

EWEB Riverfront Master Plan Community Advisory Team (CAT)

Wednesday, November 18, 5:30 - 7:30 p.m.

EWEB Board Room

Present: Dave Hauser, Tom Hoyt, Mark Johnson, Pat Johnston, Desiree Moore, Mary Unruh, Gary Wildish, members; Bob Cassidy, EWEB Commissioner; Mark Oberle, Jeannine Parisi and Debra Smith, EWEB staff; Nan Laurence and 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; Charles Biggs, Bob Hart, Justin Hoffman, Kourtney Latham, Kevin Matthews, Lorri Nelson, Kristen Taylor and Trevor Taylor, public.

Absent: Dean Pape' and Anita Van Asperdt

1. Welcome, Introductions and Agenda Review

Pat Johnston welcomed the group and reviewed the agenda.

2. Comments from the Audience and CAT Comments

Kevin Matthews said he has a great deal of respect for the CAT members and the consultants, but that he was disappointed in the November 10 public meeting. He said he believed the information provided was incomplete and unbalanced, with no ecological transect or indication of minimal setbacks along the river, short shrifting of the dimension of site consideration, and a technically inaccurate summary of the riverbank armoring. He said that he feels the design options are too similar and that it is hard for him to understand why that is. He added that the options are distractingly detailed and that the basic sight line issues obstruct vision. He urged the CAT to be careful about interpreting the outcomes of the November 10 meeting. He closed by saying that he feels the CAT's integrity is at risk but that he believes they can recover it.

Trevor Taylor said he is concerned about how the drawings of the three options were interpreted and the comments that were made, and that the public may not have understood the drawings as well as they could have. He said the small group comments he heard included confusion around what was being asked of them and some of the answers that were given. He said he himself has concerns regarding the river setback and the fact that some participants interpreted the EWEB site as being similar to the Portland waterfront. He believe the Portland waterfront has a 300-400 foot setback and the EWEB site is approximately 100 feet. He noted his concern regarding the public space and

open forested areas being the size of a soccer field. He closed by saying he is not complaining, and he urged the CAT to use caution in how the public's comments are interpreted. He also urged the CAT to remember that the river is important and appreciated by all, to take care of the river and be careful how it is improved, not to create reversible interpretations, and to remember diverse values and goals as they go to the next step. In closing, he said he appreciates and applauds the CAT's willingness to spend personal time on this important project and wished them good luck.

Charles Biggs said he agreed with the two previous speakers, and that it seemed like the preferred plan was to emphasize as much development on the site as possible, and that it seemed that the design chose to place open space where there were encumbrances and not where it would be most beneficial. He said he will be interested to see what the consultants come away with, as it seemed like there was a broad range of responses from the public. He said he will also be interested to see what the public has to say at the next public meeting.

Bob Cassidy said he is speaking tonight as a Eugene resident and not as an EWEB Board member. He said he wanted to share a thought about the effort to keep part of the EWEB property in public ownership. He said that perhaps one way to set aside the southeastern part of the property along the river would be to gift it to the University of Oregon, giving them an opportunity to build apartments with a bond issue, and possibly trade that for having them pay for the bridge to Alton Baker Park, which could possibly increase the value of the property.

Kristen Taylor said that she is in the design and planning profession and has been the Fairmount Neighborhood Association chair for nine years. She said that she shares some of the same concerns that Kevin Matthews and Trevor Taylor had expressed, and that she wants to reiterate a vision that has good design and planning and is built on success. She added that when she read the paper after the design charrette and heard some of the feedback she had an emotional response to the lack of trees on the site. She said she would love to see a balance, create an opportunity for a public place, and expand the frontage for commercial use in terms of linear footage for commercial development, and not a strip. She urged the CAT to think about places that people love to be—drinking coffee or eating a meal not only by the river but in a public space with others in the community—because that is what she imagines when she thinks about this place. She thanked the CAT for a difficult job and said she hoped for the best.

Jeannine Parisi said she had received an e-mail from Zachary Vishanoff about an article in the Oregon Daily Emerald regarding the University Riverfront Research Park conditional use permit. She added that there will be a meeting this Thursday at St. Mary's if anyone is interested in attending. She circulated the article among the CAT members.

Jeannine also passed out a memo that went to the EWEB Board on November 17 regarding a riverfront master plan status update, and reminded the CAT that the next two Board presentations will be on January 5 and February 2.

Gary Wildish said he appreciated tonight's public comment and said he came away with some similar feelings, which he will discuss later in tonight's meeting.

3. Approve Minutes

The October 28 minutes were approved.

4. Willamette River Open Space Visioning Project Overview

Jeff Krueger of LCOG gave a presentation regarding the above project, using the Rivers to Ridges park space vision map and describing the different areas.

