



IMPROVING OUR COMMUNITY

COLUMBIA GATEWAY URBAN RENEWAL AGENCY

CITY OF THE DALLES

AGENDA

**Columbia Gateway Urban Renewal Agency**

City Council Chamber

313 Court Street, The Dalles, Oregon

*Meeting Conducted in a Handicap Accessible Room*

Monday, February 23, 2015

Immediately Following the City Council Meeting

- I. CALL TO ORDER
- II. ROLL CALL
- III. APPROVAL OF AGENDA
- IV. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

During this portion of the meeting, anyone may speak on any subject which does not later appear on the agenda. Five minutes per person will be allowed. If a response is requested, the speaker will be referred to the City Manager for further action. The issue may appear on a future meeting agenda for Agency Board consideration.

- V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES
  - A. Approval of February 9, 2015 Regular Meeting Minutes
- VI. ACTION ITEMS
  - A. Consider Recommendation from Urban Renewal Advisory Committee Regarding Purchase of Elks Club Building
- VII. ADJOURNMENT

**MINUTES**

COLUMBIA GATEWAY URBAN RENEWAL AGENCY  
REGULAR MEETING  
OF  
FEBRUARY 9, 2015

CITY COUNCIL CHAMBER  
313 COURT STREET  
THE DALLES, OREGON

**PRESIDING:** Chair Steve Lawrence

**AGENCY PRESENT:** Dan Spatz, Tim McGlothlin, Linda Miller, Russ Brown, Taner Elliott

**AGENCY ABSENT:** None

**STAFF PRESENT:** City Manager Nolan Young, City Attorney Gene Parker, City Clerk Julie Krueger, Administrative Fellow Daniel Hunter

**CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order by Chair Lawrence at 6:40 p.m.

**ROLL CALL**

Roll call was conducted by City Clerk Krueger; all members present.

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Chair Lawrence noted approval would include the Supplemental Agenda, to add Executive Session ORS 192.660 (f).

It was moved by Miller and seconded by McGlothlin to approve the agenda as amended. The motion carried unanimously.

MINUTES (Continued)  
Urban Renewal Agency Meeting  
February 9, 2015  
Page 2

### **AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION**

None.

### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

It was moved by Miller and seconded by Brown to approve the minutes of the December 8, 2014 meeting. The motion carried unanimously.

### **ACTION ITEMS**

Approval of Minor Amendment #14 to Urban Renewal Plan, to add Thompson Park Pool as a Project

City Attorney Parker reviewed the staff report. In response to a question, City Manager Young said this project would not encumber any future urban renewal funds.

Parks and Recreation District Director Phil Lewis said the splash park was still part of the project, but the District was seeking approximately \$80,000 in additional funding for that portion of the project.

It was moved by McGlothlin and seconded by Spatz to adopt Resolution No. 15-001 approving Minor Amendment #14 to the Columbia Gateway Downtown Plan, Adding the Thompson Park Pool Project, as an Urban Renewal Project. The motion carried unanimously.

### **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

Chair Lawrence recessed the meeting to Executive Session at 6:48 p.m. in accordance with ORS 192.660 (2) (e) to conduct deliberations with persons designated by the governing body to negotiate real property transactions and ORS 192.660 (2) (f) to consider information or records that are exempt by law from public inspection.

### **Reconvene to Open Session**

The meeting reconvened to open session at 7:55 p.m.

MINUTES (Continued)  
Urban Renewal Agency Meeting  
February 9, 2015  
Page 3

**DECISIONS FOLLOWING EXECUTIVE SESSION**

None.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 7:55 p.m.

