

**CITY OF MESA
MINUTES OF THE DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
STUDY SESSION**

DATE: August 15, 2002 **TIME:** 7:00 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Dave Wier, Chair
Art Jordan, Vice Chair
Theresa Carmichael
Vince DiBella
Deb Duvall
Wayne Pomeroy
Charles Riekema
Mark Reeb

STAFF PRESENT

Shelly Allen
Katrina Bradshaw
Tony Felice
Greg Marek
Amy Morales
Patrick Murphy

OTHERS PRESENT

MEMBERS ABSENT

Terry Smith

1. Call to Order

The August 15, 2002 study session of the Downtown Development Committee was called to order at 7:01 a.m. in the Gold Room of the lower level City Council Chambers located at 57 E. First Street by Chair Wier.

2. Discuss and consider if the City Council should include extending light rail to downtown Mesa on the ballot authorizing an election for a new sales tax for transportation related issues.

Mr. Murphy explained that the issue under consideration is whether to include light rail in the transportation sales tax initiative scheduled for the March 2003 ballot. He said he is looking for feedback from the Board to determine whether they would like light rail to be included on the ballot or considered as a separate item.

Chair Wier said he thought there was government funds available to help pay for the light rail transit project.

Mr. Murphy said the government funds will only cover 50% of the costs and must be applied for during the first phase of the project. The City must be able to fund the rest of the project.

Ms. Duvall asked if there is any guarantee that the government will grant the request for the funding.

Mr. Marek said once they grant funding for the first phase, the succeeding phases are more likely to be funded.

Chair Wier expressed concern that the condition of the economy may negatively affect the votes to increase sales tax to fund light rail.

Mr. Marek said the primary reason for the March ballot is to fund the Transportation Plan that is being approved by City Council. The Plan calls for approximately \$3 billion dollars in transportation projects over the next 20 years. Much of that cost largely consists of maintenance to existing streets and construction of new streets. He added that the City is already behind with its upkeep of existing streets. In order to fund the Transportation Plan there will have to be a sales tax increase, otherwise Mesa's transportation system will fall way behind.

Mr. Marek said a citizen's committee, headed by Jim Davidson, is currently discussing whether light rail should be included on the March ballot with the rest of the Transportation Plan. This would provide the necessary funding to bring light rail all the way to downtown Mesa, rather than ending at Longmore Road (which is all the City can currently fund).

Chair Wier asked how much of a tax increase is proposed for the March ballot.

Mr. Murphy said several different options are being considered ranging from a quarter cent increase or higher.

Mr. Marek said part of that decision will be weighed against what other cities are currently charging for sales tax. Mr. Marek added that they would like to make the decision about the March ballot pretty quickly which is why staff has brought this before the Downtown Development Committee as a discussion item on the agenda.

Ms. Duvall asked that if light rail was not included on the ballot, will it be up to City Council to determine whether they want to use capital funds to extend light rail from Longmore to Mesa Drive.

Mr. Marek said it looks like the only way light rail can be funded to come to downtown Mesa is if a sales tax increase is approved.

Ms. Duvall said she would rather that the light rail sales tax be separate from the rest of the transportation plan on the ballot so that the City does not have to risk the possibility that the transportation sales tax might not get passed due to the controversy of light rail. She said she fears that when the time comes, the supporters will not turn out for the vote. She also feared that the media will negatively impact the voter decisions by printing articles that are unbalanced and one-sided.

Mr. Pomeroy asked if the citizen's committee was leaning towards a consolidated ballot or if they favor a separate vote.

Mr. Murphy said the City has hired a consultant, who also helped both Phoenix and Glendale with their votes, to provide the City with some direction on how to handle this issue. The consultant has recommended not to separate the two

ballots because he felt that the survey results were positive and he also felt he could help with the public relations. The consultant also explained that in the scheme of things, the light rail project is only a small component to the overall budget of the Transportation Plan.

Ms. Duvall asked what is the difference in the sales tax increase if light rail is included on the ballot.

Mr. Marek said they have not determined that yet but he added that Phoenix, Glendale, and Tempe have already held their transit elections and all have included light rail with their overall transportation plan.

Ms. Duvall asked if the sales tax initiative passed in those other cities.

Mr. Marek said Glendale's transit tax election passed at 76% and Phoenix and Tempe's passed as well.

