

BISMARCK RENAISSANCE ZONE AUTHORITY
MEETING MINUTES
July 8, 2021

The Bismarck Renaissance Zone Authority met on July 8, 2021 in the Tom Baker Meeting Room in the City-County Office Building at 221 North 5th Street. The meeting was held remotely via the online platform Zoom as well as the meeting room. Chair Christianson presided.

Authority members present were Jim Christianson, Joe Fink, Dustin Gawrylow, Todd Van Orman, Curt Walth and Greg Zenker.

Authority member George Keiser was not present.

Technical Advisors Steph Smith and Bruce Whittey were present.

Staff members present were Sandra Bogaczyk (Office Assistant II), Jannelle Combs (City Attorney), Ben Ehreth (Community Development Director), Will Hutchings (Planner), Allison Jensen (City Assessor), and Daniel Nairn (Senior Planner).

Guests present were Kate Herzog (The Downtowners), Jay Caldwell (Freedom Financial), Chris Tyce and Jonathan Casper (Alliance Management) and Bryan Dean (Applewood Homes).

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Christianson called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.

MINUTES

The minutes of the May 13, 2021 meeting were distributed prior to the meeting.

MOTION: A motion was made by Mr. Walth and seconded by Mr. Fink to approve the minutes of the May 13, 2021 meeting. The motion passed unanimously by voice vote with members Fink, Gawrylow, Van Orman, Walth, Zenker and Chair Christianson voting in favor.

RENAISSANCE ZONE PROJECT – 212 NORTH 2ND STREET
JMN ROOTS, LLC FREEDOM FINANCIAL GROUP OFFICES – PURCHASE WITH IMPROVEMENTS AND LEASE

Mr. Nairn gave an overview of the staff report and stated that the applicant, JMN Roots, LLC, is requesting approval of a Purchase with Improvements Renaissance Zone project at 212 North 2nd Street. Mr. Nairn stated that the owner intends to modify the interior for occupation by a financial services firm. The build-out includes new HVAC, electrical, plumbing, framing, sheetrock and all finishes and new windows on the south wall. Mr. Nairn stated that the applicant estimates a budget of \$125,000 in project costs, exceeding the 50% of assessed building value of \$95,000 necessary to meet minimum program requirements. He stated that

both have a common ownership, but each would be a recipient of a separate Renaissance Zone project whereas the Purchase with Improvements project would be granted to JMN Roots, LLC and the Lease project would be granted to Freedom Financial Group – Bismarck, LLC who would be operating out of the building.

Mr. Nairn stated that, based on the findings contained in the staff report, staff recommends approval of the Purchase with Improvements Renaissance Zone project for the building at 212 North 2nd Street as presented in all submitted documents and materials, as a 100% property tax exemption on the building for five years.

Mr. Nairn stated that, based on the findings contained in the staff report, staff recommends approval of the Lease Renaissance Zone project for the building at 212 North 2nd Street as presented in all submitted documents and materials for an exemption from state tax on income derived from the location for five years.

Chair Christianson asked staff if any public responses had been submitted. Mr. Nairn answered that he had not received any statements.

Mr. Fink asked if all listed expenses were considered qualified purchases. Mr. Nairn answered that all expenses listed were capital expenses and traditionally the Authority has accepted façade improvements as capital improvements.

Mr. Van Orman asked if a Downtown Design Review is needed for the windows improvements. Mr. Nairn stated that the windows were not facing the right-of-way and therefore staff decided to not schedule Downtown Design Review.

Mr. Fink asked if a lease is recorded. Mr. Nairn stated that he did not know if there was a formal lease but the Commerce Department does not require it.

MOTION: A motion was made by Mr. Walth and seconded by Mr. Van Orman to recommend approval of the Purchase with Improvements Renaissance Zone project for the building at 212 North 2nd Street as presented in all submitted documents and materials, as a 100% property tax exemption on the building and improvements for five years. The motion passed with members Fink, Gawrylow, Van Orman, Walth, Zenker and Chair Christianson voting in favor.

