

MISSOULA REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY

CONDENSED BOARD MEETING MINUTES

February 21, 2019

FINAL

A Regular meeting of the Board of Commissioners of the Missoula Redevelopment Agency was held on Thursday, February 21, 2019 at the Hal Fraser Conference Room, 140 W. Pine, at 12:00 p.m. Those in attendance were as follows:

Board: Ruth Reineking, Melanie Brock, Tasha Jones

Staff: Ellen Buchanan, Chris Behan, Tod Gass, Jilayne Dunn, Lesley Pugh

Public: John Herzer, Blackfoot River Outfitters; Terri Raugland, Blackfoot River Outfitters; Aaron Polumsky, Montana Carpenter Union; Mike Day, WGM Group; Martin Kidston, Missoula Current; David Erickson, Missoulian, Missoula Community Access Television (MCAT)

CALL TO ORDER

12:00 p.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

January 17, 2019 Regular Board Meeting Minutes were approved as submitted.

PUBLIC COMMENTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

ACTION ITEMS

Bitterroot Trail Connection – Pine to Spruce Streets (URD II) – Request for Additional Engineering and Project Administration Funds (Behan)

Behan said staff has been working to get this trail section built for several years. Last year the MRA Board authorized staff to enter into an agreement with WGM Group to design the trail section. Behan said this section exists only because it has always been judged to be too difficult for any of the other City departments to take on and actually make it work. Behan said it looks simple but there are a lot of complicating factors.

Behan said the design phase ended up being even more complicated than anybody had originally thought. Part of that is because the street on the east side and the street on the west side were built in two different subdivisions and are different widths. That makes it hard to figure out how to get trucks in and out of a driveway, along with a trail, and still keep drainage functioning properly. He said a lot of the things that aren't visible have increased the price in terms of design, which WGM Group has estimated to be around \$15,000.

Behan said WGM Group says they feel like that amount is their responsibility and they will absorb that cost.

Behan said in between the conceptual drawings and when the plans were submitted for approval by the City there had been a lot of activity regarding how the sidewalk should be built on either side, how the trail should be aligned next to the railroad, how tall the walls should be next to the trail on the east side, and so on. Each of those were designed in accordance with City code and had to have signatures by the City Engineer's office, the Building office, and the Parks and Recreation Department in order to move forward. Behan said those took time and what engineers sell is their time. To get all of the questions answered and do other investigating it has ended up costing money. Behan said WGM Group is requesting that MRA reimburse those costs in the amount of \$18,709. Behan said he has met with individuals from WGM Group three times and they have submitted lengthy written explanations of the expenses. He said it is fair compensation for the work they have done to benefit the project and to make it come to fruition. Behan said the staff recommendation is to authorize an amendment to the Professional Services agreement with WGM Group in an amount not to exceed \$18,709.

Mike Day, WGM Group, said it has been a very complex project. He said he's looked at it in the past, as well as have his peers, and they have always run into the issue of not being able to do it for whatever reason. When they came up with the concept of having the switchback and the stairs he said it was the first time they saw a way of potentially getting it done. Day said they got it to the point where it could be done, however there were concerns. He said everybody wanted to look at it and it needed to be looked at in different ways because it is going to be a very permanent piece of infrastructure. Day said he thinks they have a workable solution that will help alleviate the public safety concerns in that area as well as complete the missing link of the trail.

Jones asked what the next step is in this process if it is approved. Behan said they'll finish up the paperwork and Day believes it will be out to bid in about two weeks. Hopefully construction can begin during the summer and early fall. Behan said they are considering splitting off the lighting portion of it because the lead time on them is long, about six months. Behan said they can open the trail but the lighting will likely happen at a later date in the fall.

Reineking asked if the switchback is to accommodate wheelchairs or others with mobility impairments. Day said yes. Reineking asked if there will also be stairs. Day said to do the switchback and the stairs would have provided the accessibility required by ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) and PROWAG (Public Rights-of-Way Accessibility Guidelines). However, due to maintenance neither the City nor Parks and Rec believe that it would be maintainable to a level that would be safe without doing a lot of other infrastructure improvements which would have been outside the scope and budget for this project. Day said they looked at other solutions that could be more "roadside" solutions and once they started looking at those it became a road reconstruction project rather than a trail connection. The road reconstruction is a much more involved public process and needs to be its own separate project. Day said they have taken out the switchback and the stairs for now, knowing that in the future they will look at improvements as far as the roadway, parking and pedestrian facilities.

Brock asked about the “Bitterroot Trail Connection - Pine to Spruce Streets” line item in the URD II budget and asked if it was this connection. Buchanan said yes, and that it is for design engineering, not construction. Buchanan said there will be a new line item for construction.

BROCK: I MOVE TO APPROVE THE STAFF RECOMMENDATION TO AUTHORIZE AN AMENDMENT TO THE PROFESSIONAL SERVICES AGREEMENT – BITTERROOT TRAIL PINE STREET LINK BETWEEN WGM GROUP AND MRA IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$18,709 TO COMPLETE FINAL DESIGN, FINAL BID DOCUMENT PREPARATION, AND CONSTRUCTION ADMINISTRATION.

Jones seconded the motion.

No further discussion. No public comment.

Motion passed unanimously (3 ayes, 0 nays).

