



**Blueprint Downtown Steering Committee Meeting Minutes
CBJ Assembly Chambers**

August 28, 2019, 6:00 p.m.

Steering Committee Members Present:

Christine Woll, Chair	Laura Martinson
Betsy Brenneman	Jill Ramiel
Kirby Day	Meilani Schijvens
Daniel Glidmann	Patty Ware
Michael Heumann	Ricardo Worl

Steering Committee Members Absent:

Wayne Jensen, Lily Otsea, and Karena Perry

Planning Commission Liaison:

Nathaniel Dye

Staff:

Beth McKibben, Senior Planner, Project Manager
Alexandra Pierce, Planning Manager
Tim Felstead, Planner
Brenwynne Grigg, Administrative Officer

I. Roll Call

Ms. Woll called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m.

II. Approval of Minutes

August 8, 2019 Draft Minutes, Blueprint Downtown Steering Committee Meeting

MOTION: *By Mr. Day to approve the August 8, 2019, minutes without changes. Mr. Worl seconded.*

The motion passed with no objection.

III. Public Participation

Mr. Bruce Denton was present at the meeting, to present on the proposed move for the Glory Hall, as item number V on the agenda.

IV. Steering Committee Updates

Ms. McKibben reported that staff have conducted two additional focus group meetings since the last Blueprint Downtown Steering Committee meeting. One focus group looked at business and economic vitality, and the other discussed health and human services. She is currently organizing focus group discussions for neighborhoods and housing, and youth and education. This will conclude the focus groups, and staff will discuss how to report the meeting results back to the Committee in an organized fashion.

V. Presentation on Proposed Move for Glory Hall

Housing First Update

Mr. Bruce Denton addressed the Committee with an update on Housing First, Phase II. Dawson Construction is currently constructing the framing for the second floor, and the anticipated completion date is around April 2020. He commended CDD on their support through the plan review and construction process. He added there is consensus among community providers that Juneau will never need a Phase III; that the homeless population, eligible for the Housing First program, has not changed much since they began studying it years ago.

Glory Hall Update

Mr. Denton reported that the Glory Hall Board is unanimously in support of moving to a larger piece of property in order to provide better support and services. Their current building has difficulties, due to lack of ADA accessibility, so there presents challenges for some of their patrons. For example, the sleeping units are on the third floor, and there is no elevator, so trying to get a wheelchair up the narrow staircase proves difficult and dangerous. Additionally, the building footprint consumes most of the lot, so when patrons need to step outside, there is no private outside space. Staff also have little to no control over what occurs on the sidewalk right outside their building, and activity has worsened since the closure of the Bergman Building.

Mr. Denton said the Glory Hall has initiated a campaign to raise money for the purchase of a parcel of land from St. Vincent de Paul. He is hopeful to have the funds needed by September 1, 2019. Once the purchase is complete, discussion with neighboring property owners will begin on how the Glory Hall can be great neighbors. He hopes to enlist a member of the nearby neighborhoods as a Glory Hall Board Member, to give the surrounding community a voice on the Board. The Glory Hall expects that transportation operations will decrease with the move, because of the closer proximity to services the residents partake in, such as medical care, dental, etc.

The goal is to secure the funding for the new location without state or federal grants. The Rasmuson Foundation, the Central Council of Tlingit and Haida, and the Mental Health Trust have reached out, to see how they can support the Glory Hall in this endeavor. Mr. Denton plans to enlist local volunteers and people skilled in the trades, to donate materials and labor for phases of the construction.

Ms. Ware asked about the deadline for funds needed to purchase the property. Mr. Denton confirmed the deadline is September 1, and if all the pledges and commitments are collected, they should have the needed funds.