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Submitted by/  
Julie Krueger, MMC  
City Clerk

SIGNED:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Stephen E. Lawrence, Chair

ATTEST:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Julie Krueger, MMC, City Clerk




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CITY OF THE DALLES

## MEMORANDUM

TO: Urban Renewal Agency Board

FROM: Julie Krueger, MMC, City Clerk 

DATE: February 12, 2015

RE: Urban Renewal Advisory Committee Recommendation

Due to the short period of time between the Advisory Committee meeting on February 17 and the Agency meeting on February 23, the City Manager will provide additional information and the Advisory Committee's recommendation at the February 23 meeting. The attached staff report is the report that the Advisory Committee will be considering.



IMPROVING OUR COMMUNITY

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CITY OF THE DALLES

AGENDA STAFF REPORT

URBAN RENEWAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MEETING DATE	AGENDA LOCATION	AGENDA REPORT #
February 17, 2015		

**TO:** Urban Renewal Agency

**FROM:** Nolan Young, Urban Renewal Manager *Ny*

**DATE:** February 11, 2015

**ISSUE:** Purchase of the Elks Building for a Neon Sign Museum

**BACKGROUND:** The Elks Building in downtown The Dalles has been vacant for many years and has not been heated or cooled for all that time. It has suffered major water damage. In addition, the roof has a significant leak. There is at least one broken window through which birds have access, and last summer a large portion of the cornice came loose and had to be repaired. The building is regarded as having great historical character, but the state of building is in constant decline.

In 2010, the Urban Renewal Agency staff did a rough estimate for bringing the building back to a usable condition which was well over one million dollars. In December 2014, Gary Rains did an additional initial assessment of this building and the cost was also in excess of one million dollars.

The Elks Building is currently on the market for \$450,000. After discussing the possible options with the realtor, it is our belief that the Urban Renewal Agency can purchase this building for \$245,000 with a requirement that the roof be recovered at a cost of approximately \$60,000 (Brown Roofing).

The Dalles is in the rare position of having a partner willing to take on the restoration of this building as a Sign Museum and centerpiece for Downtown. This is significant, because David Benko was the original curator for the American Sign Museum. He has a track record of restoring historic signage, plus Rocket City Neon has a collection of over 200 iconic signs including “Buster Brown Shoes” and “Jantzen Swimwear”.

“Signs are a fascinating reflection of America.” Todd Swormstedt, founder, American Sign Museum. In 2013, the American Sign Museum in Cincinnati, Ohio had 11,000 visitors and an operating budget of \$561,000 from a combination of visitors, grants and event rentals. We believe Rocket City will exceed these attendance numbers.

Rock City Signs previously made presentations to the Urban Renewal Advisory Committee and the Urban Renewal Agency regarding market survey funds for the project which they are no longer requesting. Gary Rains, the City’s Business Development Director, has also discussed the purchase of the Elks Building with the Advisory Committee and the Agency. Attached is a summary of questions that came up during those meetings, along with answers from Mr. Rains.

At the meeting we will have Gary Rains, our Business Development Director, Matthew Klebes, the Main Street Program Director, David Benko of Rock City Neon, and Rob Bearden, the current director of operations of the Portland Art Museum who will be the primary fundraisers for this project.

At this time we are asking the Urban Renewal Advisory Committee to recommend to the Urban Renewal Agency Board that they authorize staff to continue to proceed with the purchase of the Elks Building and the necessary papers for the building to be sold to David Benko for the development of a Sign Museum with a right to recover the building if the museum is not open within two years. Final documents would need to go to the Agency Board for approval.

**BUDGET IMPLICATIONS:** The Urban Renewal Agency has sufficient cash to pay the \$245,000 purchase price.

**RECOMMENDED MOTION:** Move to recommend that the Urban Renewal Agency proceed with the purchase of the Elks building from Steven Johnston for a maximum of \$245,000, and the transfer of title to David Benko for the development of a Sign Museum.



January 21, 2015

Re: Creation of Rocket City Sign Museum in Downtown

Dear Urban Renewal Agency Advisory Board,

Downtown The Dalles is at the beginning of a renaissance. The City of The Dalles through its leadership has developed an economic development effort and Main Street Program to make this happen. There are steps being taken in historic restoration and rehabilitation planning that may have a significant impact on the future. Urban Renewal is playing a vital role in this mission.

