



IMPROVING OUR COMMUNITY

COLUMBIA GATEWAY URBAN RENEWAL AGENCY

CITY OF THE DALLES

**Columbia Gateway Urban Renewal Agency Advisory Committee  
Tuesday, February 17, 2015**

**5:30 PM**

City Hall Council Chambers

313 Court Street

The Dalles, OR 97058

*Conducted in a handicap accessible room.*

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Grossman called the meeting to order at 5:30 PM.

ROLL CALL

Members Present: Gary Grossman, Steve Kramer, John Nelson, Atha Lincoln, Linda Miller, John Willer

Members Absent: \*Greg Weast, Jennifer Dewey

Staff Present: Urban Renewal Manager Nolan Young, Administrative Fellow Daniel Hunter, Administrative Secretary Carole Trautman

Others Present: Mid-Columbia Economic Development District (MCEDD) Loan Fund Manager Eric Nerdin, City of The Dalles Business Development Director Gary Rains, Main Street Program Director Matthew Klebes

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chair Grossman led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Grossman introduced Dr. John Willer, Mid-Columbia Fire and Rescue representative for the Urban Renewal Advisory Committee (URAC).

ELECTION OF COMMITTEE VICE CHAIRMAN

Chair Grossman called for nominations for the Committee's Vice Chair position. It was moved by Kramer and seconded by Nelson to nominate Greg Weast. With no further nominations, Chair Grossman called for the vote. Grossman, Kramer, Nelson, Lincoln and Miller voted in favor, Willer abstained; Weast and Dewey were absent. Motion carried.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Chair Grossman asked if there were any additions or corrections to the agenda. None were noted.

### APPROVAL OF MINUTES

It was moved by Nelson and seconded by Lincoln to approve the minutes as submitted. Grossman, Kramer, Nelson, Lincoln and Miller voted in favor, Willer abstained; Weast and Dewey were absent. Motion carried.

### PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

ACTION ITEM – Urban Renewal Property Rehabilitation Façade Improvement Application Review and Recommendation to the Agency Board for Columbia Gorge Real Estate

**\*NOTE:** Weast joined the meeting at 5:33 PM.

MCEDD Loan Fund Manager Nerdin presented highlights of the staff report and pointed out that this was the first Urban Renewal (UR) Property Rehabilitation Façade Improvement Grant application since the formation of the program.

Applicant Nan Wimmers stated that a Phase III was planned for the project, the installation of an outdoor courtyard. Ms. Wimmers indicated no UR funds would be requested for Phase III.

Miller and Weast said they supported the project. Weast asked if the Agency would need to borrow money this fiscal year to recover funds. Urban Renewal Manager Young stated that there would be sufficient cash this year to fund projects, but the Agency would need to borrow funds for certain projects next fiscal year.

It was moved by Kramer and seconded by Weast to recommend approval by the Urban Renewal Agency (Agency) board of a \$10,100.00 Property Rehabilitation Façade Improvement Grant to Columbia Gorge Real Estate for its Phase II project. Grossman, Kramer, Weast, Lincoln, Nelson, and Miller voted in favor; Willer abstained; Dewey absent. The motion carried.

ACTION ITEM - Recommendation Concerning Funding for the Lewis and Clark Fountain Project

Administrative Fellow Daniel Hunter presented the highlights of the staff report. Hunter stated that the Agency had committed to a \$100,000 donation, and the project was at a point where they were ready to proceed. The bronze canoe sculpture design was created by artist Jeff Stewart and would be placed in the circular grass area on the south side of the park.

Urban Renewal Manager Young reported that the UR funds for the fountain had been in place for approximately four years, and the Agency would not need to borrow cash to fund the project this year. However, Young said, any money spent this year would mean less money available next year.

Miller stated that she thought it was a wonderful project. Her concern was vandalism, because there was a history of vandalism in the park. Young said cameras were installed at the park, but they had not been as effective as they had hoped. Chair Grossman pointed out that there was a fair amount of leverage this year receiving a donation, and if the project did not proceed this year, the Agency could lose the donation.

It was moved by Nelson and seconded by Kramer to recommend approval by the Urban Renewal Agency board for the distribution of \$100,000 for the development of the Lewis and Clark Fountain Project. Grossman, Kramer, Weast, Lincoln, Nelson, and Miller voted in favor; Willer abstained; Dewey absent. The motion carried.

