



## **Rail Yards Advisory Board**

November 20, 2019

11:30-1pm

Albuquerque/Bernalillo County Government Center (1 Civic Plaza NW)

Department of Finance & Administrative Services (11th Floor)

Budget Conference Room 111028

### **Members Present:**

City Councilor Isaac Benton  
Sen. Jerry Ortiz y Pino  
Rep. Miguel Garcia  
Lawrence Rael, COO  
Jay Rembe, ULI-New Mexico  
Leba Freed, WHEELS Museum  
Dorothy Chavez - Barelas  
Elena Gonzalez – Barelas

### **Members Absent:**

Sen. Michael Padilla  
Rep. Javier Martinez  
Comm. Steven Michael Quezada  
Alex Romero, Governor's Representative  
Alex Trujillo, South Broadway

### **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  
Bob DeGroot, New Mexico Steam Locomotive & Railroad Historical Society  
Rick Kerbie, New Mexico Steam Locomotive & Railroad Historical Society  
Jeff Hertz, Policy Analyst, City Council Services  
Diane Dolan, Policy Analyst, City Council Services  
Alaska Prism, Rail Yards Market  
Eric Griego, Barelas  
Rick Miera, Former Rep.

### **I. Call to Order**

Councilor Benton called the meeting to order at 11:34am.

### **II. Welcome & Overview**

Board members and City staff introduced themselves. Dorothy Chavez is taking Eric Griego's

place on the RYAB, but Eric Griego is going to continue attending meetings to provide his support.

**III. Approval of Minutes:** August 29, 2019 RYAB Meeting.

Councilor Benton motioned that the minutes be approved, Rep. Miguel Garcia seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

**IV. Scheduling Regular Quarterly Meetings (or 3 times per year)**

City Councilor Isaac Benton: It has been difficult to bring everyone together for meetings. In previous meetings, we talked about having 4 meetings per year, but because of the legislative session and all of the action that takes place around that time we might just want to meet 3 times per year.

Sen. Jerry Ortiz y Pino: Likes the idea of doing quarterly. There is no need to schedule the meetings right now. The budget priorities are being finalized right now and everyone is getting department requests. There is a lot to get ready right before the session. For instance, the Rural and Economic Development Committee just met to discuss the soccer stadium. Having meetings in April, August, and December seem to be the best options.

City Council Isaac Benton: City Council staff can do another Doodle poll leading up to those meetings to be sure that we get all of the legislators available to attend.

Lawrence Rael: Having meetings in April, August, and December will work for both short and long sessions.

**V. Administration Updates**

*a. Environmental Remediation (Next Steps)*

Councilor Benton: It was a wonderful opening day of the Rail Yards Plaza opening up and kudos to administration and Ed Adams in getting stuff built fast.

Lawrence Rael: The Plaza opening was a great opportunity to showcase the community and create a public space that is good for the public moving forward. A new access point was created, which is tough with the grades of the area. Restructuring of the parking lot created more space and better infrastructure to help with the drainage. The lighting will help with the space and create a more friendly environment for the community. Cultural Services will be responsible for scheduling the space and creating opportunities for the community. There is lots of work on buildings that still need to be done and we are moving through this methodically. Karen has done a great job managing this project and construction. We were

also notified two months ago that EDA was awarded \$1.2 million that we can use on infrastructure on the site.

Karen Iverson: Metropolitan Redevelopment applied for \$1.2 million that includes a scope with the extension of sewer and water that are internal to the site. This will include laying the conduit for fiber. We want the highest quality for uses - including uses for the school of CNM - including funding for streetscaping along 1<sup>st</sup> St., along the perimeter of the property, and along 2<sup>nd</sup> St. to provide additional security.

Lawrence Rael: The Mid Region Council of Governments was instrumental in getting the application done for these funds, including helping cover the cost of remediating the site. It is not a ton of money but will help us a lot.