Buchanan said a Downtown Police Officer did a presentation at the BID (Business Improvement District) board meeting on Tuesday. He talked about this stretch of non-trail, specifically the fact that he went there in Hazmat (Hazardous Materials) gear and carried out two truckloads of trash. She said this is an important project. Reineking said she is glad there is lighting planned for it. Buchanan said coming back to the Board will be a request for approval of purchase of the light fixtures by MRA and award of a construction contract for everything else plus the labor to install the lights.

Blackfoot River Outfitters – 235 North Russell Street (URD II) – Request to Proceed Without Prejudice (Behan)

Behan said Blackfoot River Outfitters is currently located on Reserve Street. The owners, John Herzer and Terri Raugland, have purchased the vacant property located at 235 North Russell, which is on the corner just east of Bayern Brewing. The owners intend to construct a building that will house their fishing and adventure business – Blackfoot River Outfitters, along with a separate retail store and a coffee shop.

Behan said he thinks this project is the kind of business and structure that MRA is looking for to fill in along Russell Street. He said it fits with the Russell Street Study the Sonoran Institute did for MRA a number of years ago. Behan said the owners need to get moving on the project and get demolition and clearing started which may be included in a future Tax Increment Financing (TIF) application. If they were to start the project without a Proceed Without Prejudice approval from the MRA Board, those items would automatically become ineligible under MRA’s rules. Behan said the staff recommendation is to approve Black River Outfitters proceeding with the work on certain items without precluding them from a future application.

Raugland said they want to get going on the project as quickly as possible. She said this is all new to them so they are just trying to follow the rules. According to their contractor they need to start demolition as soon as possible. She said Dick Anderson Construction is currently using the space on a month to month lease so they can be moved out quickly. Raugland said they hope to be in the new building by the end of the year.

Herzer said they don't know how soon the project will go through permitting because there have been a lot of changes at the City. He said their architect, True North Architecture, and builder have been in the business a while but neither can tell exactly how it will work out, so they are asking for the opportunity to start demolition as soon as possible. Herzer said this is very exciting for them. The building will be around 8,000 square feet. They are in the process of negotiating with a professional services company right now for a long-term lease in one of the spaces. He said he feels like it will be attractive to other investors too. He said it's wonderful that Russell Street is changing and they look forward to being one of the first people there to spark that region. Herzer added that they also have a store in Phillipsburg that they've had for twelve years and the store in Missoula they've had for eight years. Blackfoot River Outfitters has been guiding in Montana for 30 years.

Behan said Blackfoot River Outfitters and their contractor do understand the deconstruction policy. He said the building on the property is essentially a concrete bunker with siding on it. The walls are 16 inches wide. Herzer said the building will come down. They tried to figure out a way to make the façade work, but they did not come up with anything.

Jones said her eyes are drawn to the overhead power lines in the photos. Herzer said the power lines are down and buried with the new road. There is currently one left and it will be buried as well. Herzer said the property is a diamond in the rough and it is already looking better.

Reineking asked if the design will meet the new Design Guidelines through the City. Herzer said it will. Reineking said she also wanted to make sure they understand that if the Board approves the motion today it is not the same as approving their future application. Herzer and Raugland said they do understand that.

Jones asked what the general timeline is. Herzer said, depending on permitting, their goal is to be in the building at the end of November. He said everything is lined up and ready to go. At the very latest they need to be in by February 2020. They need at least a month to find themselves in the new facility because their season kicks in March 1st and is non-stop through October.

JONES: I MOVE THE BOARD ACCEPT THE STAFF RECOMMENDATION TO APPROVE BLACKFOOT RIVER OUTFITTER'S REQUEST TO PROCEED WITH WORK ON CERTAIN PROJECT ITEMS WITHOUT PRECLUDING THOSE ITEMS FROM BEING INCLUDED IN A FUTURE ASSISTANCE APPLICATION FOR A PROJECT AT 235 NORTH RUSSELL STREET.

Brock seconded the motion.

No further discussion. No public comment.

Motion passed unanimously (3 ayes, 0 nays).

NON-ACTION ITEMS

STAFF REPORTS

Director's Report

Buchanan said the bonds for The Merc were approved by City Council and they are currently waiting to get their Certificate of Occupancy to sell the bonds so MRA isn't paying money on interest it can't disburse. Reineking said the Board did get their invitation to the soft opening.

Budget Reports

Dunn said the revenue will look the same as last month because the City hasn't had the opportunity to make transfers yet. Dunn said the first half of the tax increment remittance has also been taken care of on schedule.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

OTHER ITEMS

Reineking said the City Council has started what they are calling the Citizen's Academy. They invite people to come to a series of meetings with various departments of the City to learn about how the City functions. There were over 100 applicants and 35 were chosen for the first go-round. Reineking said they have completed six out of eight weeks of meetings and Development Services and MRA happened to be the sixth one. She said she and Buchanan presented at the meeting and there were a lot of really good questions. She said they were able to represent the MRA well and impart a lot of good information that was well received. She thanked Buchanan for doing it. Buchanan said she thinks they were able to do away with some myths as well. She said the group was very engaged. Reineking also thanked City Council for putting it together and said she hopes they are able to continue it. Buchanan said it was filmed and MCAT said weeks one through three are On Demand right now.

ADJOURNMENT

Adjourned at 12:28 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,



Lesley Pugh