

**Urban Renewal Advisory Committee Meeting**  
**Regular Meeting**  
**February 20, 2020**

**Present:** Chair Jack Trumbull, Vice Chair Pat McAllister, Abby Capovilla, Jody Behr, Tina Lassen, Amanda Goeke, Joshua Chandler

**Staff:** Urban Renewal Administrator Rachael Fuller, Director of Finance/ACM Will Norris, Planning Director Dustin Nilsen, City Engineer Stoner Bell and Dev Bell, City Recorder Jennifer Gray

**Absent:**

I CALL TO ORDER – Trumbull opened the meeting at 5:30 p.m.

II BUSINESS FROM THE AUDIENCE

III AGENDA ADDITIONS

IV APPROVAL OF MINUTES

**Motion:** To approve the meeting minutes of November 21, 2019 as amended

**First:** McAllister

**Second:** Chandler

**Discussion:** Goeke pointed out a typo on page 2. Instead of stating “conclusive” in Behr’s statement it should state “inclusive.” It is our collective intention to be inclusive, to listen, to encourage and gather input from one another and all members of the public.

**Vote:** Motion passed unanimously

**Motion:** To approve the meeting minutes of December 19, 2019 as written.

**First:** Goeke

**Second:** McAllister

**Discussion:** Trumbull noted he was not at the meeting in December, but he is very appreciative for Behr’s participation and work she did for the Urban Renewal Advisory Committee.

**Vote:** Motion passed unanimously

V URBAN RENEWAL ADMINISTRATOR

1. Heights Project – Two Paths Forward

Norris stated at the last URAC meeting the committee asked that Chief Holste attend the meeting to give an overview on the enforcement strategy on the Heights and to give the committee an opportunity to ask him any questions.

Holste answered questions and spoke about enforcement in the Heights area and throughout the City. He spoke about the difficulties of enforcing crosswalks. Drivers tend to slow down when they

see an officer and abide by the rules. It takes a lot of time to sit in one location. They would like to increase enforcement, but they are unable to put the time into it like they did in the past. Since the recent changes by ODOT with the Heights crosswalks, they have received less complaints. He added the Police Department will place the digital speed sign (trailer), at locations when requested by the public. He welcomed citizens to contact him if they have any additional questions or concerns, they would like to discuss.

#### Heights Project – Two Paths Forward

Norris gave a brief overview on Urban Renewal to educate the new members of the audience.

The Heights Urban Renewal District was formed in 2011 via Ordinance 1999. The district was authorized at creation to borrow up to \$8.5 million to accomplish the projects in the simultaneously adopted Heights Urban Renewal Plan and Report. The district remained largely inactive for several years as it accumulated resources and the downtown and waterfront urban renewal districts dominated the agency's focus.

In 2017, the Urban Renewal Agency (Agency) hosted a series of community events to prioritize Heights Urban Renewal Plan projects. These meetings included open ended options for the public to propose new ideas. Studying traffic flow modifications on State Highway 281 was a common request. Dovetailing on the Agency hosted events were grassroots events, including a "Walkshop" facilitated by Blue Zones, LLC and streetscape demonstration projects as part of an Open Streets event. These community events heavily emphasized modifying traffic flows on State Highway 281.

In 2018, the Agency issued a Request for Proposal (RFP) for an urban design team to, in part, study incorporation of traffic modifications into the Heights Urban Renewal Plan. The Agency selected a consulting team and worked through initial project visioning and completion of a traffic study in 2019. The Agency and project team chose to discontinue this contract in late 2019. The Agency then entered contract negotiations with the second rated consulting team from the original RFP, MIG, to carry the project forward.

The MIG team thoroughly reviewed the project work to-date as well prior existing Heights District planning documents. MIG and Agency staff held near weekly conference calls to answer questions and develop a revised project scope of work. During the scope discussions it became clear that the existing project and budget are not realistic.

The memorandum and scope outline in the meeting packet from MIG is intended to initiate a discussion on the desired project scale and explain what is required to adequately consider district traffic modifications. This includes increasing the project budget by as much as 3x. This enlarged budget is cognizant of the fractured and energized interest groups that have coalesced around the traffic change question in the Heights. The MIG memorandum and scope also offer an alternative condensed option that remains within existing budget but also does not venture outside of the adopted 2011 Heights District Urban Renewal Plan (which does not include major roadway and intersection modifications).

