

City of St. Helens Urban Renewal Agency

Approved Minutes

January 17, 2018

Members Present: Ginny Carlson, Vice Chair
Doug Morten, Agency Member
Rick Scholl, Agency Member
Susan Conn, Agency Member
Keith Locke, Chair

Members Absent: None

Staff Present: John Walsh, City Administrator
Matt Brown, Finance Director
Margaret Jeffries, Library Director
Sue Nelson, Public Works Engineering Director
Jennifer Dimsho, Associate Planner

Others: Mark Kreutzer
Al Petersen
Sarah Sparks

- 1) **Call to Order - 6:00 p.m.**
- 2) **Election of Officers: Chair & Vice Chair**

Agency Member Carlson asked if there would be additional community representation on the Urban Renewal Agency (URA). City Administrator John Walsh said the URA was established in 2008 originally, and it did not include membership outside of City Council. He said as the URA moves forward, additional membership can be considered. Associate Planner Jennifer Dimsho noted that the bylaws proposed for adoption today are flexible and allow for the creation of Advisory Committees to allow input from the community on certain projects or issues.

Agency Member Morten asked how long the terms last for Vice Chair and Chair. Dimsho said terms are for one year.

Agency Member Locke said since this is his last year on City Council, he would not mind serving as Chair this year. Morten proposed Agency Member Carlson or Agency Member Conn as a Vice Chair. Carlson said she would be happy to serve as Vice Chair.

Motion: Upon Agency Member Scholl's motion and Agency Member Carlson's second, the Urban Renewal Agency unanimously approved Agency Member Locke to serve as Chair. [AYES: Agency Member Carlson, Agency Member Morten, Agency Member Scholl, Agency Member Conn; Nays: None]

Motion: Upon Chair Locke's motion and Agency Member Conn's second, the Urban Renewal Agency unanimously approved Agency Member Carlson to serve as Vice Chair. [AYES: Agency Member Morten, Agency Member Scholl, Agency Member Conn; Nays: None]

3) **Consent Agenda for Approval**
3.A URA Minutes dated May 5, 2017

Motion: Upon Agency Member Conn's motion and Vice Chair Carlson's second, the Urban Renewal Agency unanimously approved the Urban Renewal Agency minutes dated May 5, 2017. [AYES: Agency Member Morten, Agency Member Scholl, Agency Member Conn, Vice Chair Carlson; Nays: None]

4) **Public Comment**

Kreutzer, Mark. Kreutzer is concerned about the makeup of the Urban Renewal Agency (URA). He knows it is convenient to have City Council make up the URA, but he feels it would not represent those who are impacted by the URA decisions. Kreutzer would like to propose two members of City Council, one County Commissioner, two members from special districts, and two citizens at large. He feels that this would represent the wider public in decisions. He said Advisory Committees will not have the power to make decisions.

Vice Chair Carlson also wants wider participation because she feels it results in better outcomes. She explained that the City's Budget Committee is made up of equal representation of the community and City Council. Kreutzer said he is on the Board of Directors for Columbia River Fire & Rescue and their Budget Committee includes five board members and five citizens at large. Morten asked if Kreutzer would like to see a makeup similar to the St. Helens Budget Committee on the Urban Renewal Agency. Kreutzer said yes. Five members of City Council and five members of the public would be a fair compromise, so long as the other five members represent taxing districts, citizens, and a County Commissioner. Morten said he would like this to be added to the next URA agenda. Chair Locke and Vice Chair Carlson agreed.

Chair Locke added that the City Council is elected by the whole community. He feels the current Council makeup is very diverse and represents the public. Morten also said when additional members are added, there is a risk of the makeup of the agency being weighted towards one concern over another. This topic warrants further discussion at the next URA meeting.

Agency Member Scholl said he originally thought City Council would have too much power if they made up the URA. He said the history of urban renewal has been negative because City Councils abused the power. Scholl said legislation now requires strict use of urban renewal funds on projects that are defined in the adopted Urban Renewal Plan. Morten said there is a benefit of having the City Council serve as the URA because it is more cohesive. He said if the URA and City Council disagree, there can be serious problems.

Kreutzer thanked the URA for the opportunity to speak on this.

