

Minutes
HISTORIC RESOURCES BOARD
City Commission Room, City Hall
1101 Poyntz Avenue
Monday, November 18, 2019
4:00 p.m.

Members Present: Kevin West, Chair; Eileen Meyer, Vice-chair and Cameron Tross; Renee Erickson; Jana Fallin; Ann Kosch; and Tom Hanson.

Members Absent: None

Staff Present: Ben Chmiel, Planner

Public Present: Linda Glasgow, Citizen; Kathy Dzewaltowski, Citizen.

1. Meeting Opening

West called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m. Staff performed a roll and confirmed a quorum. West read the public comment policy and opened the floor for public comments.

Fallin moved to approve the October 28, 2019 meeting minutes as written. Erikson seconded. Motion carried 5-0-1 (Meyer abstaining).

2. Work Session

Chmiel presented concepts for improvements to Aggieville, including a parking garage, and Phase 1 streetscape redesigns including 14th, West Laramie, Bluemont, and 12th street.

Tross asked about the outdoor dining space on 12th; if it would be leased to adjacent businesses or would remain public. Chmiel explained the use of the space could be part of an agreement between businesses and the city to lease those spaces as an extension of their restaurants, but it could also remain as public gathering space. He further explained the programing was not decided on, but the space would allow flexibility.

Fallin expressed support for the flexibility of the space, including temporary closure of the streets for events. Tross concurred. West noted that Triangle Park functions as a gathering space today. Chmiel said the input received throughout the planning process said the park was not well programed and not very central, adding that there were plans to redesign it in the future to help with some of those issues.

Tross noted something could be done about managing trash in an increasingly pedestrian district. Chmiel explained there had been extensive conversations within Aggieville to consolidate trash enclosures and minimize the number of servicers, but that it would mostly be up to ABA to coordinate.

Kosch noted that public restrooms should be considered as part of the improvements. West concurred.

West shifted the conversation to the parking garage, expressing his opinion on its incompatibility in size and scale. Tross spoke to the scale that makes downtowns successful, noting that the garage as proposed was massive and out of scale with adjacent buildings. Tross asked if envisioned redevelopment would be upwards of the scale of the garage. Chmiel explained the core of Aggieville would be kept at its historic scale at one and two stories, while the perimeter of the district is envisioned more at three to five. Fallin asked how tall the new hotel under construction would be. Chmiel said it would be five stories. Fallin further expressed that the proposals and plan was a big opportunity to renew Aggieville. Erikson asked how far along the concepts were, specifically for the façade design of the parking garage. Chmiel explained that very rough concepts were presented before, but this was the most detailed to date. Earlier concepts included a building wrap for the garage, but the geometry did not work out. Tross lamented fake historic design approach, which inappropriately replicates historic architecture to hide parking facilities. Erickson suggested something more architecturally compatible in terms of style and scale.

Tross said newer, more modern buildings surrounding the historic core could be a good approach if done correctly. He believed the west façade should be considered for public art instead of a big blank wall. Erickson did not think the juxtaposition of the size difference between the garage and the rest of Aggieville was complimentary to the district.

Meyer agreed that additional parking was needed, but was concerned about maintenance cost burden and how parking would be managed. Chmiel said there was a parking management plan. West noted parking would have to be paid and help pay for maintenance. Chmiel agreed, noting that paying for parking at some degree would probably be inevitable to create turnover and pay for enforcement and revenue. Chmiel explained that a permit system for employees was being looked into in order to guarantee employee parking that would not displace patron parking. Chmiel understood the maintenance of the parking facility would almost certainly fall on the City, but for the streetscape, it was a little less known whether it would be the City, the BID, or a combination of the two.

West reiterated his opposition to such a tall parking garage, noting that other options are available. Kosch concurred. Tross described examples where modern construction has blended well with the historic fabric, noting that step-back architecture has worked well. Chmiel explained the difficulty of fulfilling a need for parking in an efficient way while creating a structure compatible with its surroundings.