MIG and Agency Staff agree that reevaluation of project scale is a necessary and appropriate step at this point. The MIG team is ready and willing to support the Urban Renewal Agency for either sized project. The primary goal is to align resources to project ambitions to insure a successful implementation.

Staff Recommendation: Provide an Urban Renewal Advisory Committee recommendation to the Urban Renewal Agency Board on the two paths forward identified by MIG.

Alternatives: Re-bid the project or initiate development of existing 2011 Urban Renewal Plan projects on an individual basis.

Trumbull asked Norris to speak about the traffic study.

Norris explained MIG believes in order to be successful and to really consider traffic modifications supported by traffic safety, it would be more in the line of \$300,000 or potentially more. To put that in perspective, that is about 3.5% of the budget for the entire district. It is certainly a major revision to what they were expecting to pay going into this project. MIG and Norris both thought this needs to have a "gut check" and go back to the Advisory Committee and the Urban Renewal Agency Board for their direction. Do they want to spend the money that is necessary to really do the project fully and complete with as much outreach as possible, for something that could be as large as modifying traffic flows? Or do they want to stay within the four walls of the existing 2011 Urban Renewal Plan? There is flexibility to address safety but not changing lanes of traffic. That is the policy question in front of the Advisory Committee now and for the Agency Board in a couple of weeks.

MIG is wanting to have a review and confirmation of the scoring criteria meeting to make sure the conclusion is what you buy into. They want to use the majority of the current traffic study but do some additional work to have an addendum to it and then carry forward.

Norris stated the two options within the existing direction to stick with the original solicitation is stay within the confines of the 2011 Plan or commit the resources that MIG says is necessary, if they are going to take on the assessment of modification to traffic flows. Norris stated traffic flows are a major scope expansion to the existing 2011 Plan.

Lassen stated she would like to see a part of the proposal to include what are the logical ways some projects can be done in the near-term.

Norris stated he would take the Advisory Committee's recommendation to the Agency Board next month. If approved the details would be flushed out and the turnaround should be quick.

Trumbull stated he would like a more comprehensive plan and a plan that would involve the constituents of the City and the other entities that are involved. He would like a plan that would continue moving forward quicker. He would prefer to not go back to an open bid.

Public Comment:

Susan Johnson, Hood River, OR – she appreciates Trumbull's statement about having others included in this process. She added the League of Oregon Cities has trainings regarding expectations of local government committees. She suggested it is something URAC should be looking into, if interested.

Peter Cornelison, Hood River, OR – he asked that the URAC wait on this decision. It is a big deal. It might seem like it's something the group has been working on for a while, but the memo provided by Norris is dated today. That is not enough time for such a big decision. He asked

that they discuss it tonight but decide at the next meeting. The Heights has great potential, and everyone is excited about it. There are a number of things that need to be fixed. He believes they need to spend whatever is necessary to get a really good plan; something that will stand the test of time.

Norris clarified the memo is dated for today, but it was sent to the Advisory Committee last week.

Kyle Ramey, Hood River, OR – he read a letter to the editor published on January 25 in the Hood River News. It was regarding the concerns of pedestrian safety on State Street.

Taylor Gautier, 1621 4<sup>th</sup> Street, Hood River, OR – he is here tonight to speak about safety and that is why he has been a part of Streets Alive. He spoke to Council last year asking them to work on safer routes to school. Council did so, by putting it on their list of goals for 2020. He thanked Norris for his updates. He believes safety needs to be addressed in a holistic manner. He shared a photo of how much space it takes for cars for the certain number of people on a road. It takes about six blocks for this number of people but if they are on bicycles it's about 1.5 blocks. That is something to keep in mind, if they design the roads for just cars and parking, that is what you're going to get. It needs to be designed for all users. Photo was added to the record.