Petersen, Al. Petersen agrees with Mark Kreutzer. He noted that concerns about the URA makeup were made multiple times throughout the planning process. He said there are multiple ways to structure how the public can be involved. He said the citizen at large or special district representation could be on rotation. Petersen said the URA should be sensitive to the perception that the special districts have given up revenues to the URA. Petersen thinks that

having special district representation on the URA with voting power can help with any potential negative perception.

Next, Petersen asked what is going on with the agency. He asked if the URA would be prioritizing projects prior to revenues coming in. He said the URA should start having more regular meetings so that when money comes in, the City is ready to implement projects. Scholl said there is at least a couple of years until the URA has enough money to leverage a loan for the first project.

Sparks, Sarah. Sparks said school facilities need to be re-done. She said the bathrooms are in terrible condition. Scholl agreed that the conditions of the restrooms are terrible. Scholl said the school bond that recently passed should help with school facilities. Morten said UR can also help provide safe passage to and from school. Chair Locke recommended that Sparks consider joining the Youth City Council.

5) Discussion/Action Items

5.A Resolution No. UR-001 - Adopting Bylaws of the Urban Renewal Agency of the City of St. Helens

Morten said the URA can amend the bylaws at any time by a vote. Vice Chair Carlson asked if there will be any predictability to the meeting schedule for the public who want to attend. Chair Locke would like to add a discussion of meeting dates and times to the next agenda.

Motion: Upon Agency Member Morten's motion and Agency Member Conn's second, the Urban Renewal Agency unanimously adopted Resolution No. UR-001 Adopting Bylaws of the Urban Renewal Agency of the City of St. Helens. [AYES: Vice Chair Carlson, Agency Member Morten, Agency Member Scholl, Agency Member Conn; Nays: None]

5.B Resolution No. UR-002: Proposing a Minor Amendment to the St. Helens Urban Renewal Plan

Walsh explained that when the approved urban renewal boundary went to the County Assessor's office, they requested that the boundary be amended to reflect full parcels because it would make assessment more difficult. Walsh said the changes make up less than half of a percent in total boundary acreage. Dimsho said that when the boundary was originally drawn, it went about three to four blocks back from street corridors where improvements were proposed. This method included bisected tax lots. Dimsho said we did not know this would be an issue until the adopted boundary went to the County Assessor, and they let us know that people would be receiving two separate tax bills for the same property. The boundary would not change how much their property taxes are, but the boundary determines how the money is allocated. Instead of creating a hassle for citizens, we want to correct the boundary to follow exact property lines. Dimsho said she verified with the County Assessor that the new boundary proposed with this minor amendment would solve the issue.

Motion: Upon Vice Chair Carlson's motion and Agency Member Morten's second, the Urban Renewal Agency unanimously adopted Resolution No. UR-002 Proposing a Minor Amendment to the St. Helens Urban Renewal Plan. [AYES: Vice Chair Carlson, Agency Member Morten, Agency Member Scholl, Agency Member Conn; Nays: None]

6) **Administrator Report**

Walsh said the URA is in its infancy stage. We cannot leverage any money at this point for projects unless the City loans the agency seed money. He said other Cities sometimes create the URA before plans have been adopted. In this case, we have multiple adopted plans with very specific projects. Walsh said the City is in a great position with all of our adopted plans, many of which have been funded by state and federal grant programs. Walsh said discussing agency representation and a regular schedule of meetings are great future agenda items.

Morten would like members of the URA to make clarifying statements after yes or no vote so that citizens understand the reasons for their vote. Chair Locke said this should be added to the next agenda. Chair Locke proposed April 18 at 6 p.m. for the next URA meeting. Vice Chair Carlson asked how the notice for meetings would be distributed. Dimsho said it follows the same notification process as our Planning Commission. The agenda and packet were sent out to our mass distribution list, which includes the press, a week in advance of the meeting. The meeting agenda and packet was uploaded to the City's website on the Public Meetings Calendar. Chair Locke asked if the agenda and packet could be sent to the Chair of each taxing district. Dimsho said if the URA eventually includes membership of the taxing districts, additional notification may be unnecessary. Dimsho recommended discussing rules for notification of meetings within the larger discussion of a Public Involvement Plan for the URA.

Morten recommended that the URA not deliberate on the spot when issues are brought up by the community. He suggested that items be placed on the next agenda for discussion so that members have time to do the research in advance of deliberations in order to make thoughtful decisions.

7) **Adjournment**

There being no further business before the Urban Renewal Agency, the meeting was adjourned at 6:48 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer Dimsho
Associate Planner