

Downtown Commission Meeting
Minutes of March 10, 2017
8:30 a.m.
1st Floor North Conference Room - City Hall

Present: Vice-Chairman Michael McDonough, Presiding; Councilman Brian Haynes, Mr. Brent Campbell, Ms. Franzi Charen, Mr. Byron Greiner, Mr. Jimi Rentz, Ms. Ruth Summers, Ms. Sage Turner, Mr. Tobias Weas and Ms. Pamela Winkler

Absent: Mr. Dane Barrager

Vice-Chairman McDonough called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m. and informed the audience of the public hearing process.

Administrative

- Vice-Chairman McDonough welcomed the two new Commission members: Tobias Weas as a County appointee and Sage Turner as the Asheville Downtown Association representative. Mr. Weas introduced himself, an attorney by training currently Vice President and General Counsel of Wicked Weed Brewing and formerly Vice President of Policy with the Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce. Ms. Turner introduced herself and her role as Project Manager on the redevelopment of the French Broad Food Co-op site downtown and a member of the Asheville Downtown Association board.
- It was the consensus of the Commission to approve the minutes of the February 10, 2017, meeting.

Updates

Asheville Downtown Association

Ms. Turner provided updates from the Asheville Downtown Association (ADA) as follows: Coffee with a Cop took place at Penny Cup; ADA will host a post-primary City Council candidate forum; a Social Justice Sub-Committee of board was created; and a new ADA website was launched.

Haywood Street Community Visioning

Vice-Chairman McDonough provided an update on the Haywood Street Vision Advisory Team's progress. A presentation was made on March 8 to the public. Bubble diagrams were presented that represented the group's vision for uses on the site. Included were passive and active civic spaces complimented by mixed-use elements. Not all members of the Advisory Team were supportive of mixed-use. The group will meet again on March 20 before going to Council on March 28.

Design Review Committee Update

Vice-Chairman McDonough provided an update on the February 21, 2017, Design Review Committee meeting, which focused on tree and tree pit policies, and included representatives from Public Works including the City's arborist. The following items were discussed: (1) Use of flexipave not supported due to prevention of water/organic material to reach the tree, cigarette butt collection, tree root compaction, appearance; (2) Mulch to be used instead of gravel or fines; (3) Staff to ask developers to install the largest of recommended pits when a project calls for a larger section of sidewalk to be replaced; (4) Smaller projects where only 1 tree is being added would not trigger the larger tree pit system; (5) Test of tree guards to protect temporarily after planting; (6) Staff to consider alternate compliance for hedges; (7) A few

varieties of street trees should be tested, with corridor by corridor approach; and (7) Staff to report back to the Commission and/or Design Review Committee.

Downtown Update Report

Downtown Development Specialist Dana Frankel updated the Commission on the following items:

Pritchard Park - City Council approved a revised plan and associated budget amendment at their 2/14 Council meeting. The revision was informed by public engagement and includes changes to the fencing plan, creating a mulched area on the east side of the park with the addition of boulder seating. The improvements are designed to contribute to a safe and inviting urban public space and include improved lighting, landscaping, irrigation, an all-season drinking fountain and fencing to protect a large tree and areas of the landscaping. Construction is expected to begin in March and continue for 15 weeks. The park will not be closed in its entirety during the improvements, though there may be rolling closures to portions of the park while lighting, landscaping and other improvements are installed.

Haywood Street Bond Project - The City's Capital Projects Department is gearing up to hire a contractor for the design of the Haywood Street improvements (street and sidewalk) funded by the transportation bond. The project will be discussed at the next Downtown Design Review Committee meeting (on 3/21) and then at the full commission to get some early feedback, specifically on the use of blue stone.

Downtown Commission Ordinance Amendment - Following the Downtown Commission's recommendation at the February 10, 2017 Downtown Commission meeting, a resolution amending the affiliation requirements for the Asheville Downtown Association seat are proceeding to City Council's Boards and Commissions Committee on March 14, 2017.

Enhancements to South Pack Square - On March 9, improvements were made to South Pack Square including new benches, new planters (fabricated by a local metal worker) and relocation of the trash/recycling bins to maximize use. Rhubarb is working with the City to maintain the planters. Earlier this month, signal timing was adjusted at this intersection to maximize pedestrian crossing times. Goals of these improvements are to enhance safety, reduce congestion and beautify the area.

