

WATERFRONT CITIZENS' ADVISORY COMMITTEE

"WAC"

MEETING SUMMARY

APRIL 11, 2007 - 5:00 – 7:00 p.m.

MEETING ATTENDANCE:

Port Representatives (Support)

Sheldon Tyler
Mary Murphy

Riverwalk LLC (Support)

Mark Benson

Committee Members

Arnold Cogan, Facilitator
Larry Blaufus
Jennie Brown
Russ Chambers
Paul Fearn

Charmaine Harvey
Sandy Krahn
Casey O'Dell
Pat Sheaffer
Gary Simmons

John Svilarich
Roberta Tidland
Excused Absences
Ashley Eckman
Barbe West

Arnold Cogan, Facilitator, opened the meeting at 5:00 p.m., and welcomed everyone. He then asked the audience to sign in if any wished to speak during the Public Comment period, and several did so.

Review:

The Meeting Summary from March 14, 2007 was approved.

The Meeting Summary from the March 28, 2007 Open House was also approved.

Comments / Reactions from Open House:

Arnold and the WAC members discussed their opportunity to converse with the public at the Open House, and considered how the public's preferred features compared with WAC's list. WAC was asked to share what they heard and learned:

Roberta Tidland heard again and again that parks, open spaces and greenways, especially the Historical Park, were primary in what the public wanted to see.

John Svilarich said that he found himself repeatedly explaining the 'idea of features' – said it was difficult to make it clear.

Jack Miller, of MCA Architects, explained that when it's an everyday thing to see building concepts – which he does at his job – it's easy to understand. But once it's a drawing, people tend to identify it as an actual structure. He found it hard to explain that the ratio of open space to building is actually 2-to-1. He heard some issues come

up repeatedly: SR-14; boating; open spaces; historical park. Jack said he was able to ease peoples' minds. Received very positive feedback. He said he was not trying to take anything away from the community. "If we don't add anything, we are not doing our job."

Arnold explained to WAC that most of the Open House concept boards were brought in to tonight's meeting by the architects and were available if anyone wished to look at, refer to, or comment about them to facilitate their comments.

Charmaine Harvey said she heard from many downtown Washougal businesses that they are concerned about how RiverWalk would impact them. She talked to a few with businesses currently on Port property and which are community supported – they have a 'following.' She said, "They are very important. If we don't support businesses both here and downtown, people won't support RiverWalk."

Russ Chambers had a suggestion on how to handle 6th Street: Let's talk to the state about a pedestrian overpass/car tunnel.

Gary Simmons said he had the pleasure of manning the Orientation Station, and heard over and over that open spaces are important; don't lose the historical aspect; build history into the project; parking is an issue. Gary was asked 'what about current businesses that are here?' He was told that they have not been brought into the process. He also said parking is an issue and will continue to be a problem.

Arnold asked Dave Sacamano, of The Illahee Group, and Kelly Punteney, consultant, about the parking issue and open spaces.

Dave Sacamano talked about the comments he heard:

- Trails going east
- Access to and views of the River
- Connectivity concerns to the east, and also north and south.
- Forcing access through the west end raised eyebrows – would want additional access
- Concerns about 6th Street
- The historical park is relatively well supported.

Kelly Punteney said he received positive responses toward keeping the integrity of this region; it has features that no one else has. Indigenous elements resonated very well. One person commented: 'no outsiders.' Overall, he heard good comments and that people are anxious to learn more history of the area.

Jack Miller said that for the most part, the feedback at his station was positive. He did hear concerns that the public's comments would fall on deaf ears. He reassured all that this was not the case.

Ted Grund, Project Manager, from MCA, addressed the issue of parking. He said the plans are very 'schematic and diagrammatic' at this point. The density may change as the plan 'shakes out.' Both vehicle and boat parking will be considered. Ted remarked that people were impressed with the quality of the designs introduced. The design impacts the nature of how things are managed. *How* we do is probably more important than *what* we do. We need to be mindful of:

- Sightlines
- Open view corridors
- Relationship of parking to parks
- Making things attractive and easy to use

A valid concern from current businesses: 'What's our place in this?' Ted's response: Those negotiations will probably happen.

Jack Miller remarked that a lot of the boards were 3-dimensional in order to get in front of people what the features 'could' look like. He repeated again and again that these were 'just ideas.' Even the landscape shown was 'just ideas.' Jack felt the turnout for the Open House was 'super.'

Larry Blaufus said he was a floater and noted that most people were able to get to the stations they were interested in seeing. He engaged in conversation with those who were waiting. Many were interested in a local hotel, but there was little interest in the idea of a convention center. When asking how many stories would be acceptable for a hotel, the responses were 3-4 stories.

Arnold asked if people were frustrated when they needed to wait to see a board.

Larry Blaufus responded that he and Russ Chambers both spent time talking to people who were waiting, so they weren't just left alone.

Sandy Krahn (who was unable to attend the Open House) asked the Committee if most people understood that the boards were conceptual.

