



Rail Yards Advisory Board

August 5, 2020

8:30 am

Via Zoom Videoconference

Members Present:

City Councilor Isaac Benton
Sen. Jerry Ortiz y Pino
Rep. Miguel Garcia
Lawrence Rael, COO
Leba Freed, WHEELS Museum
Dorothy Chavez, Barelás
Chelsea Powers for Commissioner Steven Michael Quezada
Alex Trujillo, South Broadway

Members Absent:

Sen. Michael Padilla
Rep. Javier Martinez
Alex Romero, Governor's Representative
Jay Rembe, ULI-New Mexico

City Staff and Other Resources Present:

Karen Iverson, MRA Manager
Gabriel Rivera, MRA Staff
Leslie Naji, Historic Preservation Office, Planning Department
Ed Adams, Planning Department
Petra Morris, Policy Analyst, City Council Services
Diane Dolan, Policy Analyst, City Council Services
Eric Griego, ex-officio, Barelás
Julian Moya, Council Services
Elena Gonzalez, Barelás alternate
Rick Miera, ex-officio member

I. Call to Order

Councilor Benton called the meeting to order at 8:34am.

II. Welcome & Overview

Board members and City staff introduced themselves.

III. Approval of Minutes: November, 2019 RYAB Meeting.

Ms. Chavez made a motion to approve
Sen. Ortiz y Pino seconded

Councilor Benton made a motion to amend the minutes, Sen. Ortiz y Pino seconded, the motion passed unanimously.

Minutes approved as amended

V. Administration Updates

COO Rael asked Metropolitan Redevelopment Agency Manager Karen Iverson to give an update on revitalization and Request for Proposals/Expressions of Interest.

An RFEI has been issued for the northern entrance to the RY, specifically the three small buildings of the firehouse, waste paint room, and pattern house. MRA held an open house where interested parties could give input into the RFEI. Two pre-proposal conferences were held, the second one was well attended. MRA expects to get proposals from some community groups and cutting edge arts groups. There are other RFP's in the area for redevelopment, including the vacant lot at Silver and 1st St priority is housing and up to 10,000 sq. ft. of office ; EDo, including properties along Central Ave (using funds recycled back from the Albuquerque High development) and between Broadway Blvd and the railroad tracks between Central and Lomas.

The RFP is for any or all of the three buildings on northern entrance, for either a developer interested in rehabbing and finding tenants or for a business entity to become a tenant, where the City will rehab and lease to them. Priorities of the RFEI are to meet goals of Rail Yards Master Plan, second provide site synergy (history, community, businesses), third priority is activation bring people to the site, fourth supporting small and minority businesses. Garcia – what does the edo rfp entail? Karen – rather broad \$2.2 m available to support infill development. Wanted to activate by creating housing or employment. Rfp closed, four responses, plan on awarding at least two. Been time since we've seen infill in recent years in that area.

Rail trail – the City is looking at creating an active corridor, landscaping, comfortable pedestrian/bicycle experience, public art. Lots of potential redevelopment opportunities. Huge barrier getting from one side of the track to the other. The first part will be along 1st St, jump over to east side of the rail tracks at the Alvarado Transportation Center, with an at grade crossing added. \$2million of lodger's tax is dedicated for this project and the City is also applying for an EDA grant from COVID funding stream, as well as a National Endowment for the Arts to fund some of the art along the corridor.

Ed Adams provided a construction update. Since last meeting 6 months ago, a lot has happened.

The City has removed the small building in front of the Flue Shop; the Blacksmith Shop is no longer hidden behind there. Concrete, other debris has been removed. Brick pavers were put down in front of the Blacksmith Shop, similar to plaza, the rails remain, embedded in the bricks.

The City is waiting for approval for environmental remediation plan by NMEHD. Enterra is on contract, working with the City and NMEHD. Two to three additional wells for groundwater monitoring will be installed on the southern part of the site.