Karen Iverson: Gave a quick update on the Film Office's Career Connection Event at South Broadway Community Center. Not only was this put on by the Film Office, but it involved doing getting people in the neighborhood involved and connecting people with the industry. It was packed and we could not include any more people. It was a very successful event.

Lawrence Rael: CNM's involvement meets all the check boxes that we want to have in a project like this. It is a great fit moving forward. The bonds were successful giving us an additional \$5 million. CNM's bonds were also successful and we need to thank the legislature for their support.

#### *b. Construction Update - Roofing and Preservation*

Ed Adams: The environmental remediation on south is underway. The City went out to RFP and found a contractor to work on the south side. Taking care of everything on north is exciting. We are going for Council approval soon and will enter into a contract on a remediation plan for the south. There is not the same amount of lead on the south side as there is on the north.

As far as construction goes, the City finished the plaza and are working on taking care of the roofs and being sure they don't degrade. The flue shop, lieutenant repair, and other shop are all going to be worked on as well – those are the next focal points.

#### *c. Fire House Request for Expressions of Interest*

Karen Iverson: We have requested Expressions of Interest for 3 buildings and the spaces between them. This is open to non-profits, businesses, and developers. We are offering them a ground lease for use as tenants.

Commercial, industrial, and housing development are the goals of the RFQ and catalytic uses of the rail yards. We are looking for 24/7 use of the site in a way that contributes to the goals of the RFQ. Site synergy is key and this is particularly true with the film school. We want to celebrate the history of the site and how it relates to technology. We also want to celebrate the surrounding neighborhoods of South Broadway and Barelás - this includes community driven development and a commitment to local supply chains.

City Councilor Isaac Benton: We should all take into consideration that 24-7 use of the site is ideal, but is just one of the criteria set out by the RFQ.

Lawrence Rael: Remediation is 12-18 months out as it relates to the work. This has much to do with the massive size of the buildings and the amount of engineering it involves. We need to account for the fire and flue shop. The roof also requires a lot of work to be done. Remediation on the side of the street can bring other activities to the site. We want these changes to be compatible with the neighborhood as well. We need to be cautious about putting up a fence around the buildings immediately. We are trying to create some activity on site but because it is an open site we don't want to get people hurt either. From the neighborhood's perspective, we want to have their support in evaluation and want to be sure it works for everyone. The fire house has issues with lead paint and will need to be cleaned of debris. We won't do anymore work, however, until remediation is done. If the tenant wants to open up the space for a restaurant, for instance, we don't want to have to take out the walls. It's kind of a chicken and egg problem. This shows that there may be a need for the city to step in and make the space attractive. In a nutshell this is where we are.

Sen. Jerry Ortiz y Pino: Does this mean there will be three separate RFQs? And is there asbestos in the building? What about the plumbing and electricity?

Karen Iverson: We plan to just have one RFQ for developing all three buildings at once or just one building at a time. We are open to mixing and matching.

Ed Adams: The roof of the fire house has some asbestos. At one point in time, some of these buildings had everything in them, but over time some things have been pulled out. So we will need to have utilities put in some places. When looking at the dates when these buildings were built, the fire house was built between 1900 1910. The site was completely reconfigured between 1900 and 1924. The wood structure was taken down and machine shop taken down.

Lawrence Rael: When you look at the environmental issues, there are really different levels of issues. We need some level of work on all buildings to get them ready, but it's going to be difficult to make it all pencil out. This is why we are putting it out the way we are. There are

probably some potential uses we haven't even thought of and this is of particular interest to the schools. Students will be there and need some level of service. This creates some level of support for continuing to move the site moving forward.

Jay Rembe: Is there any information provided in recent reports on the status of the materials of the buildings – are there any structural problems?

Ed Adams: We are aware of the types of materials that are in each building and the report will be made available. Some of them are capped with Zuni sandstone – they are concrete block buildings.

City Councilor Isaac Benton: Focusing on the north side of site, we will need to pay for something to patch the roofing – no warranty – just to stop the bleeding.