MOTION: A motion was made by Mr. Van Orman and seconded by Mr. Walth to recommend approval of the Lease Renaissance Zone project for the building at 212 North 2nd Street as presented in all submitted documents and materials, as a exemption from state tax on income derived from the location for five years. The motion passed with members Gawrylow, Van Orman, Walth, Zenker and Chair Christianson voting in favor. Authority member Fink opposed the motion.

DOWNTOWN DESIGN REVIEW – 215 WEST THAYER AVENUE APPLEWOOD GROUP, LLC – NEW CONSTRUCTION OF EIGHT ROWHOUSES

Mr. Nairn gave an overview of the staff report and stated that the applicant, Applewood Group, LLC, is requesting Downtown Design Review approval for the design of the new construction of rowhomes at 215 West Thayer Avenue. He described the scope of the project including the construction of eight housing units of a rowhouse-style arranged in three buildings. Mr. Nairn stated that off-street parking is not required in the DF-Downtown Fringe zoning district and although the submitted site plan shows a small parking area the lot, as shown, it should be modified to include adequate turnaround space or removed from the plans. He stated that both restricted and unrestricted on-street parking is available and that at least one street tree should be planted in the boulevard in front of the parcel. He also stated that the building plans would be subject to stormwater and site plan review.

Mr. Nairn stated that the building would be 3 stories in height and that design elements could be used to soften the boundary between buildings and the adjacent properties to avoid a monotonous blank wall.

Mr. Nairn stated that, based on the findings contained in the staff report, staff recommends approval of the design of the new construction of rowhomes at 215 West Thayer Avenue as presented in all submitted documents and materials, with the following conditions:

1. The design of the western wall is modified to provide variation and visual interest.
2. The parking lot is equipped with an adequate turnaround or removed from the site plan.
3. A continuous pedestrian pathway is provided to all housing units.
4. The driveway apron is removed from the right-of-way with removal of one driveway.
5. Any substantive revisions to the approved design must be reconsidered by the Downtown Design Review Committee prior to installation.

At Chair Christianson's invitation Mr. Dean, Applewood Homes, distributed samples of the siding materials and described how his project would address the west wall design and instead of having any parking he would build a pergola with a common outdoor grilling area but would have to look at ideas between the street and the building.

Mr. Walth asked several questions about what materials would be used on the façade. Mr. Dean stated that a corrugated metal siding is proposed. Mr. Walth stated that he is hesitant to approve the use of corrugated metal as a main building material.

Mr. Whittey and Ms. Smith stated that the plans do not show enough detail to assess direction, streetscape, door and window openings, tree plantings, neighboring buildings and materials and suggested that the applicant return with a more detailed plan.

Chair Christianson read a letter noting several concerns about the building plan as presented. Submitted as Appendix A and B.

There was discussion between the applicant and technical advisors as to what needs to be included in a more complete plan submittal.

Mr. Fink asked if a retaining wall would be built. Mr. Dean stated that an existing retaining wall exists and a fence would be built. The applicant was asked to put the material of the fence on the new plan.

Chair Christianson asked if the lot had any grade changes. Mr. Dean stated that the same grade exists on the lot.

Mr. Walth stated that he would like to see the corrugated metal sample and struggles with approving that material and that it is a solid wall of black. Chair Christianson agreed and asked if it was a commercial material. Mr. Nairn stated that corrugated metal is not considered a commercial material.

Mr. Fink asked the applicant what his building schedule would be. Mr. Dean stated that he would like the exterior walls completed by winter.

There was discussion about the lack of parking and street restrictions.

MOTION: A motion was made by Mr. Fink and seconded by Mr. Walth to continue the request for the design of the new construction of rowhomes at 215 West Thayer Avenue to the August 13, 2021 meeting. The motion passed with members Fink, Gawrylow, Van Orman, Walth, Zenker and Chair Christianson voting in favor.

DOWNTOWN DESIGN REVIEW – 120 NORTH 3RD STREET BENCHMARK PROPERTIES, LLC – LOGAN ON THIRD PROJECTING SIGN

Mr. Nairn gave an overview of the staff report and stated that the applicant, Benchmark Properties, LLC, is requesting Downtown Design Review approval for a projecting sign at 120 North 3rd Street. He described the scope of the project to include a sign that would brand the building rather than listing the tenants on the sign and the applicant would list tenants on a directory installed at the entrances. Because the sign does not meet dimensional requirements listed in Section 14-03.1-09(8), stating that a sign may not be above the sill of any second floor window, the request has been brought to the Downtown Design Review Committee for approval since they might choose to waive the requirement since there is an historic reference to a similar sign previously hung in the same position.