The City bid and awarded roof contracts for the Flue Shop and Tinder Repair.

Asbestos caulking, lead paint, other asbestos will be cleaned up. Power will be installed to the building. Jaynes was low bidder on that part of the project. Looking at Notice to Proceed in mid to late August for the Flue Shop and roof repairs.

We are in the process of designing roof repairs. Lee Gamelsky has completed 95% construction drawings for that building, will submit to SHPO and code review. SHPO has a month to review and approve Boiler Shop plans. The City anticipates we will be ready to bid roof and some clean up in the building by the end of the year.

The team has consulted with Fire Marshall's office, have an approved Level 1 plan for the north half of the property. ABCWUA is modeling water usage; there is a 6" line on 1st St. we expect to tie into.

Water, sewer, natural gas, additional power and communication will be added in the north part of the site. SHPO seems ok with using the transfer table as a utility corridor. That will allow us to extend power to the boiler shop and into other areas in the future. Wilson & Co design utilities and TLC is under contract for installation. There was a problem with the storm drain in 2nd St, blocking access to the sewer. We are going to be able to address it so we don't have to pump.

The City has \$2.4 million and federal matching funds for utility work and streetscape for 2nd St. Wilson & Co. will be the design engineer. A concept for streetscape for the 2nd St. frontage has been developed. There will be a whole public process before design; this is just concepts/thoughts. The team is considering moving the project into the site to create more space for pedestrian environment, around 20' wide to accommodate sidewalks, landscaping, etc. Retaining walls will be needed to deal with grade. The project will include connecting the Rail Yards to the neighborhood, and maybe some traffic calming. A design kick off is expected sometime in August; the City will have to figure out alternative way to have public input due to COVID restrictions. This project will transform how the property feeds into the neighborhood. We will need to figure out how to deal with WHEELS parking. The City is in the process of trying to acquire the triangle property to the north of the site at the intersection of 1st and 2nd Streets. If that property is acquired, that will influence and help the project.

COO Rael explained that the EDA grant we received requires a thorough discussion with the neighborhood. We're looking forward to getting their thoughts. This will lay out the groundwork for what the site is going to look like on the ground level. Also important – we negotiated with BNSF for a ROW donation between the Lead Ave and Coal Ave bridges south of the site on the east side of 1st St. They are granting it! It will make the connection between downtown and the Rail Yards a safe connection.

Sen. Ortiz y Pino noted that at one time it was expected that PNM was going to have to negotiate with us additional power or a substation. Mr. Adams stated that the City has been talking with PNM, and it appears we have adequate power. That is qualified – until we know what the uses are, it's hard to know what additional power needs will be. We are bringing in additional power for Tinder Repair, some power will be available for the Boiler Shop. In the shorter run, we're going to be ok on power; we can't tell in the long run right now. There is some additional power on 2nd or 3rd St. that PNM thought we could potentially bring over to the site in the future.

Lee Gamelsky has met with Leba Freed and WHEELS to start design of heating and cooling improvements for WHEELS.

COO Rael asked Mr. Adams to sum up where we are as far as use of city and state funds.

Mr. Adams stated that we're out of money. Almost all of the state grants (about \$7m) is obligated or will be shortly. All of the City money will be encumbered by the end of the year. The Boiler Shop roof will probably be about \$4m. The Tinder Repair roof was bid w/the Flue Shop. Tinder Shop was \$1m, full package \$2.4 million. Utilities are going to be about \$2m. The Rail Trail EDA grant is \$1.2m, requires 100% City match. Other internal packages in design now for Flue and Tinder; he's skeptical we'll have adequate funding for Tinder internal cleanup.

COO Rael wants to make sure legislators know we are using the funds; there was some question in the legislature's special session about whether the City was moving to utilize funds. We are also leveraging every opportunity we can, including grants. The courtyard and work we've done has been at the north end. We don't usually walk around admiring roofs, but these repairs are very important, give us comfort that if it takes longer to get to those buildings, at least they won't deteriorate any more.