- 30-mile corridor from Fern Ridge to McKenzie River
- Broad partnership
- Unanimous endorsement from elected officials, Willamalane and other project partners in 2001

Key themes - Utilizing rivers and ridges to connect major public open spaces

Jeff noted that in a public outreach done in June, the project and its basic vision elements were presented and received a good response. He explained that a public survey was done for three months with nearly 500 responses regarding what people want to see in terms of open space along the river. He said that a more detailed report can be found on the LCOG website.

Key points relating to EWEB site:

- Trails and paths most valued recreational facility – in line with nationwide
- Connectivity – walk and bike to river easily from all areas
- There is broad support for river-oriented development – people want to see it done well
- EWEB is a good example of sites with potential for river-oriented development. Valley River parking lot, Glenwood area, and the Riverfront Research Park are also good sites.
- Industrial use not a suitable use – mixed use is okay if done well
- Historic preservation – bring back millrace, incorporate river history, include the steam plant
- Downtown connection important – High Street, 8th Avenue to courthouse
- Improved pedestrian connections are important – from downtown to Alton Baker Park and the University
- Clear route from downtown to river – fountains, water features connecting salmon fountain to EWEB plaza fountain (a similar connection is in Springfield)
- Improving access for all to the river – create “river views”
- Would not recommend leaving cars out of the master plan or relying on car-free riverfront access.
- There are opportunities for habitat reclamation at the fringes but the biggest opportunities on the EWEB site are to provide an opportunity to appreciate the river and develop awareness/appreciation for this natural resource.

Jeff also shared his thoughts regarding the EWEB riverfront master plan:

- Devil is in the detail – stormwater treatment, ecologically sound, bike and pedestrian access, outstanding public open space somewhere on EWEB site
- Historic context – look into millrace in more detail – pull millrace flow from further upstream, not from pipe, possible opportunities through Riverfront Research Park.
- The Willamette Visioning process is focused on side channel habitat and improved ecological functions of open space. The millrace does not offer ecological habitat on the EWEB site and side channels on the EWEB site are not a good idea.
- The pedestrian bridge to Alton Baker Park is an interesting idea.
- Key point – river-oriented development areas are key to success of open space system. This type of development brings people to the river.

Currently developing version 1 of the open space vision for the river--agricultural lands, habitat, extending multi-use path and trail system, visual qualities and resource preservation

Highlights for the vision:

- Identifying priority areas for restoring side channel habitat, i.e., Delta Ponds and Springfield millrace
- Extending multi-use path system northward from Beltline to Armitage Park and connection to Coburg
- Connection to Coast Fork and Middle Fork path – 4 miles, to Buford Park recreation area for bike and pedestrian access

Jeff added that the vision project will be ready for public review in a month or so, and that following additional public comment and revisions, staff will try to develop a plan that can be endorsed by the elected officials.

In response to a clarifying question from Gary Wildish, Jeff noted that from a fishery standpoint, the millrace has some habitat value but not as a side channel, because of pumped water. He added that the canoe canal in Alton Baker Park has very high potential.

Pat Johnston asked if there is an opportunity for that on the University of Oregon property. John Rowell responded that several river ecologists have mentioned that, but whether the entire millrace could serve that is the question. Jeff Krueger agreed that there is some habitat restoration opportunity at the millrace outflow, but the grade there makes fish passage somewhat difficult.

Dave Hauser asked Jeff if some of the ideas mentioned in the above vision process are EWEB-specific ideas. Jeff replied that 30 or 40 different studies have been done and key vision elements were presented that included channel habitat and riparian restoration, and that his group can apply a lot of those concepts to the EWEB site, but it's a broad area. He noted that he was actually referring to open-ended comments gathered in vision meetings and the surveys.

Tom Larsen asked, regarding access and connectivity to the river, if consideration has been given to the infirmed or disabled. Jeff replied that there is already fairly good ADA access with the multi-use path system.

Tom Larsen asked if cars fit into the vision. Jeff replied that they are not precluded and mentioned some vehicle accessible lookout points along the river. However, the recreational facilities his group is looking at are non-motorized.

5. CAT Input on Design Options

John Rowell and Kaarin Knudson showed the CAT a slide of Riverfront Master Plan topics for discussion and asked the CAT for their comments. Mark Oberle reminded the CAT that now is the time to share their personal opinions about the site.

The slide included the following:

- Design direction topics
- Great loop connection
- Primary routes of access
- Open space types/orientation
- Block structure
- Character of river edge
- Millrace accommodation
- Steam Plant and existing buildings
- Easement assumptions
- Others

John Rowell reminded the CAT that the purpose of the November 10 public meeting wasn't to come to agreement on a single design option but to get more information about what the public wants the relationship between the City and the river to be.