Project Updates:

- 68 Patton Avenue – Level II Project was approved by the Planning and Zoning Commission on February 1 with a vote of 6-1. The applicant plans to go to City Council on March 14 to request the purchase of air rights (602 SF) for the balcony being added onto an existing roof that encroaches over the right of way on Commerce St., as well as easements for the existing columns (16 SF) that are in the sidewalk right of way.
- 192 Haywood Street – Level III CUP was denied by City Council on January 24 with a vote of 7-0. There are no further updates at this time.

Downtown Open Office Hours – Continue on the third Thursday of each month, staff is available at the Pack Square Park Pavilion from 2 – 5 PM to share information, answer questions and discuss ideas about downtown with citizens. On March 16, Sam Powers, Director of Community and Economic Development and Alan Glines, Assistant Director of Planning and Urban Design will be at there.

New Business

Comprehensive Parking Study

Director of the City's Transportation Department, Ken Putnam, explained that the Comprehensive Parking Study was nearly complete and that it would primarily serve as a resource document for parking related policy and budgeting decisions. He noted that the study includes detailed information about numerous other cities, including rates, spaces and parking/transportation technology. He also noted that the Study includes information on cost for possible shuttle routes and vehicles that could be considered (as a follow up to previous plans that recommend shuttle services).

Mr. Putnam discussed a plan (and funding) to extend the life of the Civic Center Garage (by 30 years), as well as to expand the garage itself to add spaces, and that studies are underway to consider expansion opportunities at the Wall Street and Rankin Garages.

Throughout discussion, Mr. Putnam responded to various questions/comments from the Commission, some being, but are not limited to: recommendation that the loading zone fines be increased; recommendation that all monthly decks be the same price; has staff located land for a new parking garage; are the Rankin Avenue and Wall Street Parking Garages being considered for additional spaces; if a mixed use development is built on the Haywood Street property, will the \$3 Million that came out of the Parking Enterprise Fund be paid back to that Fund; how long is the wait list for the different decks; what is the Parking Benefit District concept and is it legal in North Carolina; there will be a lot more flexibility and efficiency with the new parking meters; do we have any current occupancy sensors in parking spaces; can staff develop some incentives, when new projects are being reviewed, to encourage developers to add private/public shared parking; and conversations with Buncombe County on their responsibility in terms of building infrastructure parking with possible land-swapping with the City.

Parking and Transportation Subcommittee

Vice-Chair McDonough, Ms. Turner, Ms. Summers and Mr. Greiner were interested in forming a Parking and Transportation Subcommittee. Downtown Development Specialist Dana Frankel said at the Subcommittee's first meeting, they can determine whether they would like to invite other community members to join that Subcommittee.

South Slope Visioning Plan

Principal Planner Shannon Tuch asked the Commission for a representative to serve on the Advisory Committee for the South Slope Visioning Plan. The Plan will help identify priorities and goals for the area, particularly as we look at investing in public infrastructure. After an initial meeting, she anticipated the Steering Committee would meet quarterly.

Mr. Greiner moved to appoint Mr. Campbell and Mr. Weas to serve as representatives of the Steering Committee for the South Slope Visioning Plan. This motion was seconded by Ms. Summers and carried unanimously.

Officer Elections

Ms. Summers explained that after checking with all Commission members, Vice-Chairman McDonough and Mr. Greiner expressed interested in the Chairman seat. She noted that both respective terms expire on December 31, 2017, and neither are eligible for reappointment. Also noted was that Mr. Rentz' term will expire at the end of December 31, 2017,

and he is not eligible for reappointment. For future vacancies, the Commission should solicit applications from architects, landscape architects, minorities and women.

Ms. Summers explained that the secret ballot will consist of Vice-Chair McDonough, Mr. Greiner and a write-in candidate (whose name will need to be identified as Chair or Vice-Chair). The highest number of votes would be Chair (effective immediately), the person with the second highest number of votes would be Vice-Chairman. After votes were tallied, Vice-Chair McDonough was appointed as Chairman and Mr. Greiner was appointed as Vice-Chairman.

Next Formal Meeting

Due to the next Commission's formal meeting falling on a holiday (April 14 - Good Friday), it was the consensus of the Commission to reschedule their April 14 meeting until April 21, 2017, at 8:30 a.m. in the First Floor North Conference Room in City Hall.

Public Comment

Adjournment

At 9:40 a.m., Mr. Greiner moved to adjourn the meeting. This motion was seconded by Mr. Rentz and carried unanimously.