Ed Adams: Yes the machine shop is showing some major damage. The flue shop and the Wheels building are made out of concrete.

Leslie Najji: It would be significant to move the transfer table and tracks.

Dorothy Chavez: When it comes to getting involved with the RFP, what opportunities will there be for the community to provide input? Isn't this why this process started in the first place? We don't want to see a chain restaurant going in there. We had no input on the plaza, for instance.

Lawrence Rael: We would like to have someone from the neighborhoods involved in the RFP to ensure we have their interests at heart. I wanted to say something else about the plaza – it is all temporary just to use the space for now, but once the site is open this will change. One issue that we needed to deal with was working on the parking lot without having an impact. This included having good storm drainage - a way to capture the rain and get it out into the street. This will change as we continue to develop the buildings.

City Councilor Isaac Benton: Members of the board need to be conduits for this happening. The whole purpose of the board is for its transparency.

Rick Miera: I understand that the transfer table and tracks would be difficult to move. My question is about the rails connected to it? Are there any plans for these?

Ed Adams: Not for the environmental piece. Many of the rails are actually gone, but we don't have any plans for the other rails at the moment.

## **VI. Second St. Streetscaping**

City Councilor Isaac Benton: We have some funding from the capital budget for streetscaping. \$400,000 passed from the voters. We had a conversation with Leba (Freed) with George Radnovich and the Department of Municipal Development about working on slowing traffic on 2<sup>nd</sup> St. - now a two way street, a neighborhood street to coordinate traffic calming and tightening up the street. There have been concerns for pedestrians and connectivity to the downtown area and the Lead/Cole overpass – that street is the frontage. Lawrence addressed why we don't want to put in an expensive fence – but how can we start moving forward? Different types of lighting and street trees and good sidewalks would make for a nice presentation that we have enough funding to at least get something designed.

Lawrence Rael: The EDA grant has some opportunity to use funding for that. The Mayor is wanting to create something that visually suitable for the community and that also addresses speeds on the corridor. This might involve a process of going to an engineering group for 1st and 2nd St and reconfiguring how they blend together. The entrance into the parking lot is tough – we should have more info on how all that works. We asked Ed to work with Council on this and to add more curb appeal on a regular basis while also including more accessibility. Dorothy, please talk to the community about what they would like to see on this. It is a long corridor – the challenge is the distance between the street curb and the buildings – parking on the west side of the street for neighbors and finding a balance for pedestrian needs. We want more storefront, but are also limited with the width of the street.

City Councilor Isaac Benton: We don't want to throw money up front. For the Wheels, these improvements could help them operationally. We have been hearing from constituents that some drivers get out of control around the bend on 2nd St. We recognize that in terms of traffic calming this is difficult and are taking on interim measures until this is done.

Lawrence Rael: I just wanted to add that the Mayor has reached out to BNSF - he has sent a letter out to them about using the railroad. There are about 30 feet of curb on 3rd St. that is owned by BNSF where we could put in a nice street space to attach the rail yards to downtown and give people nice access to the site. There is a caveat, however - our city attorney can attest to the fact that working with the railroad is a whole new deal. At least they got our letter. There is also the track right next to the curb that has been used before for storage. This makes it an active track even if no rail cars have been parked there for a decade. We will try to be successful in asking for a donation of the public right of way.

Rep. Miguel Garcia: What we do for 2<sup>nd</sup> St. could be temporary in nature. Lighting that would go up around the yards on neighborhood streets could incorporate dark sky receptacles. Whatever is done should reflect what we did on 4th St. Streets that come into the rail yards need to be welcoming and should also have some art work – there could be temporary and long term pieces of improvements. It should probably not be the exact same type of artwork that is on 4th St., but should be similar in terms of design. Art work should be related to the design and workforce of the rail yards and should be broad based

City Councilor Isaac Benton: There is a lot of photography by Jack Delano that we could refer to - documenting not just the yards, but also the washroom of workers. Delano moved to Puerto Rico and documented the railroad there and married in Puerto Rico. The work that was used on the 4th St. banners are a great example of this - we need to celebrate the history and not just the development of the site.

