior to the January 27 CAT meeting, with the meeting starting at the regular time of 5:30 p.m.

Jeannine asked for an additional CAT volunteer to help staff a table at the bike and pedestrian summit at Sheldon Community Center on Saturday, January 23.

Jeannine noted that the February 2 EWEB Board presentation for Board review of the final design option has been postponed until February 16. She added that the next public event, previously scheduled for Wednesday, February 24, has been postponed until Wednesday, March 3 (due to need for a larger meeting space) and will be held at the Eugene Hilton. She said that more information regarding the public event will be presented at the January 27 CAT meeting.

Desiree Moore asked if there will be a CAT representative at the MLK Celebration on Monday, January 18 at the Hult Center. Jeannine Parisi replied that the event is on Ellen Teninty's list of events and that Desiree can work with her (Jeannine) directly regarding an opportunity for outreach at that event.

Tom Hoyt (via speaker phone) reminded the group about the Delta Rotary CAT presentation on Friday, January 22.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

Next Meeting: Wednesday, January 27
5:30 – 7:30 p.m.
EWEB Board Room
(NOTE: 4:00 p.m. site walk-through prior to meeting)