Mr. Worl informed the Committee that St. Vincent de Paul is an advocate for the Glory Hall locating next to them. He spoke of some technical hurdles with the mortgage lender, but assured the Committee they are working closely with the Glory Hall, and are being flexible. They understand the need for site control if the Glory Hall is going to take their fundraising to the next level. They have a joint meeting scheduled with the Housing Finance Director of the Central Council of Tlingit and Haida, to share their ideas and gain additional support.

Ms. Martinson asked how much more they needed, as they had one week left to collect the funds. Mr. Denton replied they needed to collect between \$50,000 and \$100,000. He added that in the very best of situations, they are looking at construction beginning in the spring of 2020. Their next step is to begin discussions with neighbors to discover issues and concerns. One known issue is the bus stop behind Nugget Mall. It is currently a transfer station, so it is not easy to relocate. However, once the Valley Transit Center is active, it will become a regular bus stop and will become easier to relocate if needed.

Ms. Brenneman asked if there has been any studies, or general sense, of what the impact of the Glory Hall move will be in the downtown. Mr. Denton replied there had been no studies. As to the impact, Mr. Denton stated that the Board does not want to give up the equity in that building, for the equity in a new building. The Glory Hall Board is

interested in keeping their operating costs under control, and has considered selling the downtown building, in order to park the funds in an investment somewhere, with a 5% draw down every year. However, the details have not yet been determined.

Ms. Brenneman added that she has heard rumors of pushback to the Glory Hall moving out of the downtown. She did not believe the move would have a huge impact on some of the current problems downtown. She asked Mr. Denton if the Board has heard any pushback of this sort. Mr. Denton replied there was initial concern from traditional Glory Hall supporters when a letter was sent out, explaining their intent. The perception was, "Why are you letting the local business owners kick the Glory Hall out of the Downtown?" The Board responded that they have been thinking about and planning this move for a very long time, and it is a win-win, because they are getting better facilities. Ms. Lovishchuk, the Executive Director of the Glory Hall, believes the net effect of the downtown population will be good.

Mr. Glidmann moved the conversation back to the Housing First facility, and asked why the square footage of the building was around double the amount as that of the Trillium project, since they are both multifamily constructions. Ms. McKibben responded that extra amenities are included in Housing First, due to the target population presenting a more challenging set of needs. For example, Housing First is equipped with double dry walls, floor drains in the bedrooms, and every room is ADA accessible. Mr. Denton added that the groundwork for Housing First was more expensive than usual, due to the soil in the Lemon Creek area being post glacial, which presents the need for additional prep work.

Ms. Martinson moved the conversation back to the Glory Hall, and stated that her perception was that removing the Glory Hall patrons from the close proximity of the drug population would have a positive effect on their safety. Mr. Denton agreed, and added that simply being able to be outdoors in a private courtyard, where drug dealers and prostitutes will not approach them, will do a lot for their stability.

Mr. Dye added that in removing the Glory Hall population from the downtown area, the drug population becomes more isolated, and will be easier to deal with.

Mr. Day suggested that this time of year is difficult for businesses to focus on anything besides keeping up with the market, and asked if the fundraising timeline could be stretched out a bit. Mr. Denton explained they are trying to segregate their fundraising efforts for various programs, to maximize focus and contributions for specific needs. They are concerned that if fundraising for the Glory Hall property runs too closely to their Empty Bowls Fundraiser in the fall, the Empty Bowls fundraiser may inadvertently suffer as a result.

Ms. Schijvens commended Mr. Denton and the Glory Hall staff and board members on their amazing work.

Mr. Worl commented that having Mr. Denton here tonight was great timing, since at the last meeting, the Committee discussed all these wonderful visions of parks and amenities for the downtown, but could not help but worry about how the homeless population would affect those plans. He is glad to see more people gaining a residence at Housing First, and having a place to gather at the Glory Hall, and is confident that the parks will see improvement. He acknowledge the City still had to deal with the heavy drug users that frequent the downtown, but that population is smaller and much more specific. He is hopeful for a plan to deal with it.