Larry Blaufus told Sandy that he had to explain it over and over.

Jack Miller said that when people hear the term 'convention center' they think of 500 to 5,000 people. That wouldn't be part of RiverWalk. He said 'think smaller – a hotel with a smaller facility.'

Ted Grund explained the difference between a conference center and a convention center. A conference center would be used by the community.

Larry Blaufus said that Kelly Puntaney talked to people about history.

Roberta Tidland said this area has a unique ambiance and that RiverWalk should not spoil the community. She noted that on some of the boards the Park was impacted in the designs, and she reiterated that the Park is important. The project needs to emphasize the history of this area. Put into the design that it must be preserved. Roberta then read a written statement detailing her position on this issue.

Gary Simmons heard concerns about the lack of a launch ramp on the conceptual boards, and about the idea of off-site parking for boat trailers.

Roberta Tidland concurred that parking for both boaters and visitors is needed.

Report from Open House

Arnold then explained the Report Summary he prepared from the 91 comment forms, the emailed comments, and 10 pages of flip chart comments. He did not try to correlate the Report's comments with WAC's list of preferred features. He asked the WAC members if they had any suggestions about or preference on the way he organized the information.

Roberta Tidland commented that she liked the format.

John Svilarich thought the Report was far more succinct than he thought it would be.

Gary Simmons asked whether any more emails have been received since the report was compiled. [Arnold responded: none since last week.]

John Svilarich said he saw clear trends in the Report, along with 'hot spots.' He said the next questions are 'What do we do with this now? How do we boil it down for the Commissioner's clear guidance?'

Arnold asked the WAC members what, if any, the next steps should be in forming their recommendations to the Commissioners.

Gary Simmons feels that there should be an underlying theme from both the Commissioners and WAC, such as historical significance, connectivity to water, openness to water. Then, from there, what is the greatest need? How do we start? He suggested that the final report to Commissioners be a draft.

John Svilarich reminded the Committee that their mission is to give recommendations to Commissioners, not the design. Work out a work project with consensus of bulleted points. ‘The Commissioners may want us to be a standing committee in recess, take a break, and then bring us back for more work.’

Arnold agreed with John, saying the Commissioners may wish to utilize the information gathered by WAC for a later task. He then asked if there was any more feedback from the architects or landscapers.

Jack Miller commended Arnold on doing a great job with the information gathered into the Report, and asked ‘how many’ out of the 260 attendees were represented in the comments listed.

Arnold responded that there were 91 comment sheets, 11 emails, and 10 pages of flip chart comments.

Jack Miller then asked if a 50% response was considered good, to which Arnold replied that 50% is considered ‘super.’

John Svilarich remarked that there was probably some overlap, with people completing a comment card and writing on a flip chart.

Arnold explained that people were welcome to take advantage of every venue they wished.

Jennie Brown said that after reading through the Report Summary she found ‘no surprises here. The comments were along the same general line as they’ve been since we’ve been here.’ She was pleased in the ‘generally positive tone,’ and wants to move forward within the parameters of the park issue and boat issue.

Arnold then asked Jennie if she had any observations from her standpoint as greeter.

Jennie answered that she observed people arriving looking ‘halfway afraid’ of what was going to happen. ‘Fearful, but interested.’ Once they started through the process, however, she could see them relax. She saw people leaving in groups, talking, looking like they were feeling pretty good, and that their questions were answered.

Ted Grund commented that he received a better response to ‘concrete’ ideas. Items that were more abstract and qualitative (fun, safe, comfortable place) received fewer comments.

John Svilarich said he wanted to talk about how to use this Report Summary.

Arnold asked the WAC to look at the Draft of the Final Work Product, specifically #4: Recommendations of the WAC. He asked if the Committee thought he should prepare it? Or appoint a sub-committee to prepare a draft? Be done as a group? Also, he asked if the Committee liked the outline format of the document.

John Svilarich responded that he doesn't envision WAC doing sample layouts. Not part of their mission statement. Their role is to narrow down the information for the Commissioners, and then the Commissioners will take care of having the layouts and illustrations prepared, so they can be clear with the architect as to what they want.

Gary Simmons said the information given by WAC to the Commissioners needs to be clear.

John Svilarich suggested that the information from the Open House be boiled down to a 2-page document; concise; with guiding principles. List the features of importance, i.e., dining, keeping the local integrity, boating, water access.

Larry Blaufus said he thought this could be done without meetings, but it can't be too general; needs to be more specific. How does WAC feel about the Park? Where should the Park be?

John Svilarich suggested writing a document about core issues, with "do's" and "don'ts".

Jennie Brown voiced concerns about making sure that whatever WAC does, the work product needs to be more substantial. Something with really clear direction. Something to use; not so general that the Commissioners don't know what to do.

John Svilarich suggested giving examples of what is important for Marina services.

Russ Chambers feels that the discussion was going further than WAC's mission.