ACTION ITEM – Recommendation Concerning the Real Property Purchase of the Elks Building for a Neon Sign Museum

The Dalles Business Development Director Rains highlighted his list of questions from the URAC and the Agency board dated February 17, 2015. Some of the main discussion points of his report were as follows:

- The assessed tax value of the building was \$262,000, and the annual property tax payments were current.
- Staff researched and determined there is a considerable amount of downtown parking available.
- The potential for additional UR funding for the façade improvement on the building could possibly come late in the project.
- Holding funds for the roofing until the time of reconstruction rather than funding the roof project up front could be a consideration, but Rains felt it would be better to get the roofing done early. Staff was continuing to gather information on specific cost estimates in order to get the best price.

Main Street Program Director Klebes reported on the tourism visitor rates at other museums and attractions in the area as follows: The Discovery Center – 34,000/yr.; Western Auto Museum – 40,000/yr; Maryhill – 40,000 over seven months; Bonneville Dam – 60,000/yr; Sunshine Mill Winery – 9,000 visitors last year; cruise ship visitors last year totaled approximately over 14,600. Interstate 84 traffic totals approximately 7 million cars a year.

Weast asked Rob Bearden, Director of Operations at Portland Art Museum, how many visitors per year would be needed to sustain the Sign Museum operations. Mr. Bearden said the estimate would be 25-27,000 visitors annually. One of the original fundraisers of the Portland Art Museum, Lucy Buchanan, offered to assist in the fundraising for this project on a national level. She has seen the site, and had a favorable opinion of the site and thought it was a viable project. Bearden said the sign industry is a national industry, and David Benko is on the radar with every major sign company in the United States, if not the world. The plan would be to draw up a national board, primarily for fundraising, because much of the inventory on display would come from around the world on loan. That would be the bulk of the startup capital. Mr. Bearden said the Buchanans raised \$125 million in over 11 years from the tri-county area around Portland, as

well as national contacts. “We don’t expect the funds to come from The Dalles,” Bearden said. He thought two years was a reasonable time to develop the project—a year to gather funding, and a year to build the project out to be presentable. He felt this site was “the right fit,” and they were excited about it.

Miller asked if they were seeking private investors. Bearden said not on this project. Nelson asked how they would market the vision locally. Mr. Bearden said it would depend, possibly bring a team to the area and spend time with the local people.

Various downtown stakeholders in the audience gave comments on the business project. Gary Honald asked what the plans were for the floating dance floor on the third floor. Bearden said they intended to preserve every inch of it. A new roof was imperative for that to happen. Mr. Honald said it sounded like a good project, because it was a project that would bring people to the downtown area. Michael Leash said he thought the project was a great concept and would be a great addition. Converting a building to tourism was a good thing. Chuck Covert said he had an opportunity previously to take a tour of the building, and he was amazed at its character. He felt any improvement in downtown was a big plus. Nan Wimmers commented that the project would add great diversity.

Nelson asked Mr. Bearden if any thought had been given to include, as part of the museum, a presentation of the history of the building. Bearden said they hadn’t given that much thought, but David Benko was a great historian. Gary Rains added that Benko had already obtained a set of old drawings of the building and had researched it.

It was moved by Weast and seconded by Lincoln to recommend that the Urban Renewal Agency move in a positive direction for the purchase of the Elks building for the purpose of the creation of a Sign Museum.

It was moved by Kramer and seconded by Weast to amend the original motion to include the maximum dollar amount of UR funds of \$245,000. Chair Grossman called for the vote on the amendment. Grossman, Kramer, Weast, Lincoln, Nelson, and Miller voted in favor; Willer abstained; Dewey absent. The motion carried.

Chair Grossman called for the vote on the original motion as amended. Grossman, Kramer, Weast, Lincoln, Nelson, and Miller voted in favor; Willer abstained; Dewey absent. The motion carried.

#### ONGOING URBAN RENEWAL PROJECTS UPDATE

Urban Renewal Manager Young reported that the United Church of Christ Congregational completed the window project and the UR grant payment was made.

Main Street Program Director Klebes reported that he has two more Property Rehabilitation Façade Improvement projects coming up in the near future, and he will be meeting with two additional potential applicants in the near future.

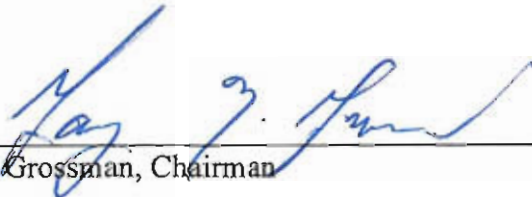
Granada Block Redevelopment Rapoza representative Michael Leash reported that the EB5 term sheet was signed, and the process was moving forward.

FUTURE MEETING – March 17, 2015

ADJOURNMENT

Chair Grossman adjourned the meeting at 6:17 PM.

Respectfully submitted by Administrative Secretary Carole Trautman.



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Gary Grossman, Chairman