Mr. Day acknowledged there remains a population downtown that has many issues, including the committing of crimes. With the peaceful homeless population removed from the equation, and cared for in a better space, it will be easier for the city officials to 'fix' the problem.

Ms. Pierce took the opportunity to point out that Housing First started as a grassroots effort by the Downtown Improvement Group (DIG), and since then, the City and other major organizations have stepped in to support their vision. Often, this is how meaningful change gets accomplished, and she commended Mr. Denton, DIG, and the Glory Hall for recognizing the role they could have in making things happen in Juneau.

Mr. Worl supported the work of the Glory Hall and Housing First, by reminding us that when we remove someone from the street, they feel safer, and are no longer in survival mode. It is then, that they are in a better position to receive treatment. Mr. Denton added that a lot of bad behavior is really a survival technique. For example, the consequence for committing a crime means a warm bed in jail. Alternatively, the consequence for becoming drunk and passing out, is a warm bed in Sleep Off. Mr. Denton ended by stating, that the goal is to improve their lives in a way that will start improving the trajectory of future populations, instead of repeating the generational cycle of poverty.

VI. Draft Chapter 7: Parks, Open Space, and Recreation

Introduction Presentation

Ms. Woll moved the Committee on to the next agenda item, continuing the discussion from the last meeting on parks, open space, and recreation.

Ms. Pierce informed the Committee that the updates in their packet came directly from comments made in the last meeting. In addition, she met with Michelle Elfers, Deputy Director at Parks and Recreation, to communicate the Committee's comments to the Department, and ensure the visions coming out of this group are continuing to align with Parks and Recreation's plans. Ms. Elfers was very receptive to the Committee's input, and appreciated the feedback and suggestions for parks.

Ms. Pierce then picked up where the Committee last left off and initiated a discussion about access points to the Seawalk, and types of allowable uses on the Seawalk. Pedicabs are using it the Seawalk now and there have been some complaints, yet at the same time, they are part of a vibrant downtown. She reminded the Committee there has been some interest in dockless vehicles accessing the Seawalk, and the City put a moratorium on dockless vehicles until February, when they could decide how to handle them. Mr. Felstead is currently working on that ordinance language with a team from other CBJ departments. Ms. Pierce asked the Committee, "Should we allow dockless vehicles on the Seawalk?" She went on to list all the access points to the Seawalk, such as the Mayor Bill Overstreet Park, Glacier Highway, the Support Dock, Marine Park, Warners Wharf, the steamship dock/tram parking lot, and the Franklin Dock. She then asked the Committee, "Would you like to see more access points?"

Access Points to the Seawalk

Ms. Martinson asked if there would be an access point at the Archipelago lot. Mr. Day replied that the entire lot would be an access point.

Ms. Schijvens stated there should be a priority to provide more connectivity to the Mayor Bill Overstreet Park and the Seawalk from the Flats Neighborhood, which connects with many other downtown neighborhoods. Ms. Pierce pulled up an image of a new pedestrian crossing at Glacier Avenue, and Ms. Ware asked if there would be a pedestrian light. Mr. Felstead replied that he has not seen electricity for a light in any of the final plans.

Ms. Brenneman suggested that the most logical place for some cleanup efforts would be around the Gold Creek area, and ridding the space of the barbed wire fence. Especially, she added, as it is an access point to the Seawalk and the Mayor Bill Overstreet Park.

Mr. Day pointed out the need for additional signage at all access points, directing people to the Mayor Bill Overstreet Park. Ms. Pierce replied that there is a Way Finding project underway in the CBJ Engineering Department, and she hopes to have the Project Manager, Lisa Eagan-Lagerquist, give a presentation to the Committee on their efforts. She added that Parks and Recreation has a small budget for improved signage, and there are plans to pursue additional funding through various avenues, as it is a recognized need.

Ms. Brenneman asked the Committee to remember that access to the water is important, as well as access to the Seawalk.