Heather Staten, Thrive – she is encouraging the URAC to stick with the original plan. The Advisory Committee chose to do a comprehensive design of the Heights for a reason. They wanted to look at it holistically and address all of the underlying problems and bring all of the stakeholders into the discussion. There is a large interest in this project and there have been several public meetings. She wanted to remind the group about some of the data behind why they need to do a comprehensive design. The Heights does not work for any mode of travel. Staten showed a map of the Heights provided by ODOT. The dots of the map show where there has been a crash. Photo was added to the record. There is no place like the Heights for the density of automobile crashes. There were 25 in 2017; 7 were injury crashes and 3 involved pedestrians. The traffic study is interesting. There are 20 intersections that were studied. 5 of the intersections are already failing. By 2039, 11 of the intersections will be failing. For pedestrians, they analyzed 49 legs of intersections and only 4 of them have legal curb ramps. Both 12<sup>th</sup> Street and 13<sup>th</sup> Street are coded red, which is the worst rating. All these things can be addressed in a comprehensive plan. A plan is needed to address what is going to happen in the next 20 years.

Megan Ramey, Hood River, OR – Streets Alive has received a grant to produce a short film that will have the goals of empathy and awareness around biking, walking and driving in the Heights. She has researched what the relevant laws are for both the State and the City for people biking, walking and driving and what is the general etiquette. She read the law regarding biking on sidewalks. "Operating rules in addition to observing all other applicable provisions of the Ordinance codified in title and state law, an operator of a bicycle, skateboard, roller skates or inline skates upon a street shall a.) not ride upon a sidewalk within a commercial zone, or an industrial zone." Going to the ODOT map, the pink zone in the Heights is 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> Street and all of the cross streets. That means a child cannot bike on the sidewalks legally on any of the sidewalk in the Heights.

Adam Mims, Hood River, OR – he lives in the Heights. He would like to echo what he has heard from others regarding safety. It's dangerous for everyone, no matter what time of the day

it is. This is all very fresh in his mind because last week, his family was almost hit in one of the crosswalks. It was a very close call for his family of four and his dog. This is very real and happening daily.

Nicholas Kramer, Hood River, OR – he stated this is an ODOT facility and they don't have ODOT in the room. ODOT standards will apply to this. Whatever is designed, has to meet their standards. He is confused when they would come into this process. He understands what they will get out of public involvement but what they get out of ODOT. What ODOT will allow is a totally different thing. He asked if a TSP would be a better step first. ODOT reviews TSP's and fund them. Once the parameters are known, then a project can be designed. He doesn't want there to be a great design created and then get roadblocked by ODOT.

Ruth Meletz, Hood River, OR – she is a resident and business owner in the Heights. She does not know what a traffic change would entail. She has been concerned about dropping to one lane due to the amount of traffic. She said the traffic study was done in September, rather than having it done during the summer season. She believes summer traffic numbers should also be included. She spoke about the cross walk that was removed at the Farm Stand on 12<sup>th</sup> Street. Kids are still crossing there and this is happening at other areas. She is frightened more about pedestrians getting killed than anything. She is not sure if there is something the public can do to get some crosswalks reinstated by ODOT.

Norris responded that is part of the more comprehensive corridor study, including a lot of work about ODOT design standards, OR highway plan policies and the access management rules. Everything they would need to do to ensure this fits within ODOT's manual. It will be on a fast track for approval. Through this larger comprehensive project, is how they have strived to get ODOT's attention on this. There was an ODOT representative that helped craft the RFP and they were on the selection criteria. One of the reasons the traffic study took so long to get done was because it was going through ODOT review for comment and revisions based on their comments. Having it go through in a comprehensive way allows it to be all blessed by ODOT. Depending on where this goes, this will likely be appended on to the amendment to the TSP. They are doing the Westside Plan amendment, and this would also be integrated with ODOT.

McAllister noted ODOT has attended past meetings. He added most everyone on the URAC were not happy to see the removal of the crosswalks by ODOT. The crosswalks did not meet ODOT standards, so they were removed. When projects get done in the Heights, they will be able to get the crosswalks reopened; they will meet ODOT standards.

The Advisory Committee discussed and agreed to make a recommendation to the Agency to move forward with the comprehensive plan.

**Motion:** I move to make a recommendation to the Agency to move forward with the comprehensive plan.  
**First:** McAllister  
**Second:** Goeke  
**Discussion:** None  
**Vote:** Motion passed unanimously


## VI ITEMS FROM MEMBERS

VII ADJOURN – 7:18 p.m. by unanimous consent.



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Jack Trumbull, Chair



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Jennifer Gray, City Recorder

Approved by the Agency on 5-28-2020