COO Rael met w/CNM last week, still committed with their use of the Blacksmith Shop. Thanks to our legislative support, CNM got \$300k and the Mayor was able to get grant funding to augment CNM's proposal. There is \$600k for study and review/proposal for how they would utilize the Blacksmith Shop. Also, there is the potential of future bond funds.

Because of COVID and social distancing and restrictions on mass gatherings, we have unfortunately not been able to do community activities. The Mayor is very interested in activating the space, getting people there. As COVID policies get loosened up a little, we want some kind of activity there with social distancing, etc. We want more people out to look at it and get excited. The Rail Yards Market has been operating differently than usual but will continue.

Mr. Griego asked, regarding connectivity to 4th St. (Barelas MainStreet), is a connection via Santa Fe Ave part of the plan for 2nd St, and/or how does that fit into this phase of the project or for later? Would hate to push people off of 4th street since they have been getting some momentum.

COO Rael said we are very focused on that as well. He agrees that Santa Fe is the “main street” connection to the site. We are going to try to make sure whatever we do on 1st St, we create pedestrian access. We do not have funds right now to do Santa Fe Ave between 1st and 4th Streets. CIP is around the corner, he thinks we should put some money in for Santa Fe Ave. In the design, the team talked about Santa F Ave. Mr. Adams confirmed that we don’t have funding at the moment for the connection to 4th St. on Santa Fe, but we are looking at accommodating a connection in this project at certain locations (such as bump-outs). The actual connection will be addressed in the future.

Mr. Griego noted that for folks coming in and out of the site now, it’s two blocks of Santa Fe, between 4th and 2nd Streets. If we’re serious about getting people over from the bike trail, there is a connection there. The community would like to find a way to enhance this, making a real clear connection to/from 4th Street, one visible and usable for bicycles and pedestrians.

Councilor Benton stated that we will keep that on the front burner as we approach the CIP; a two block project for good lighting, make sure it’s ADA accessible.

Ms. Naji raised a question about what is happening with the office extension into the courtyard from the Boiler Shop; there seems to be confusion with SHPO as to whether the building is being removed (the original office portion of the Boiler Shop). Mr. Adams explained that piece is part of the internal project for the Tinder Repair. That space burned, only two walls remain, short walls, some metal frame. Design of that phase is not finished but we are entertaining not keeping/replacing the one that burned down. We have not made decisions, haven’t broached this with SHPO, still in discussion. Ms. Naji confirmed that we will need documentation and approval before moving forward.

Rep. Garcia asked if in development of the project, will we be looking at protection of the landscaping and buildings? Do we have crash data on the east-west streets where they intersect with 2nd St? He would like to look at some type of planning for streetscape design that includes traffic calming, such as bollards that are aesthetically pleasing, such as concrete planters, like at the courthouse. If the area has a history of traffic accidents, we might want to entertain this option.

Mr. Adams stated that we will be evaluating traffic in the area. COO Rael has asked him to look at potential calming in the corridor as part of the package we will be asking the feds to approve.

Ms. Chavez reiterated Mr. Griego's comments on the importance of connectivity to 4th Street. One of the neighborhood visions when we started 14 years ago was that it would connect to the whole neighborhood via Santa Fe Ave. There is a pedestrian bridge on Santa Fe to connect to the Bosque. Neighbors would like to see pedestrian connectivity go all the way to the bridge. With 2nd street closed recently, there has been a problem with people racing, so she thinks Rep. Garcia's idea about bollards should be considered.

COO Rael agreed that Santa Fe, because of its connection that goes all the way to the Bosque, is an important connection. Maybe there is a way to put money in the CIP to put in a nice streetscape along Santa Fe also.

Councilor Benton emphasized that this is an important, long standing component in the planning process. All recommendations from the sector plans are still relevant to where we go with capital projects in the future. Maybe get someone on Council on call to look at Santa Fe. He wants to work together with the Administration to get that done.