But today, right now, Downtown is in need something to get excited about. Rocket City Sign Museum is this type of project.

Electric signs, specifically neon signs, are celebrating 100 years. As the Interstate System came into existence so did much of our exposure to these iconic neon images - Drink Coca-Cola, Borden's Ice Cream, Chevrolet and Buster Brown Shoes - images from my childhood and yours. They are bright, colorful, whimsical and as much a part of our legacy as the '57 Chevy or '64 Mustang. And Rocket City has over 200 of these signs that simply need a permanent home.

The Elks Building is perfect to be this home. It is a grand old building built in 1910 that needs to be restored or torn down. We've reviewed the building and it is going to require your maintenance and help or it will continue to deteriorate at an ever-increasing rate. We're convinced the building can be restored with a lot of patience, time and money. But it also needs a purpose. After meeting with David Benko and his advisors, we're convinced David has the connections, passion and purpose that could make this a reality.

The Dalles is so fortunate. Rocket City Signs could become what WAAAM has become - a year-round draw that attracts visitors from around the world. This is a rare opportunity - not to be missed. I hope you agree Urban Renewal can and should make this happen. It's a great story that we will all be very proud of.

Sincerely,

Gary Rains  
Business Development Director  
City of The Dalles

Enc. LOI, Rocket City Images, Property Information



February 17, 2015

Fm: Gary Rains  
Business Development Director  
City of The Dalles

Re: Creation of Rocket City Sign Museum in Downtown

**Questions from the Urban Renewal Advisory Committee:**

- 1) **Will the Sign Museum be taxable** – Yes. Rocket City Sign Museum will be taxable. David Benko will found a non-profit for the purpose of raising money.
- 2) **Why don't we just keep it (the Elks Bldg) ourselves?** – The building is only one portion of the problem. The much bigger issues are future upkeep and finding an appropriate and sustainable use for the building.
- 3) **It's not our problem, why do we want to make it our problem?** – Because it *is* our problem. If the owner can't repair the building, it will continue to deteriorate. Eventually you're going to be faced with fixing the building or tearing it down... *either way, this is a million dollar problem.* It would be far better to support doing something *now*, while the building is still re-habitable.
- 4) **Parking will become a big issue?** – Any development in downtown will certainly impact parking. On two recent days, we counted 110 empty parking spaces within one block. Actually that will be a nice problem to have, because it means the museum is wildly successful.
- 5) **Will they be coming back to URA for more money?** – No, except for the façade program.
- 6) **What happens if the museum fails?** First, it won't. But the sale agreement will contain language that if it fails to become operational or is abandoned within two years, the City will take it back. Which means any appreciation in value will benefit the City.
- 7) **Can we negotiate to hold the funds for the roof and fold them into the reconstruction instead of paying them to the building owner?** [URA Board] As we finalize the purchase this could be a possible consideration.
- 8) **What is the risk of the project?** [URA Board] If we do nothing, we'll lose the opportunity. If we fund the project, and it's successful, everyone wins. If the project fails, we get back a building with a new roof and appreciated value.
- 9) **Did we do look for other users of the building or do an RFP?** [URA Board] Numerous parties have looked at the building. The cost of the building isn't the problem. Without a vision for something grand, that will attract major outside dollars, it is hard to envision any successful use of this building.
- 10) **Will the fundraising committee be local?** No. The emphasis will be on national money and national sign collections. – *Rob Bearden will explain.*
- 11) **Has the owner agreed to the purchase?** Yes. The realtor, Connie Thomasian assures us the owner is willing.
- 12) **What assurance do we have people will come to see the museum?** – *Matthew Klebes*
- 13) **We all want this iconic landmark to be brought back, what is the best way to do this?** Fully support the Sign Museum project.