Mr. Nairn stated that, based on the findings contained in the staff report, staff recommends approval of the proposed design for 120 North 3rd Street as presented in all submitted documents and materials on the basis of the historic character of the building, with the following conditions:

1. An encroachment agreement from the City Engineering Department is obtained prior to installation.
2. Any substantive revisions to the approved design must be reconsidered by the Downtown Design Review Committee prior to implementation.

Mr. Fink asked what shape the sign is. Mr. Nairn stated that it is rectangular design but visible from both adjacent streets.

MOTION: A motion was made by Mr. Walth and seconded by Mr. Fink recommended to approve the sign design for 120 North 3rd Street as presented in all submitted documents and materials on the basis of the historic character of the building, with the following conditions:

1. An encroachment agreement from the City Engineering Department is obtained prior to installation.
2. Any substantive revisions to the approved design must be reconsidered by the Downtown Design Review Committee prior to implementation.

The motion passed with members Fink, Gawrylow, Van Orman, Walth, Zenker and Chair Christianson voting in favor.

OTHER BUSINESS

DISCUSSION ON REQUEST FOR RENAISSANCE ZONE EXPANSION AND ISLAND

Chair Christianson invited Mr. Casper, Alliance Management, to present his idea to possibly utilize a Renaissance Zone island if one were to be created by the Renaissance Zone Authority. Mr. Dean distributed images of existing and proposed redevelopment at the existing apartments west of South 3rd Street and south of East Arbor Avenue, submitted as Appendix C.

There was discussion about location, commercial and residential space, potential revenue projections and parking.

Chair Christianson thanked the applicant and stated that Authority members would like some time to consider his ideas. He asked staff what would be an estimate of time needed to pass such a proposal. Mr. Nairn stated that at least one Renaissance Zone Authority meeting and a Bismarck City Commission meeting. He added that the State would need to concur, which collectively would take a couple months.

There was discussion about how many blocks would be needed for the proposal and how that affects the contiguous Renaissance Zone. Possibly changing the number and location of current blocks and possible remodel of completed blocks were discussed.

There was a consensus that Authority members were open to discussion and asked to add the discussion to next month's agenda.

Mr. Walth voiced concern that the area could not be expanded, yet would use the entire Renaissance Zone island. Mr. Nairn suggested that he could show a map of potential areas for development.

Chair Christianson asked staff to add a discussion about adding a Renaissance Zone island to the August agenda.

REPORT FROM STAFF

There was no report from staff at this time.

REPORT FROM THE DOWNTOWNERS

Ms. Herzog suggested adding more Technical Advisors to the Authority since new construction projects rather than rehabilitation projects seem to be the norm in the near future.

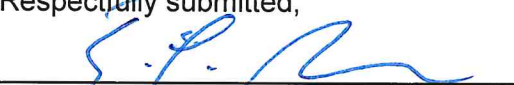
Ms. Smith welcomed the idea and suggested that a civil and structural engineer would be nice to have. Mr. Nairn suggested that a request for advisors could be placed on the City website.

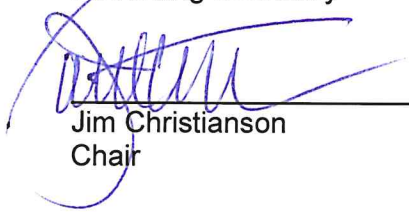
Mr. Whittey reminded Authority members that the CORE Program process would be valuable at this time so that applicants would have affordable access to professional services. Ms. Smith suggested that staff might look at the expenses of the CORE program and the return on investment. She also suggested that there might be other financial sources available. Chair Christianson asked staff to consider. Mr. Gawrylow suggested that staff find ways to make the development process easier for applicants.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting of the Bismarck Renaissance Zone Authority adjourned at 5:15 p.m. to meet again on August 12, 2021.

Respectfully submitted,



Sandra Bogaczyk
Recording Secretary

Jim Christianson
Chair