Allowable Uses on the Seawalk

Ms. Pierce moved on to a discussion on allowable uses on the Seawalk. Possible uses include bikes, dockless vehicles, eBikes, pedicabs, scooters, etc. She reminded the Committee that a fully connected Seawalk would probably be even busier than what we currently experience, so it is important to think about how these things will work in the fabric of our current infrastructure.

Mr. Day added that in addition to dockless vehicles/bikes, there are docked vehicles/bikes for rent, and these are a lot cleaner than dockless, since a renter cannot just leave it lying around in the middle of a path.

Ms. Martinson suggested that perhaps a section of the Seawalk could be marked as a bike lane, or for things on wheels. Mr. Heumann was concerned there might not be enough room for that. Ms. Schijvens thought there might be room in the winter, but not in the summer. She suggested considering a seasonal, scalable solution. Ms. Ramiel stated she has experienced cities where certain times of day are open for bikes, and other times are not. Mr. Heumann was interested in the potential enforcement budget for this, stating he was concerned there would not be adequate enforcement.

Mr. Glidmann asked the Committee to think back to the original vision the population of Juneau had for the Seawalk. He reminded the Committee that the Seawalk, in its early stages, had almost universal support from Juneau citizens. Some supported it because it would be another road to distribute tourism. Others supported it as another place to recreate. He concluded that the reason for increased contention around the Seawalk happens when there is discussion of commercializing the Seawalk. Ms. Woll added that the aspects of the original vision of the Seawalk is why we value it so much today.

Ms. Ware agreed, and went on to state how she believes the City has done a decent job of implementing that vision with the Mayor Bill Overstreet Park and having little commercialization. She went on to share her concern with there being enough room for motorized vehicles, especially scooters, to “whiz” by on the Seawalk.

Mr. Glidmann replied that speed might be an indicator of what might be appropriate. He asked if a speed limit would be enforceable and if there could be speed limit signs.

Mr. Day shared his perspective, since his office overlooks the Seawalk. He shared that he watches locals on their bikes and with their dogs every day. He himself rides his bike to the office, on the Seawalk, and has never had an issue with it being too crowded. He believes pedicabs are a great way for people to get around downtown, and it is working pretty well, currently.

Ms. Pierce suggested allowing specific uses and studying them. Then, if they prove to be an issue, make improvements by implementing things like bike lanes, special hours for commuting, etc.

Ms. Ramiel reminisced on teaching her daughters how to ride their bikes on the Seawalk, and she would not want to limit bike access, because it would be limiting that very wholesome, local experience for families. She added that it would be wonderful if snow shoveling could occur in the winter.

Mr. Glidmann expressed concern over shoveling snow on the Seawalk, as it will greatly diminish the lifespan of the Seawalk, due to increased wear and tear from the snow equipment. Additionally, the snow would need to be gathered and disposed of, since dumping it in the ocean is not an option.

Mr. Worl agreed with Mr. Day's statements, and added that it will be difficult to take an allowed use away, than to never allow it initially. He was skeptical about allowing the use of electric motorized vehicles. Ms. Pierce stated it was difficult to enforce electric bikes, because it is difficult to tell them apart from regular bikes. Mr. Day expressed his agreement with Mr. Worl.

Ms. Woll supported the idea that the Committee should prioritize local residents who want to enjoy slow speed bikes on the Seawalk.

Mr. Day brought up the topic of skateboards, stating they seem to be more dangerous than other uses, though he admitted to not seeing them often in the downtown. Mr. Glidmann informed the Committee that the entire downtown is a 'no skateboard zone'.

Ms. Pierce then asked the Committee to consider commercial uses.

