

EWEB names five to riverfront development advisory panel

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The Eugene Water & Electric Board leaned toward business expertise Tuesday in selecting five people out of a pool of 45 applicants to serve on a Community Advisory Team charged with helping to guide redevelopment of nearly 20 acres of choice riverfront property.

The Eugene City Council next month will select another four people to serve on the nine-member panel. The appointees named Tuesday are Dave Hauser, president of the Eugene Area Chamber of Commerce; business attorney Thomas Hoyt; real estate broker Desiree Moore; real estate development consultant Dean Pape; and retired construction company officer Gary Wildish.

The advisory team will make suggestions on how to develop the acreage that EWEB expects to vacate when it relocates its operations complex to a new site in west Eugene in 2010.

The utility's headquarters and steam plant will remain along the Willamette River.

EWEB commissioners said it was difficult to choose among a pool of extremely qualified candidates, and that they tried to select individuals who seemed to possess vision, experience, passion and diversity.

"This is going to be a legacy for EWEB and the community," Commissioner John Brown said. "We need to do this right."

All five of the selected applicants checked the box marked "Business" when asked in their application which perspectives they would expect to bring to the table.

Applicants could mark as many boxes from a list of 24 as they felt applied to them.

Among the applicants who narrowly missed selection included Dan Dingfield, a retired real estate development consultant from Seattle who served on that city's Waterfront Development Task Force and also managed a 70-acre waterfront development in Anacortes, Wash.

Commissioners said they were impressed by Dingfield's resume but concerned that, as a relative newcomer who moved to Eugene three years ago, he might not have a strong sense of the city's "diversity and fabric." Another top applicant identified by the board was Mark Johnson, director of transit operations at Lane Transit District.

Any of those not selected by EWEB could still be among the four appointed next month by the City Council. EWEB President John Simpson speculated that the council could opt for applicants who have expressed strong interest in assuring that the riverfront development incorporate plenty of open space.

The council is tentatively set to choose its four applicants on May 12. EWEB Project Manager Mark Oberle said he hopes the advisory team can begin meeting shortly thereafter. One of the group's first tasks will be to recommend criteria for selecting a consultant to help with a master plan for the riverfront property.

The city's downtown plan sets several criteria for any redevelopment of the EWEB property, including allowing for open space and mixed-use development.

The redeveloped site must be a "people place" with an educational aspect, and include setbacks and design techniques to address environmental concerns.

EWEB and the City Council in February approved issuing \$85.5 million in revenue bonds to pay for a new operations complex on Roosevelt Boulevard at Belt Line Road. EWEB hopes to break ground this summer. However, citizens last week initiated a referendum petition to refer the matter to voters. If the petitioners are able to collect signatures from 4,208 registered city voters by April 28, the matter would be placed on the Sept. 16 ballot.

EWEB officials have said that the referendum campaign, if successful, would delay the project by nearly a year and push up construction costs by \$4 million to \$6 million.

That, in turn, could delay efforts to redevelop the riverfront property that EWEB plans to vacate.

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