Dorothy Chavez: I think all of this should also be interactive and educational for the kids.

Eric Griego: It should be noted that 4<sup>th</sup> St. is a main street and neighborhood folks here have helped create lots of partnerships. I'm sure they would want to support improvements on 2nd St. but we want to be sure that it doesn't impact 4<sup>th</sup> St. We should ask how all this ties in with the history of Barelas.

## **VII. Short Presentations**

### *a. Rail Yards Market Update*

Alaska Prism, Rail Yards Market Manager: Provided a powerpoint presentation that included an update on the outcomes of the 2019 Market Season. Alaska announced that the market had close to 90,000 visitors and 300 vendors participate in the 2019 season. Vendor sales were over \$915,000. Over \$31,000 were provided in SNAP and other benefits. Rail Yards Market management is still developing an economic impact statement and are waiting for vendors to submit their numbers for the season. The market employs 23 staff members. The market is collaborating with other local organizations to make neighborhood outreach bilingual for recruiting vendors and its management works hard to make sure that their vendor base is diverse. They plan to host over 200 vendors in their Holiday Market on December 14 and 15.

City Councilor Isaac Benton: We appreciate all that the market does to support the Rail Yards and to give the community a peek into the facilities we have at hand. It is true micro-entrepreneurship in inception that is tied in with all of the great work being done with the Barelas Coalition.

b. *Private Rail Car Coming to Wheels*

Leba Freed: Gave a powerpoint presentation that introduced the Silver Iris - a 67 year old private rail car that was just donated to the Wheels Museum, Inc. 6 months ago the American Association of Private Railroad Car Owners, Inc. came to Albuquerque and started talking to the Wheels Museum about donating the rail car. The Silver Iris is in perfect running condition and is certified by Amtrak. It is worth \$500,000 and includes 10 bathrooms, 8 bedrooms, and a lounge car. Leba said the Wheels Museum is hoping to do excursions that boost the travel tourism industry. They are currently looking for sponsorship and they are also looking to rent out the car.

c. *AT&SF 2926*

City Councilor Benton: Coordinated a short presentation from Bob DeGroft and Rick Kirbie with the New Mexico Steam Locomotive & Railroad Historical Society.

Bob DeGroft: The Society has written up plans for the transfer table and tracks and are serious about being there. The RYAB hasn't heard from us because of security problems. We will give you a private tour of the facility if you call. We have 200,000 volunteer hours on this and a net worth of \$1.3 million.

Rick Kerbie: The Society has been fortunate to get a few grants. Membership donations help us as well. We also have a lifetime membership. The turntable as it is right now is critical to our operation with the Wheels Museum to turn locomotive and see it under steam. We rebuilt some of the street on 8th St. close to Haines - this cost around \$100,000. Everything used to be done by hand and had to be read off first hand and now they have automatic train stops and other automatic equipment to accommodate all the bells and whistles. At night time everything needs to be lubricated, using lead, to reduce power requirements along the engine. We have had input from the plumber and pipefitters union – from certified folks doing a great job on what we have done. This engine is 1 out of 30 built and this is the only one that will ever run again – and now abq has it. We are working with DOT to do test runs on 8<sup>th</sup> street – we are not allowed to get on main line. We will be able to do test runs in spring. The turntable is key to what we do. Hydraulics and ties need to be redone. Events could be brought down to stimulate interest. There would be lots of people touring the United States who would be interested in seeing this engine. 13000 people showed up for a few days to see the engine. We could be selling rides for a few thousand dollars.



Rep. Miguel Garcia: What is the status of repairs on the turntable? What about easement issues?

Bob DeGroft: If the turntables are operating well, it would be incredible to see the big steamy beast. It had to turn around and the diesel engine will need to be re-lined – the rubber line needs to be redone.