Arnold read WAC's mission statement. Suggested that whatever WAC recommended should have enough detail 'so the Commissioners would know what you're thinking.'

Sandy Krahn asked if WAC should dissect what they want to put down.

Russ Chambers said that maybe WAC members could be assigned homework prior to their next meeting, ‘spending time to compile our individual thoughts,’ and giving them to a designated party to compile.

John Svilarich added that another way would be to get feedback from 12 to 13 WAC members who could meet and reach consensus.

Arnold asked the members what they thought of listing their individual thoughts before the next meeting.

Pat Schaeffer said the Committee has already spent a lot of time and now has a list of good public comments. The Port has paid quite a good bit of money already. Asked, ‘Don’t you think it’s time we compiled a presentation? Put what we have in front of the Port and the developers? If they wish to, they can bring it back to WAC. The comments are already well organized.’

John Svilarich suggested that Arnold write a preliminary report that WAC could tweak. In the meantime, if the WAC members wish to send individual comments to Arnold, they can do it via email. (Roberta will bring any written comments in to the Port Office for scanning and emailing to Arnold.)

Arnold said he would get something down on paper, and whoever wishes to can send him their comments. He will focus on the recommendations to the Commissioners. Rest of information will round out the report. WAC’s recommendations are at the heart of the report to the Commissioners.

Gary Simmons suggested that Arnold could prepare a detailed outline, so WAC will have talking points at their next meeting. “I can’t say we’re in agreement.”

Arnold confirmed with WAC members that he’ll bring an outline to the April 25th meeting. He asked that any comments from WAC members be to him by Monday, April 16th.

The group agreed that Mary had done a super job at the Open House.

Public Comments

Lawrence Dvorak – Thanked WAC members. “Why are we using public money to do this? It sounds like a done deal. Didn’t see any provision for high water, such as the flooding in (named several different years, including) 1996. You’re inviting a huge concentration of people to a delicate area. You’re encouraging a bad thing. Once this (pointing to waterfront area) is changed, you can’t ever go back.”

Martha Martin – Said she appreciated WAC, and she has attended every Port and WAC meeting. “We went to the Open House, heard concerns from local and downtown Washougal businesses.” She had two questions: ‘Why now? Where is the urgency?’ And ‘Why these particular principals? Who is RiverWalk LLC?’ Said two cities are already working on generating jobs and boosting economy and, as for highlighting the ‘Gateway to the Gorge’ – look at downtown Washougal. “How do we know RiverWalk is the best and wisest choice to do this project? *My* credentials are available. Ports have a fiduciary responsibility to the public. Who authored the mission statement? Wisest public benefit?”

Richard Hamby – Thanked WAC. Said the ‘process’ is a concern. “The Committee was asked to ‘step into the middle of something – not sure where it’s going. The Commissioners entered into an agreement without any public knowledge. The input from the public forum last summer has been shoveled into a ditch. How is WAC addressing concerns such as private property concerns? If this process is done correctly, we’re not anywhere near the end. You shouldn’t be done. The March 28th Open House shouldn’t be the last one. No real answers. People have questions. Somewhere along the line there should be answers. You should represent the community by realizing this is not done.”

Bill Ward – Commended WAC on their work. He is encouraged that we are being able to develop this area to the maximum benefit of the community. “If you are smart and wise, the formulation you recommend will be key to getting your ideas across. Hope your recommendations will be termed in design principles. I think you have input needed. If concepts are provided, next step with concrete ideas will be something people can look at.”

John Wagner – Said he had asked the architect and the developer if they’d ever been here in the summertime; their answers were ‘no.’ He said they would be astounded at the crowd. The renditions showed no parking. Said underground parking would not work for him. Said building will take away from parking that is not ample now. The Port’s mission statement is to enhance recreational opportunities, and WAC should remind the Commissioners of that. Said 6th Street has a reef and wind. Can’t launch a boat for 6-7 months out of the year. “Whoever drew the pictures couldn’t have had an idea of this place in the summertime. Anyone who builds will be depriving people of their rights. We have got to preserve our ability to use the river. Hope message you would take back is: don’t take the ability to use the river away from us. We are the citizens, we use the river, we don’t want to lose it.”

Diana Tehrani – Thanked WAC for their work. Said she appreciated the openness of this forum. She is a property owner and has heard rumors – ‘something is going to happen.’ A lot of good things. She has concerns that transitional areas or buffers are not

being addressed. Said she and her husband support the plan. Said development happens whether or not you plan for it.

Marianne Guetter – Said there is not a big demand for dry stack storage. Sundance Marina offers it, and they're not full year round.

Schedule of Upcoming WAC Meetings:

Wednesday, April 25th – 5:00 to 7:00 p.m.

Wednesday, May 9th – 5:00 to 7:00 p.m.

Wednesday, May 30th – 5:00 to 7:00 p.m.

Next Steps:

Arnold said he hopes to wrap up before June.

Adjournment: Arnold adjourned the meeting at 7:00 p.m.