

**BISMARCK RENAISSANCE ZONE AUTHORITY
MEETING MINUTES
March 13, 2025**

The Bismarck Renaissance Zone Authority met on March 13, 2025, in the Tom Baker Meeting Room in the City-County Office Building at 221 North 5th Street and remotely via the online platform Zoom. Chair Christianson presided.

Authority members present were Jim Christianson, Amelia Doll, Kirsten Dvorak, Joe Fink (via Zoom), Nancy Guy, Kate Herzog, Jon Lee and Greg Zenker (via Zoom).

Authority member Steve Bakken was not present.

Design Advisors David Witham and Eric Hoffer were present.

Staff members present were Sandra Bogaczyk (Office Assistant II), Isak Johnson (Planner), Daniel Nairn (Planning Manager), Linda Oster (Assistant City Engineer) and Dave Pechacek (PE, Engineering).

Guest present was Jeran Thomson (J.E. Homes).

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Christianson called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m. and welcomed guests present.

Chair Christianson asked each member to introduce themselves as it was the first meeting for new members, including Amelia Doll, Kirsten Dvorak, Joe Fink and Nancy Guy – Citizens, and Kate Herzog – Parks and Recreation, Jon Lee – Bismarck Public Schools and Steve Bakken (absent) – Burleigh County Commission.

MINUTES

The minutes of the December 12, 2024 meeting were distributed prior to the meeting.

MOTION: A motion was made by Ms. Dvorak and seconded by Ms. Herzog to approve the minutes of the December 12, 2024 meeting. The motion passed unanimously by voice vote with members Doll, Dvorak, Fink, Guy, Herzog, Lee, Zenker and Chair Christianson voting in favor.

Mr. Johnson welcomed the returning and new members and stated that the Development Plan will be addressed at the next meeting.

DOWNTOWN DESIGN REVIEW – FRONT AVENUE AND SOUTH 5TH STREET BISMARCK ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT – STREETScape IMPROVEMENTS

Mr. Johnson gave an overview of the staff report and stated that the applicants, the Bismarck Engineering Department, are requesting Downtown Design Review approval of streetscape elements in conjunction with a street improvement project partially within the downtown, along Front Avenue between South Mandan Street and South 9th Street, South 3rd Street between the railroad tracks and East Front Avenue, and along South 5th Street between East Bowen Avenue and the railroad tracks to the north. Mr. Johnson described the proposed improvements with allowance for expected changes and stated that Engineering is working closely with NDDOT, who are providing funding through an urban grant program, and including bike racks, curb extensions and ADA ramps.

Mr. Johnson stated that, based on the findings contained in the staff report, staff recommended approval of the proposed design for the streetscape improvement project for South 5th Street, Front Avenue, and South 3rd Street, as outlined in submitted map, as presented in all submitted documents and materials, with the following conditions:

1. Approval of final designs, particularly pedestrian street lighting, is delegated to the Design Advisors in conjunction with the Downtowners, as necessary.
2. Any substantive revisions to the approved design must be reconsidered by the Downtown Design Review Committee prior to implementation.

Ms. Dvorak asked if Engineering is talking with affected business owners about the work. Mr. Johnson stated that they are, but deferred to the Engineering Department for specific conversations.

Chair Christianson asked the status of the RFP. Mr. Johnson confirmed that the RFP is for private land on the Event Center parcel, while this scope is confined to the public right-of-way.

Chair Christianson asked what is the time line for the project. Mr. Johnson stated that the project would take place during the 2026 fiscal year.

Ms. Herzog asked if the landscape plan is to use the new tree ground material. Mr. Johnson confirmed.

Mr. Fink asked what is the status of the lighted intersection at Front and Sweet Avenues at 5th Street. Mr. Pechacek was welcomed to speak and stated that after reviewing it was decided to create a four-way stop and remove the light signal at Front Avenue and 5th Street, and extend curbs at Sweet Avenue and 5th Street. He stated that any RFP would originate from City Administration.

Mr. Pechacek stated that through meetings it was decided to increase landscaping and street furniture/furnishings using existing designs and durable materials. Several safety conditions were expressed.

Mr. Fink asked how Special Assessments might apply to the project area. Ms. Oster stated that the NDDOT will fund \$1.6 million and the remainder will be paid by the benefitting properties with a special assessment. As soon as the final cost estimates are available the special assessments will be distributed.

Ms. Oster stated that street improvements will include upgrading lighting throughout the downtown area and expressed difficult conditions and high cost of that work due to the age and design of downtown street lights. She stated that, subsequently, a new street light design is desired. Engineering would like to meet with stakeholders, including the Renaissance Zone Authority, to determine the best design. There was discussion about the scope and cost of that work.

Chair Christianson and Ms. Oster recapped that the look would be similar to existing light poles, but new hardware might be more pleasing and allow better conditions for banner and holiday hangings. It was determined that Engineering will remain in contact with the Design Advisors to create a cohesive look that maintains a familiar and pleasing design.

Ms. Guy asked Ms. Oster to confirm that this particular project would be paid for by NDDOT and special assessments and not Public Works. Ms. Oster confirmed and stated that the rest of the downtown would be paid for through Public Works.

Mr. Witham summarized conversations between Design Advisors and City Engineering about various street elements which would promote street activity, safety and comfort and asked to be consulted about placement of these streetscape items.

Chair Christianson asked about rules about sidewalk-intersection bump outs. Mr. Pechacek stated that bump outs create a safer pedestrian environment and will be used for that reason. Turning radius parameters were discussed as a concern for larger vehicles which frequent the Event Center area. Mr. Pechacek stated that Public Works is being consulted throughout their planning.