Rick Miera: Once those rails are removed it will be impossible to get them back in. We need to preserve all of this.

Sen. Jerry Ortiz y Pino: We need to ask a practical question. If we retain the turntable then we keep it to one use. Versus if we let it be used for the soccer stadium it could be attracting 14,000 people per game.

Leba Freed: We think that the railroad industry is still booming. 1 million people are still coming to the area for locomotive uses. This could be a great site for tourism. We have met with Peter Trevino with New Mexico United and he agreed that we don't have enough land available to accommodate a stadium.

Dorothy Chavez: The neighborhood has already received a lot of congestion. The zoo also brings in a lot of traffic.

Councilor Isaac Benton: There will be no decision on this today - we just wanted to make sure that everyone was aware of this discussion moving forward and that is why we put it on the agenda.

Lawrence Rael: The biggest barrier to using the turntable is going to be the liability insurance with the state. There is a reason why Semitar labeled them as an artifact. The Santa Fe Rail Yards are on a different corridor. This will take an act of the state legislature. But much of this also rides on the Historic Preservation Officer when determining the various uses of the rail yards.

Jay Rembe: I think it is important to note that as much of a major impact that the soccer stadium could have on the neighborhood in terms of noise and parking, the stadium could also be a catalytic use to the neighborhood.

City Councilor Isaac Benton: This would still need to go to the Environmental Planning Commission for approval.

Bob DeCroft: We are really talking about tourism here. We have 24000 hits on our (the Society's) website. Those are the kinds of people who would stay the night and spend lots of money.

### **VIII.Potential New Mexico United Soccer Stadium Location**

City Councilor Isaac Benton: We know that there is an interest in getting the soccer stadium. The other two potential locations are the northwest corner of Broadway and Iomas and the other is 12<sup>th</sup> and I-40 (old PNM site). We just wanted to bring this up in case people hadn't heard. My response has always been first let's ask the neighborhood – this is particularly important for transportation questions. Access to the site is key and could have a detrimental impact if not thought through. This is because these streets are neighborhood streets and not high capacity streets. Other than that I am sitting back.

Leba Freed: The first time he (Peter Trevino) came to visit, we showed him the site – his first reaction was that there was no room for the stadium here on the back end of the Wheels Museum and to bring those numbers into these neighborhoods. Then he looked to the south and saw the Burlington site and asked if that was available. He seemed very interested in the south and said he would look into this.

### **IX.Follow Up on Leland Study (Action Items)**

City Councilor Isaac Benton: It is pretty clear from the last meeting what the City needs to do moving forward. While there has been some comments from the public about the City not doing enough outreach to invite people to the meetings, City staff is limited.

Eric Griego: It might be a good idea to hold one meeting annually that is more highly advertised and that gets more people out.

City Councilor Isaac Benton: We could do this for our next meeting.

Dorothy Chavez: What happened with the idea of including a representative from San Jose on the board? They say they are always feeling like the stepchild of the city and this could be a good opportunity for getting them involved.

City Councilor Isaac Benton: We originally decided to invite the abutting neighborhoods which are Barelmas and South Broadway, but we could look into bringing on a San Jose representative.

## **X.State Legislative Session**

Lawrence Rael: As part of this year's request at the State Legislature, Council passed a resolution that includes asking for additional money for the yards. The challenge is that we are still talking to the Department of Finance and Administration about getting the funds from last year to spend on the yards. The cost of restoring the roofs will definitely need more money, so this is important. A lot of this is about timing because it really depends on how things go with the bonds. Our architects, engineers, and team are all in place, however, and ready to go once we get the money.

Rep. Miguel Garcia: This is kind of disheartening because funding that is coming from the General Fund should go down to cities fairly quickly.

Rick Miera: Yes, there is only a three year window that the City has on this. Asking for the money is one thing, getting it is another, and spending it is another.

## **XI.Other Business**

None

## **XII. Adjourn**

1:13pm