

EWEB Riverfront Master Plan Community Advisory Team (CAT)

Wednesday, August 26, 2009, 5:00 – 7:30 p.m.

EWEB Board Room

Present: Dave Hauser, Mark Johnson, Dean Pape, Pat Johnston, Desiree Moore, Mary Unruh, and Gary Wildish, members; Bob Cassidy and Joann Ernst, EWEB Commissioners; Mark Oberle, Project Manager; Jeannine Parisi, EWEB staff; Tom Larsen, City of Eugene; Greg Brokaw, Kaarin Knudson and John Rowell, Rowell Brokaw Architects; Julie Fischer and Ellen Teninty, T'NT Consulting; Vicki Maxon, Recorder; Bob Hart, Peter King, Ron Lovinger, Kevin Matthews, Lorri Nelson, and Tom Snyder, public.

Absent: Tom Hoyt and Anita Van Asperdt, members.

1. Welcome and Agenda/Material Review

Pat Johnston welcomed everyone.

2. Comments from the Audience

Tom Snyder commented that, based on the August 12 meeting he attended, it seemed like the CAT was “putting the cart before the horse” with the examples of various riverfront projects that were presented. He explained that the citizens of the community want a project that makes them proud--kind of a legacy of the working class of this community. He added that this would be a good basis for some passionate ideas, and that he is hoping the CAT will have some passionate ideas and vision. He noted that a couple of questions he has are: 1) can we change the riverbank? and 2) is it possible to put an underground parking structure this close to the river? He closed by saying that he would like to have the CAT provide some boundaries related to these types of issues and that he’s heard from specialists and experts, but he hasn’t heard anything about limitations of the property.

Mark Oberle replied that the questions Tom mentioned are part of what the CAT is currently working on, and that preliminary project parameters would be addressed tonight. He added that no one has had an opportunity to voice their passion yet because that opportunity will come later during the public engagement process.

Tom thanked the CAT for the opportunity to speak.

3. Approve Minutes

The August 12 minutes were approved.

4. Preliminary Project Parameters

Ellen Teninty gave an update on the public engagement process.

- Project launch was moved from October 2 to September 30 from 6:00 to 8:30 p.m. due to a conflict with Eugene Art Walk the same evening. This event will be very inclusive and have opportunities for the public to tour the site and share ideas.
- The AIA chapter is still sponsoring a design charrette on October 3, but this will be limited to 50-80 people.

Desiree Moore asked what media packages are going to be available besides the project website to advertise the project launch. Ellen replied that an announcement for community calendars, newsletters, and other communication tools is being prepared and that there will be a media advisory day for television, radio, newspaper, etc. She added that there will also be a street display, mass e-mail program, and telephone calls being made. These will be part of an entire plan being crafted for print and electronic media.

Mark Johnson asked about outreach events for CAT involvement. Ellen replied that she is passing around a sign-up sheet for shifts at the CAT display during the Eugene Celebration September 4-6, which will be located in front of DIVA.

Dave Hauser asked if CAT members will be a part of the charrette event. Ellen replied that in her opinion it is necessary for all CAT members to attend all public events, including the charrette, if they are in town.

Ellen reiterated that she would still like a list of other possible venues or events for a CAT outreach and speaking engagements. She noted other outreach activities underway:

- Presentation to Downtown Neighborhood Association on September 17 – CAT invited to attend.
- Request from North Eugene High School biology class (riparian restoration study of EWEB riverfront) for a CAT member to attend their site tour and the later classroom presentation in October) – class meets from 8:00 to 10:30 a.m.
- Project website still under construction
- Still need bios from four CAT members by the end of this week

Gary Wildish said he lives in the North Eugene area and would love to participate in this school project.

Kaarin Knudson thanked the CAT on behalf of the entire project team for taking the time to review the large amount of printed material that was e-mailed to the CAT in preparation for this meeting.

4. Presentation of Preliminary Project Parameters

Kaarin Knudson began by saying that RBA is still collecting some interesting background information on the EWEB site, including some historic slides.

She reported that the project parameters include both site constraints and economic conditions. Site constraints had been divided into three levels: 1) Immovable/Accepted Conditions; 2) Movable Conditions and 3) Adaptable/Removable Conditions. The topics under these three categories were explained.

Dean Pape' asked about limitations regarding new railroad crossings or updating existing ones. Tom Larsen explained that regulations make it nearly impossible to get a new railroad crossing approved, but that moving locations may be possible.. He added that making 8th Avenue connect directly to the riverfront is one option.