Councilor Benton announced that former Representative and Speaker Rick Miera has joined the meeting.

Mr. Miera noted that in 6 months, a lot has been done. He wants to congratulate everyone. How do we get people informed about what's been accomplished? This puts good emphasis on what the legislators can take back to the capital – jobs for the state.

Councilor Benton gave special thanks to Mr. Miera and other folks who have been here for the long haul, and most importantly, our legislators and governor, who came through. As we approach session, there are going to be a lot of asks. Voters also stepped up in approving bonds. We are connected to the legislature through the board. Hats off to the Keller administration for jumping on this and getting it done. Having COO Rael and Mr. Adams on

board, has been helpful. Without everyone's involvement, including board members, it wouldn't be happening.

Rep. Garcia asked if there is space on the agenda for the CNM production center. What was previously discussed? CNM production center showed up on a voids list – capital outlay projects funded by the legislature that were still not being encumbered by the local governments. SB 5 asked local governments to cure the deficiencies as to why they are on the list within 90 days. Local governments need to be encumbering the full amount or 5%. What have we done regarding \$300k for rail yards for CNM?

COO Rael stated that the City had several projects that fell into that list and has addressed those. The funding Rep. Garcia referenced was awarded to CNM. They have assured COO Rael that within 90 days they will have encumbered 5% or more. They have communicated that to Santa Fe so that they can preserve the money.

There was a discussion on securing legislative funding in the next session. Councilor Benton noted that when we got the funding, we had an open house and invited legislators from all over Albuquerque for a tour. Having roofs on the building can open them up for interim uses. If CNM moves into the Blacksmith Shop, we need to find another interim location for the Market. It's important to tell the story to legislators so that they understand how much progress has been made. He would like to have a small group discussion on that, get further advise from legislators.

Ms. Freed provided a WHEELS update. WHEELS is thrilled with everything that's getting done. WHEELS has received the Silver Iris private rail car. They are getting federal approval and are otherwise ready to run that train. They do not have NMDOT approval, and Dewey Cave (at MRCOG) has not signed off. WHEELS wants to go to the Spaceport and excursions north of Albuquerque.

WHEELS had 12 break-ins since July. They need 24 hour security, the gate on west side needs to be electric. WHEELS is at the site most days watching over site. Gates need to be repaired. WHEELS is also working with the City on art projects; she thinks this will be a wonderful connection with the streetscape.

The WHEELS lease for the Storehouse was approved over a year ago but it has not been signed by the CAO. WHEELS needs that. They are pretty close to being up to code so they can be fully opened.

Sen. Ortiz y Pino asked for clarification as to whether WHEELS needs DOT approval at the state or federal level. It is at the state. They are approved federally, and the train is located at the Rail Runner station, thanks to the Mayor and COO Rael. The Governor has said yes, but they don't have it in writing yet. Sen. Ortiz y Pino will make some calls and try to help.

Councilor Benton asked for COO Rael or Mr. Adams to speak to security issues.

COO Rael stated that Mr. Adams has been working with Ms. Freed on some security issues.

Mr. Adams reported that the gate that was at the north drive, WHEELS moved to the south. The City will install a new rolling gate, not electrical, because we will be moving that perimeter boundary for the streetscape projects, so it's not right time for electrical.

Ms. Iverson reported that the City has changed the security shift, and now there is an overnight graveyard shift.

Rep. Garcia returned to the issue of legislative funding. Rail yards from the get-go in legislative perspective, has always been a bipartisan issue. In saying that, he wanted to state to the board that we lost a very strong ally to the project, Sen. James White, who lost his reelection bid in the primary. He was the only republican who participated in the tour of the Rail Yards that led to \$7.2 million legislative funding and that Sen. White contributed. Strong ally of initiatives is something we should honor and respect versus a deadbeat legislator regardless of party affiliation.

XI. Other Business

None

XII. Adjourn 10:10 am