Mr. Glidmann spoke in opposition to all commercial uses on the Seawalk. He reiterated that the local population that dreamed up the Seawalk did not dream it to be a summer amusement park for tourists. He asked if this idea was every surveyed as part of the Blueprint Downtown Visioning Report. Ms. McKibben could not recollect that it was. Ms. Pierce replied that the contractors spoke about the uses on the Seawalk very conceptually, but did not dive into commercial uses or allowable uses. Therefore, that is why it is important to have this discussion at the Committee level. Ms. Brenneman suggested a focus group or survey that would dive deeper into the topic.

Ms. Martinson asked if the City considers the Seawalk a park, because it connects to other parks.

Mr. Glidmann stated his concern with access points leading to the Seawalk, lending themselves as an attractive place for vendors to erect commercial carts, stands, booths, etc. He did not want to see the Seawalk cluttered like that. Ms. Schijvens agreed with Mr. Glidmann, and suggested securing the Subport Dock as a place for food vendors, or a place near the Juneau-Douglas Bridge near the harbor area. She supported seeing the Seawalk vendor free for circulation purposes. Ms. Woll asked if someone would like to put forward a motion.

Ms. Ware asked Mr. Glidmann if he was proposing no commercial uses on the Seawalk and/or in the parks. Mr. Glidmann clarified that he was speaking specifically on the Seawalk, though admitted there are vendor related challenges in the parks as well, but that is a separate discussion.

Mr. Heumann asked if staff could define the boundaries of the Seawalk. He spoke about the importance of Juneau relying on tourism as an additional revenue stream, especially in light of government downsizing. He reiterated that if we are to afford to live here, we have to find and nurture sources of revenue. Therefore, he spoke in support of commercializing the Seawalk.

Mr. Day reminded the Committee of the question of authority over the Seawalk, and reiterated that the City needs to determine that, so there may be consistency in permitting, and not inadvertently oversaturate the Seawalk with vendors and buskers, due to the lack of one centralized governing department.

Ms. Schijvens added that she did not want to pull customers away from the downtown brick and mortar businesses. She advocated for a shopping corridor and a separate recreational corridor.

Mr. Glidmann stated that if we allow commercialization on the Seawalk, there would be 'blindness' on the Seawalk, as there is downtown in the tourist area. Visitors will be unable to 'see' what Juneau looks like, but instead see the same shops they see in the Caribbean. He argued that the Seawalk allows our visitors to see Juneau. Ms. Brenneman expressed her agreement.

Mr. Dye recommended that the Blueprint Downtown Plan communicate the need for an umbrella department to manage the Seawalk. He added that it was not for the Committee to decide on the details, but that the Plan could call it out as a priority.

Ms. Pierce thanked the Committee for direction on managing uses on the Seawalk. She summarized that human powered uses should be prioritized, and studied, while making provisions from managing the uses by implementing speed limits, hours of use, bike lanes, etc., if needed in the future. She added that the Committee came to a consensus to limit commercial uses to parks that have plans and/or provide pockets of permissible activity.

Mr. Day speculated that if we allow booths to sell tours on the Seawalk, someone would ask why they could not sell tacos on the Seawalk. He cautioned that the term 'commercial use' is broad, and perhaps there should be some parameters for the uses.

Mr. Dye asked if there was a reason why the commercial booths could not be on the floating docks, closer to their customers, and freeing up space on the Seawalk. Mr. Day replied that would limit the audience accessing the vendors, as just the passengers from boats using that dock, and the vendors would not be in favor of that change.

Ms. McKibben stated that locals clearly use the food carts, but asked how often a local uses a ticket booth. Additionally, if there are limits on where commercial uses may exist, should there be limits on the types of commercial uses, and perhaps the size of the commercial use?

Ms. Schijvens added that the Committee members should review the Docks and Harbors Master Plan, as it is very relevant to the discussion today.

Trails

Ms. Pierce introduced the new topic of trails and the concept of using harbors as recreational facilities. She referenced a recommendation in the Willoughby Plan, to move the Zach Gordon Youth Center, but keep it within the area, close to schools. She added that the Augustus Brown Pool is also a major recreational facility and a popular space for our senior population; they have become reliant on the facility, due to its warm water. She added there would be a citywide trails plan kicking off this coming fall, which will be a coordinated effort between the City, State, and the Federal Forest Service. The citywide trails plan will address many downtown trail issues, and that planning effort will run concurrently with the Blueprint Downtown planning effort.