Dave Hauser asked for an example of how bedrock geology would be a constraint. John Rowell replied that it influenced where buildings may be sited and could impact adjustments to the riverbank, as any redevelopment would not want to undercut existing, necessary infrastructure. Gary Wildish agreed that armoring the bank and addressing erosion was a significant parameter due to the force of the river against the property.

In reference to transmission lines and towers, Pat Johnston asked what would happen if a developer bought the EWEB property for high-end redevelopment and whether a \$2 million transmission line tower would be an "immovable" parameter to them. Mark Oberle replied that converting overhead service to underground is doable along the railroad tracks, just a matter of money. However, relocating the tower is more complex because the lines need to cross the river somehow, which may bring other concerns or agencies into the equation.

Mark Johnson asked a similar question about the steam plant—if it stays on the immovable conditions list, what would happen if a developer was told it could not be removed? John Rowell replied that in the interviews they conducted, the overwhelming majority of the community wants the steam plant to remain, and that the question would then be whether a developer could remove something that the public has expressed an affinity for. He added that would be an issue to consider when the CAT is deciding whether to keep or eliminate certain project parameters.

Dean Pape' asked if the steam lines themselves (not the steam plant) are committed to being terminated. Mark Oberle replied that t plans are underway to begin the shutdown of the steam system and that the lines would be inactive, but stay in place. Dean then asked if the CAT should consider the steam lines a parameter, due to uncertainty of when the steam system will be shut down, and it impacts the property value.

Commissioner Bob Cassidy said that recent information the EWEB Board has seen states that the shutdown of steam lines will occur two or three years from now. Mark Oberle added that the steam lines will still be operating when the Master Plan is completed, but probably not when a developer is on board. Dean Pape' then stated that in his mind, the steam lines need to be added to the immovable conditions category.

Dave Hauser asked what would determine which category (movable or immovable) the steam plant would appear on. John Rowell replied that if it someday could be demolished and then the public might be upset by that. Mark Oberle noted that the same could also be true for other buildings on the property, but to a lesser degree.

Kaarin Knudson noted that a building's historic significance to the community could qualify it for inclusion on the immovable list. Dean Pape' said it would be nice to keep this issue as gray as possible in light of the possibility that the EWEB offices may appear on the movable list someday.

Mark Johnson stated it might be a good idea to put the steam plant in its own special category, given the community's interest in it being retained and the fact that it may be too expensive or too impractical to retain.

John Rowell continued, saying that a continuous, publicly accessible and improved bike path and the steam plant are the two items that the people who were interviewed felt most strongly about.

Desiree Moore asked where the millrace falls on the interest level. John Rowell replied that it's not as tangible as the steam plant, and the millrace issue has been around for quite a while. Ellen Teninty noted that only a small section of the millrace is on the EWEB site and that the entire millrace is the bigger issue.

Further discussion ensued regarding whether the steam plant should be put on the movable or immovable conditions list.

Pat Johnston said it is her belief that it is in the CAT's purview to represent community interest. Mary Unruh said that if a developer wants to remove the steam plant, it may be that developer is not the right person for the project.

Dave Hauser again questioned the definition of an immovable parameter and wondered if the steam plant would have an important public education function primarily due to its history. A discussion followed regarding how to treat the steam plant, and it was agreed that the language would be revised in the next draft.

Mary Unruh asked if the millrace should be confirmed as either in or out of the picture, and that it is most probably dependent upon funding. John Rowell replied that millrace options could be included in the designs, but that if it didn't happen, the framework to proceed would still exist.

Dean Pape' wondered if the Master Plan could be built with A and B options for specific elements.

Mary Unruh asked if there are any restrictions for use of the portion of the property underneath the viaduct. John Rowell replied that the project parameters could be expanded to include the supporting columns of the Ferry Street Bridge. Mark Oberle noted that a storm sewer easement exists in that location.

Tom Larsen stated that the public right of way option at the east end of the Riverfront Research Park would be an immovable condition, though this does not sit on EWEB property. Mark Oberle replied that the graphic of that area featured in tonight's presentation is a bit over-simplified and that right of way option is actually not on EWEB property.

Julie Fischer asked the CAT to e-mail any further suggestions or revisions of the project parameters to Kaarin Knudson in preparation for the September 9 meeting.