Pat Johnston noted that all of the existing buildings were included on all three design options, and that drawing roads around those buildings concerns her, as she is not committed to retaining all of those buildings, with the exception of the Steam Plant.

Tom Hoyt said he believes the most important issue is access—ingress and egress. He added that he likes the High Street entrance 100 feet north of the railroad tracks and the view of the river from there. He added that he would hate to see the CAT be hampered by the old storage shed buildings but that the Steam Plant should be put in a special place. John Rowell explained how the design would differ if those buildings weren't there.

Dave Hauser agreed with Pat and Tom, saying that preservation of some of the buildings makes economic sense but that streets shouldn't be drawn around them. Mary Unruh noted that many of the streets are logical whether the buildings remain or not.

Gary Wildish said he agreed with some of tonight's public comment that the three designs are very similar. He added that specificity of some of the buildings is misleading and that the ability to have 120 feet of parking is important, but that would be for a developer, not the CAT, to decide. He said he is more into the questions of how many gallons of stormwater, how much green and open space, and how much infrastructure is consumed, and the need to evaluate that in terms of how it works for EWEB. He noted that his experience at the November 10 public meeting was that connectivity and a bridge across the river were big points, and also the ability for walkways. He added that if the railroad is going to be crossed at a different location (8th Avenue), the developer needs to know if that is possible.

Tom Larsen, City Traffic Engineer, reiterated previous railroad crossing plans.

Desiree Moore asked how green space translates into the ultimate property value. Gary Wildish agreed that the CAT needs to get to that point.

Pat Johnston reminded the CAT that the design options was a time to test the boundaries with the public, and that that if there was a millrace option, that would test the boundaries.

A brief discussion ensued regarding the amount of open space in each option and how to articulate that.

Debra Smith reminded that the CAT that the EWEB Board has not made a decision regarding surplus property, ownership, etc., and that those decisions will have huge economic impacts and that, by the time that decision is made, there may be new Board members. She suggested maintaining flexibility in order to take into consideration who is on the EWEB Board at what point in time.

Mark Oberle also reminded the CAT that the Board has not given them a specific dollar figure and that they probably will not.

Further discussion ensued regarding economic and feasibility strategies, i.e., public street location, and previous and current conversations with Chris Zahas of Leland Consulting regarding those strategies.

Kaarin Knudson asked the CAT to choose their two most challenging topics from the above-mentioned list. A list follows:

- Access – ingress/egress – trolley loop? (5 responses)
- All items on the list are connected to EWEB's neighbors
- Character of river's edge (3 responses)
- Access – routes through the property
- What we mean by riparian (river's edge) to be responsive to trails/paths
- (not on the list) Collaboration with neighbors (U of O, City, courthouse, 5th Street Market) – should set up a mechanism for that communication to continue after the CAT has disbanded

What's missing from the list:

- How do things look to/from Alton Baker Park? Views out from site? Views back to site?
- Question of character, theme or consistency of development in terms of does all on the site fit with each other?

A brief discussion ensued regarding what to include in the update for the January 5 Board meeting. Kaarin Knudson reminded the CAT that there will be CAT meetings on January 13 and

27, and that a single design concept will be presented at the February 2 Board meeting, and at the February 24 public meeting after that.

Ellen Teninty suggested that the CAT address specific issues for the January meetings, i.e., shape of the bike path, where the road is, connectivity, etc., so that the conversation can be structured to go through the list and discuss each item. Pat Johnston suggested that the CAT look at each design option and then write how they feel about each.

Kaarin Knudson said she will set up an outline for specific and direct questions and set a deadline for input via e-mail. Pat Johnston asked for confirmation that there would still be an opportunity for conversation after that, in a team setting. Kaarin agreed.

Nan Laurence asked when City staff will have an opportunity to weigh in and send comments on a fairly basic level (i.e., parks, street connections, stormwater, etc.). Mark Oberle replied that would best be done via the design team.

Mark Oberle then asked if a field trip to Portland would be beneficial, in order to view the Portland riverfront and some other sites. A brief discussion ensued regarding mode of transportation and Mark said he would send out some possible dates for that via e-mail.

7. Public Outreach from November 10 to February 24

Jeannine Parisi said that Gary Wildish, Dean Pape' and she will be available at EWEB's Run to Stay Warm event on November 28 and will develop an interested parties list and gather participants' reactions to the design options.

Julie Fischer noted that the three design options and the Powerpoint presentations for each are now on the riverfront master plan website.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:40 p.m.

Next Meeting: Wednesday, December 9
5:30 – 7:30 p.m.
EWEB Board Room