Mr. Zenker stated he agreed with Design Advisors that bike lanes would be inappropriate in this area and City Commission approved a new way to snow plow the downtown area and will speak with Public Works to see that Front Street is included.

Ms. Dvorak expressed concern about the possibility of slow traffic when Event Center events end if the light is removed and replaced with stop signs. Mr. Pechacek confirmed that a thorough analysis of traffic movement has been done to determine the decision to remove the light and a 90-day test period will occur before permanent removal. He stated that several parking spaces could be added to the area as well.

Mr. Zenker added that the intersection matrices are governed by federal guidelines and not determined locally in order to maintain federal funding.

MOTION: A motion was made by Ms. Herzog and seconded by Ms. Doll to approve the proposed design for the streetscape improvement project for South 5th Street, Front Avenue, and South 3rd Street, as outlined in submitted map, as presented in all submitted documents and materials, with the following conditions:

1. Approval of final designs, particularly pedestrian street lighting, is delegated to the Design Advisors in conjunction with the Downtowners, as necessary.
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 Doll, Dvorak, Fink, Guy, Herzog, Lee, Zenker and Chair Christianson voting in favor.

DOWNTOWN DESIGN REVIEW – 207 EAST ROSSER AVENUE J.E.HOMES, LLC AND THE TITLE TEAM CO. – GAS STATION DEMOLITION

Mr. Johnson gave an overview of the staff report and stated that the applicants, J.E. Homes, LLC, on behalf of the Title Team Co., is requesting Downtown Design Review approval for a demolition project at 207 East Rosser Avenue. Mr. Johnson summarized details as mentioned in the agenda packet and presented current images of the property. He stated that the gas tank and canopy demolition occurred on September 24, 2024 and a future office building, which would require Downtown Design Review approval, is projected. Mr. Johnson stated that a Special Use Permit is not required since the owners intend to develop the property.

Mr. Johnson stated that, based on the findings contained in the staff report, staff recommends Downtown Design Review approval of the proposed demolition for 207 East Rosser Avenue as presented in all submitted documents and materials, with the following conditions:

1. The demolitions of the existing buildings must be consistent with all relevant provisions of Sections 4-05-03 and 14-4-21.2(4)k, including landscaping the land (such as with grass) if the lot will be kept vacant longer than sixty (60) days.
2. Any substantive revisions to the approved design must be reconsidered by the Downtown Design Review Committee prior to implementation.

Several members expressed concern about approving demolition when an empty lot remains undeveloped and existing concrete remains an eye-sore for an extended time and assigning deadlines for development.

Mr. Thomson stated that after looking at customer and investment data he emphasized his client's desire to develop the site.

There was consensus among members that owners who receive approval for demolition should be invited to appear at Downtown Design Review periodically to comment on the progress of development.

Mr. Witham stated that he could see sometimes not approving demolition until new development is determined but this building is not a high quality building and can support demolishing it.

There was discussion about testing the ground for contaminants and Mr. Thomson stated that the sale to the current owner was contingent on passing an environmental study and passing tests.

Mr. Johnson cited the ordinance stating that demolished properties have to landscape 60 days after demolition or choose to apply for a variance to request relief of that ordinance for an amount of time.

MOTION: A motion was made by Ms. Guy and seconded by Ms. Dvorak to approve the Downtown Design Review demolition project for 207 East Rosser Avenue as presented in all submitted documents and materials, with the following conditions:
conditions:

1. The demolitions of the existing buildings must be consistent with all relevant provisions of Sections 4-05-03 and 14-4-21.2(4)k, including landscaping the land (such as with grass) if the lot will be kept vacant longer than sixty (60) days.
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 Doll, Dvorak, Fink, Guy, Herzog, Lee, Zenker and Chair Christianson voting in favor.

OTHER BUSINESS ELECTION OF OFFICERS

At this time Chair Christianson opened the floor to nominations of Chair and Vice Chair and when asked stated he would be happy to continue chairing the Renaissance Zone Authority. Chair Christianson applauded Mr. Fink for his spirit of service and when asked, Mr. Fink stated he would be happy to continue as vice chair.

MOTION: A motion was made by Ms. Dvorak and seconded by Ms. Guy to approve Jim Christianson and Joe Fink as Chair and Vice Chair respectively. The motion passed with members Doll, Dvorak, Guy, Herzog, Lee and Zenker voting in favor. Members Fink and Chair Christianson abstained.

THE DOWNTOWNERS

Ms. Herzog stated that the Downtowners will provide a written report from now on, to be included in the agenda packet, and invite members to ask questions as needed.

CERTIFICATE OF APPRECIATION

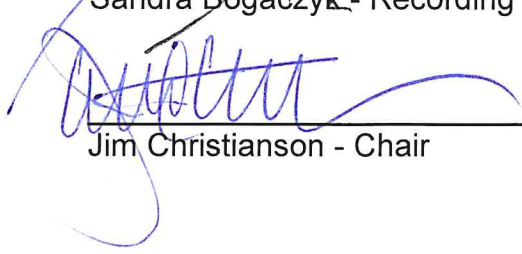
Chair Christianson stated his and the Board's deep appreciation for the work and dedication Dustin Gawrylow showed during his tenure as Renaissance Zone Authority member and presented him with a certificate of appreciation.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting of the Bismarck Renaissance Zone Authority adjourned at 4:49 p.m. to meet again on April 10, 2025.

Respectfully submitted,



Sandra Bogaczyk - Recording Secretary

Jim Christianson - Chair