5. Discussion of Potential Use Scenarios

John Rowell showed a list of six potential use scenarios for the property, based on the interviews and research so far:

1. Adaptive Re-use Scenario
2. Housing Focus Scenario
3. Civic Center Scenario
4. “New Industry” Employment District Scenario
5. Mixed-Use Neighborhood Scenario

He asked the CAT if they feel that there is anything missing from the list they are discussing tonight, and asked for questions or comments.

Dean Pape’ asked what is being considered in the “new industry” category. Kaarin Knudson replied that could be the concept of artists working on-site as part of a revolving studio; local sustainable business locating on-site; and addressing the working class history and local industry on the EWEB site, etc.

Gary Wildish said his impression is that flexibility is important and that the market will drive what happens to this site. He added that it appears that residential housing has a place in this particular location and the key is to try to figure out how that coexistence with other uses can occur. He noted that Leland Consulting spoke strongly about not being restrictive but to come up with a forum that allows the developer to deal with the market conditions that exist at the time they develop the property.

Dave Hauser asked what has been precluded based on the interviews and above potential use scenarios. Mark Oberle replied primarily big box retail and small single-use retail with heavy direction toward a certain market.

Dave Hauser asked for confirmation that use scenarios assume that the development would not be all housing or civic use, but some blend of both. John Rowell replied that it would be predominantly housing with a small amount of retail. He said RBA heard in the interviews that people associate having fun with areas that contain shops and restaurants.

Gary Wildish commented that if the EWEB property becomes the new home of city hall and the area becomes sort of a city center, the types of businesses that are compatible look a lot different than in other scenarios. He added that he felt that would be an opportunity for offices or that it might work with the appropriate level of retail that was responsive to the residents’ needs.

Pat Johnston commented that if City government ends up on the EWEB property, it gives flavor toward an anchor in a certain way, and sometimes two visions aren’t compatible, i.e., a vibrant arts community vs. City government. She said it is her feeling that this is an issue that needs to be thought about and talked about at a future meeting.

Julie Fischer asked the CAT if there were any red flags that came up for them when reading the draft guiding principles, and reminded the CAT that there will be a final draft crafted before it goes to the EWEB Board for approval. The following comments were documented:

- Change the word “proposed” to “potential” use scenarios
- Seems like a hotel is not a good fit for the property, but let market determine that
- Aren’t all the scenarios different versions of mixed uses? The design team will clarify the difference between multiple uses and mixed-use development.
- Concerned about definition/examples of successful and failed residential housing developments.
- Agreement with “let the private sector lead the way” and be market-driven, but not without CAT guidance – the master plan will need to be flexible and thoughtful.

Dean Pape’ asked for 24 hours to further review the interview/research summary from Leland Consulting, and agreed to e-mail any comments or suggestions.

Gary Wildish noted that under the Civic Center scenario, the level of public funding needed to achieve that particular idea would be higher

Pat Johnston commented that parking will become an issue when all the pieces come together.

Mark Oberle noted that the potential use scenario work will help inform work that is outside of the Master Plan itself (i.e., land use, rezoning, etc.). John Rowell noted that these are inter-related; for example, City C2 zoning requires ground level retail.

In response to a question from Ellen Teninty, John Rowell explained how the use scenarios might be used in the design charrette to test different concepts and inform design options.

6. Discussion of Interview/Research Summary and Guiding Principles

Kaarin Knudson asked for rounds from the CAT on their thoughts about the Interview/Research Narrative and the revised guiding principles. Julie Fischer added that if further revisions are needed, it is important to flag that tonight.

Dean Pape’ asked if the interviews were restricted to local residents only. John Rowell replied that they were not.

The following comments were documented:

- Well-written – some areas need more understanding and some contradict themselves, but excellent document and a good foundation.
- Ecology is not controlled solely by EWEB ownership – “above, below and across the river” there is a bigger picture to consider.
- Do not limit terminology only to fish-friendly – would like it to include not diminishing existing habitat, fish, birds, etc. – that is the intent of the respectfulness of ecology.
- How do we as a community take care of the environmental issue – this is not going to be up to the developer, necessarily.
- Challenge is to figure out what the community is saying – common elements to consider.

Desiree Moore expressed concern regarding the perception that the EWEB property could detract from downtown and felt this perception is not 100% valid. Dean Pape' agreed, saying that the EWEB property is part of downtown and also a part of the Downtown Plan, and that the issue is how it can be captured as part of downtown.