Ms. Brenneman said she was surprised at the increase in tourist foot traffic on the Flume and Perseverance trails, and around Basin road, coming off the Mount Roberts trail, just in the last 5 years. She advocated for signage, as many of the tourists appear lost and are asking for directions.

Ms. Schijvens said the Christopher Trail, should be a top priority. Ms. Pierce said there is \$90,000 budgeted for the improvement of that trail. She suspected it would be enough to shore up the Cope Park side, but it would take all of that, due to geographical constraints. Ms. Schijvens also asked that the Parks chapter read that Cope Park is in Evergreen Bowl.

Ms. Ramiel advocated for more signage, in general. She said it has been her experience, with her hotel guests, that they are eager to hike and be active when they arrive. Signage would greatly improve their experience.

Ms. Pierce then showed renderings of plans for new entry and secondary signs for parks and trails. She added that mountain biking is increasing as a use in Juneau. Gravity Logic is a consulting company based in British Columbia that designs mountain bike trails all over the world, and they just traveled here to look at developing a trail at Eagle Crest. The City added funds to their contract so they could consult on other areas in Juneau for mountain bike trails, in order to take pressure off some areas, such as the fast parts of Perseverance Trail, by creating diversions to slow people down.

Ms. Schijvens added in the Turf Field to the discussion, and Ms. Pierce stated that it is in the chapter as a recreation area.

Ms. Martinson suggested the Blueprint Downtown Plan recommend more access points from the downtown area to trails.

Ms. Brenneman asked if the Trails Planning Group would take into account what the consultants wrote in the Blueprint Downtown Visioning report. Ms. Pierce responded that they would.

Recreational Facilities

Ms. Pierce moved on to recreational facilities, stating their importance, and asked the Committee for ideas on statements they might want to make about them. Recreational facilities in the downtown area include the Zach Gordon Youth Center and the Augustus Brown Pool.

Ms. Ramiel spoke in favor of making a strong statement in support of the pool, because it seems that every time budget issues arise, the topic of cutting the pool comes up. Ms. Pierce stated that it is important to the senior population in our community and the chapter will address its importance to the downtown.

Ms. Woll stated that the Visioning document speaks specifically about recreational programming for recreating at different ages, and this is in line with the value the pool provides.

Ms. Ware asked that we mentioned a desire to keep the Zach Gordon Youth Center in the downtown, so that if the City moves the facility, as recommended in the Willoughby Plan, it remains within the downtown area.

Harbors as Recreation Areas

Ms. Pierce spoke about the Downtown Harbor Plan, which extends from Norway Point to Mayor Bill Overstreet Park. The Plan talks about a fish sales area, moving the marine services area closer to where the Yacht Club is currently, and having some commercial space – restaurants and shops – are the area of the UAS building, Juneau Douglas High School, and Mayor Bill Overstreet Park. She added that harbors are a critically important recreation area for many Juneau residents, and this Plan is an opportunity to give a statement of support.

The Committee was largely in favor of the commercial area discussed in the Downtown Harbor Plan. Ms. Pierce proposed that members of the Committee send comments on the draft chapter prior to the next meeting.

Ms. McKibben asked the Committee to be thinking of goals and actions for the next topic of discussion, Natural Resources and Historic Context.

VII. Public Participation of Non Agenda Items – none

VIII. Committee Comments - none

IX. Adjournment

MOTION: *By Ms. Ware to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Heumann seconded the motion.*

The motion passed with no objection.

The meeting adjourned at 8:24 p.m., and the next meeting date is September 19, 2019, at 6:00 p.m. in Assembly Chambers.