Mr. Pomeroy said he was in favor of combining light rail with the transportation plan on the ballot because he felt it would help get light rail passed. On the other hand he felt that it was important to have a strong public relations committee backing the light rail project or it could be an embarrassment to the City if it does not pass.

Mr. Reeb asked how much money the City Council has set aside to fund the light rail project up to Longmore Road.

Mr. Marek said he believes they found \$25 million to help fund that first portion of light rail.

Mr. Riekema said he would agree to combine the light rail transit with the transportation plan on the ballot because he felt this was a quality of life issue rather than a sales tax issue. He said he was in favor of the light rail project and encouraged the City to promote ridership and help people understand the benefits that it brings to the City.

Ms. Duvall and Mr. DiBella also agreed that light rail should be included on the ballot.

3. Discuss items on the agenda for the Regular Meeting.

Citizen Participation Plan

Mr. Marek said the reason that the Citizen Participation Plan needs to be continued to the next meeting is because the Planning and Zoning Board rejected the Citizen Participation Plan that was presented to them at their last meeting. He said the Planning staff is making some revisions and the Planning and Zoning Board will reconsider the ordinance at their September meeting. Mr. Marek said it makes more sense for the Downtown Development Committee to wait and consider the same ordinance as the Planning and

Zoning Board in September. As a result, staff is requesting that this item be continued to the September meeting.

Mr. Marek explained that one of the main issues that Redevelopment staff has with the Plan is to request that design review be included as part of the citizen participation plan requirements for all projects rather than just those requiring a public hearing (such as zone changes, etc.). He said the Redevelopment Office feels it is more important for a neighborhood to know what's being built next to them than it is to know what it's being zoned. He explained that, in many cases, by the time the neighborhood finds out what's being built it is generally already scheduled to be considered by the Design Review Board and the plans are too far along to negotiate any changes with the neighborhood. Mr. Marek said Frank Mizner, the Planning Director, does not object if the Redevelopment Office wants to follow that procedure but he is not in favor of it for the rest of the City.

Mr. DiBella said he would suggest renaming the Citizen Participation Plan to a Neighborhood Notification Process. He said the Citizen Participation Plan alludes to the false impression that the neighborhood can participate in the design of the project when, in reality, the designs are usually complete and the neighbors can have an opportunity to voice their opinions and negotiate certain aspects of the project.

Mr. Reeb said he felt that neighbors should help contribute to the cost of the project if they want to request changes to the design of the project.

Mr. Marek explained that the Citizen Participation Ordinance is was a good way to avoid some of the anger that occurs at the public meetings when the plans have come too far to negotiate any significant changes in the plans and it is too late to comply with the concerns of the neighbors.

4. Update on applications and projects

Mr. Marek asked the Board if they want to review the variance for St. Vincent De Paul, located on Broadway Road and Macdonald, or if they would rather it be handled at the staff level. He explained that the applicant has a vacant lot, which they built a wall around without checking with the Redevelopment Office and consequently it is in violation of the Zoning Code. Now they need to apply for a variance to legalize what they have done. Redevelopment staff plans to recommend approval for the variance, especially since it hides the unattractive lot behind it. He explained that if St. Vincent De Paul ever decides that they want to use that lot for anything, they will need to apply for a Council Use Permit, which would also have to be reviewed by the Downtown Development Committee. On the other hand, the variance is just a routine item that could be handled administratively unless the Downtown Development Committee would rather review it at its next meeting.

Chair Wier and the Board consented to allow the variance to go directly to the Zoning Administrator rather than have a formal hearing with the Downtown Development Committee.

5. Director's Report, Greg Marek

None

6. Board Member Comments

Ms. Duvall said this would be her last meeting on the Downtown Development Committee since she has been appointed to serve on the GPEC Board. She said she has enjoyed the time she has served on the Downtown Development Committee and appreciated the opportunity to learn and contribute to the community.

Mr. Jordan asked if the SKIP and DIP (incentives for infill projects) was approved by City Council.

Mr. Marek said the City Council approved the Development Incentive Permits (DIP) and Substantial Conformance Improvement Permit (SCIP), as the ordinance was written which excluded the Town Center Redevelopment Area from the process. This was as the Redevelopment Office requested because the Town Center Redevelopment Area was excluded from the new design guidelines and already had a process in place to handle legal nonconforming properties.

7. Adjournment

With there being no further business, this meeting of the DDC was adjourned at 7:30 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Mr. Gregory J. Marek, Director of Redevelopment
Minutes prepared by Katrina Bradshaw