West mentioned that the garage downtown was not adjacent to anything historic and was surrounded by compatible buildings. Here he did not see five stories as needed. Chmiel explained that the number of spaces the garage would provide did not achieve the number needed, according to demand studies. Chmiel explained that the financing mechanism for improvements was largely dependent on redevelopment happening, but that projections showed the garage could be paid for using that funding. Tross believed there should be developers with projects ready to go before improvements start. Chmiel explained that between the new hotel and the commercial development on 14th and Laramie, a lot of revenue would be injected into the district, resulting in these projects, but beyond the garage

and the first phase of streetscape, financing was less secure since the sales tax initiative did not pass.

Tross asked about the possibility of including pick-up/drop-off areas in the streetscape design. Chmiel pointed out that pick-up/drop-off areas were included in the design, with a turning radius at the head of the 12th street section.

West expressed support for everything in the concepts, aside from the garage. Kosch expressed support for 12th street with two-way traffic.

Chmiel said the City Commission would ultimately make the decision on design options. Kosch expressed concern for the safety, durability, and practicality of string lights. Fallin expressed high support for the concepts, saying she did not want to quash the potential of the improvements as is. Tross asked how many spaces were needed In Aggieville. Chmiel said 800 were determined, noting that the garage brought about 500.

West opened the floor for public comment. Glasgow believed Aggieville deserved the best plan. She supported the construction of two parking garages. She said the parking garage was clearly out of scale. She said restrooms should be included in the parking garage design, next to the police substation for safety. She explained the tree wells must be properly sized and designed for the trees to communicate with each other so they could survive.

Glasgow then asked how much the City was being paid for traffic disruption caused by the hotel construction. Chmiel said he was not aware the City was being paid for anything, noting that with zero lot-line development it is impossible to stage construction entirely on site. Glasgow suggested that developers should have to pay for the inconvenience imposed on the public.

Dzewaltowski agreed that the garage was out of scale with the district and it might make more sense to have two garages at a smaller scale. She asked what the plan was for paid parking. West explained how it was proposed in the parking management plan, noting phase two included paid parking throughout Aggieville, including limited hours on the edge of Aggieville. Dzewaltowski asked that the compatibility of meters be considered in the context of a historic streetscape.

West reiterated his support for everything, except the height of the garage, suggesting it should be no taller than the Rally House, three stories maximum. Tross spoke to technological alternatives to meters in the district. Chmiel noted that parking meters have existed in Aggieville in the past, as recent as the 60s and 70s.

The Board expressed support for a parking garage in Aggieville, just not at the scale proposed. The Board suggested a second garage be constructed on the east end of Aggieville to off-load spaces from a scaled down garage at the proposed site. The Board suggested this would also better balance parking supply throughout the district and relieve traffic congestion. The Board then had some suggestions for working in a letter being prepared. Chmiel said he would send it to the Board before it was submitted.

The Board debated how they could form a motion to capture their sentiment. Chmiel noted the letter would get to the Commission either way and that the Board did not have to make a motion for a letter if they did not feel it was necessary.

3. Minor Review Updates

Chmiel presented a review for a retroactive building permit for a pergola at 301 Poyntz Avenue (AJ's Pizzeria). Tross noted that it was about the same as constructed before. The Board had no other questions.

4. Updates & Announcements

Chmiel noted that the Aggieville Historic Survey was underway and was in the hands of Spencer Preservation. He said there would be a public meeting in the spring to present preliminary findings. Tross asked if unselected firms could get information on what they could do to improve their RFQ submissions in the future. Chmiel said a couple firms had reached out to him and he gave them feedback.

West noted that discussion on the bylaws and permitting would be on the next agenda.

Chmiel affirmed he would wrap up the letter for the Board and noted what time the Commission work session on the item would be.

5. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 5:10 pm. The next meeting is Monday, December 16, 2019.