Kaarin Knudson said that that concerns about draining energy from downtown came up often in the interviews, but that most interviewees felt there was an opportunity to redevelop something complementary along the river. She did not consider those statements to be pessimistic or optimistic, but a reflection of community concerns.

Desiree Moore reiterated that she believes that it is not the responsibility of the EWEB site to fix all of Eugene's problems and that the community needs to understand that the EWEB site is just one piece in a giant puzzle. She added that the CAT's goal is to help the EWEB site be the best it can be, and that it should not be burdened with all of downtown Eugene's issues.

Dean Pape' commented that that the EWEB site could be the catalyst to jump start that process. Mary Unruh added that the CAT does need to be cognizant of the synergy between downtown and the EWEB site, and of how the energy moves in both directions and what the draw could be to start creating movement between the two areas.

Dean Pape' asked if there is any plan in place to address the community's questions before they are asked, i.e., educating the public up front. He gave the example of building low-density near the civic core and that encouraging sprawl. Dave Hauser said he believed that the project parameters will be designed to do some of that.

John Rowell added that the CAT needs to help the public get up to speed quickly with a balance of education and listening, and not appearing to come into the process as experts.

Ellen Teninty said she agrees that the CAT needs to do some succinct education about the broader issues regarding downtown and its challenges, which will help frame the work that the CAT is doing.

Dave Hauser noted that the interdependence of the project with other concerns goes beyond downtown Eugene and that there are other riverfront planning efforts underway, all the way from Glenwood to North Eugene. He added that the amount of community development and vision to support all the different planning efforts is staggering.

Jeannine Parisi shared Tom Hoyt's (in absentia) comments regarding the Ecology guiding principle. She said Tom commented that the missing piece in this guideline is recreational fishing and fish habitat and economic drivers to bring people to the site.

Dean Pape' noted that education can also be a marketing opportunity, and that it would be wise to focus on that opportunity.

Gary Wildish commented that the connection piece is important to him—the ability to get to shore from the river. He noted that the south or east end of the riverfront as the river straightens out would be an opportunity for a dock or boat landing, but that there is not much shore available in front of the EWEB

property. Dean Pape' commented that the biggest problem with a dock or boat landing would be the parking requirements.

Kaarin Knudson was asked for her impression of the interviews and any trends she heard:

- Some conflicting ideas, but high expectations and hope to put a good plan in place.
- There are some big visions and hopes for the downtown riverfront, but the long-term nature of good redevelopment may challenge the community's patience.
- It has been a pleasure to talk with so many people about the project – most were very excited to share their opinions and hopes, and expressed appreciation for being involved so early in the effort.
- Very happy that so many people from so many different walks of life are grappling with the complexities of this project – very few made explicit demands but instead seemed willing to grapple with the complexities of the challenge.

John Rowell commented that there is some public suspicion about what the plans are for the EWEB property. He added that he feels there is a sense of core interest about something great happening with the riverfront, but that there are battle lines that exist.

Further comments for the next revision of the Guiding Principles:

- Balance of use – didn't see specific use of art or artists (4th bullet point)
- Identity heading, last bullet – welcoming place (for all)
- Connection – the river with the city, or with downtown?
- Add "Economics" heading and bullets
- Reorganize bullets to support "Viability/Feasibility" heading

Ellen Teninty noted that at the CAT's last EWEB Board presentation, the Board was taken aback that the "economic value" wasn't in any of the documents that were presented, and that the Board feels strongly that this issue be included in the master plan's guiding principles.

Pat Johnston commented that it is difficult to measure "economic value" because everyone measures it differently. Julie Fischer replied that the bullet points underneath the Economic heading will be reworked to clarify the intent. Dean Pape' emphasized that economic viability was an important issue and needed to be explicit, especially if the Board said it should be included.

7. Closing Comments/Next Steps

Dean Pape' asked that the August 12 minutes be corrected to reflect a 7-0 decision (because two CAT members were absent from that meeting) regarding adoption of the Public Engagement Plan. He also noted that he was marked absent when he tried to conference call in, but was unable to do so, and would like the minutes to reflect this effort.

Julie Fischer reminded the CAT that all three documents discussed and revised tonight will be ready for final CAT approval at the September 9 meeting. It was agreed to continue the earlier start time of 5 p.m.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:35 p.m.