



**Blueprint Downtown Steering Committee Meeting Agenda
Assembly Chambers & Zoom Webinar**

November 17, 2022, 6:00 p.m.

Steering Committee Members Present:

Betsy Brenneman
Kirby Day
Daniel Glidmann
Michael Heumann
Ricardo Worl
Patty Ware

Steering Committee Members Absent:

Karena Perry, Chair
Laura Martinson
Iris Matthews
Tahlia Gerger

Staff:

Beth McKibben, Project Manager
Scott Ciambor, Planning Manager

Assembly Members:

None

I. Roll Call

The meeting was called to order at 6:05

II. Approval of Minutes

a. October 7, 2021 DRAFT minutes, Blueprint Downtown Steering Committee Meeting

Approval of the minutes was postponed to a future meeting.

III. Public Participation

None.

IV. Steering Committee Updates

None.

V. Public Review Draft Committee discussion on format/layout

Ms. McKibben provided an update on the plan including goals, actions, plan work in Publisher, and outreach to the public.

Mr. Day asked about the public comments in the packet.

Ms. McKibben explained that the comment period was end of July through mid-September. She described outreach activities at Foodland, Rotary Clubs, JEDC, DBA, Chamber, Docks & Harbors. She noted that the comment period coincided with the transfer of Subport property from NCL to Huna Totem. The packet includes the table summarizing comments received and any follow up action staff may have taken and in some cases a recommendation. This table will be an appendix to the plan. She met with Denise Koch, Deputy Director of Engineering and Public Works, Alex Pierce, Tourism Manager and Michele Elfers, Deputy Director of Parks and Recreation to get discuss their comments and work towards how they may or may not be addressed in the plan. Additionally, the Tourism Director provided a recommendation to the committee regarding the many public comments that speak to the Subport and cruise ship management.

The first step for this meeting is to go around the room to get impressions from the Committee. She reminded the committee that we do not want to re-open the whole plan totally, but acknowledge the comments received and review the plan to determine if there are big topics that need to be addressed.

Ms. McKibben explained that much of the repetition in the plan is intentional, in part because one of the missions of the plan was to quilt together all the plans that were previously done for the downtown planning area. She noted there are about 34 to 37. She reminded the committee of when they went through all of the actions from those plans whether or not to include them in this plan. She also noted that large size of the document is due, in part, to lots of pictures and graphics.

Ms. Ware said she went through the whole thing during public comment period. Her concern was its length. She was worried that the public would not weigh in, but she was pleased to see the number of public comments received. She still has some concern with the duplication. With that said she thinks the priority areas are in there; housing, seawalk, economic vitality. She hopes the committee can go over the plan and make some tweaks.

Mr. Glidmann said the plan is long, but he does not think most readers will read as a novel, but a textbook. He thinks it is a fine job and echoes not wanting to review from beginning to end. He asked if there is reference to the remodeling of the Assembly apartments and if not could that be added, maybe as a footnote versus a major revision. This is important because it will add potentially 32 housing units downtown and reflects city and state cooperative efforts to make that happen. He loves the way document looks, does not have problem with size.

Mr. Worl said that it is good to see everybody. He gave congratulations Ms. McKibben that it turned out really well. He is concerned with the length. He suggested that we encourage people to approach the document like a textbook – looking at parts that are most interesting or relevant to you and your project. He did review the comments and noted the broad range of comments. He finds it reassuring that the public has parallel concerns to the steering committee. Committee did hit the key areas of concern.

Mr. Heumann noted he had not read the draft plan cover to cover. The sections of the plan he has reviewed are good. He does wish the committee had addressed short-term vacation rentals and the tradeoff between that and having independent travelers. He is not sure community can have

both. Otherwise, development of this plan was a journey and felt like we did a good job. The plan gives people a starting point.

Ms. Brenneman said she had started going through with a fine toothcomb and she will have a bunch of edits to pass off staff. She applauded Ms. McKibben for writing the majority of the document, which is no small feat. She feels some things not honed as well as they could be and that the top five action items and goals are mixed up, and the goals page needs a different title. She feels the goals page is repeated too many times and high priority action items get lost. She noted some confusion about the organization of the action tables.

Mr. Day echoed thanks to Ms. McKibben for hanging in there ever since the first meeting at the Fire Hall. The plan is long but he agrees will be used similar to a textbook. He noted the number of comments in summer is significant and good. He would like to add redevelopment of Assembly building. He agrees that vacation rentals is important topic; this is what people want and likely here to stay. Going through these comments tonight puts the committee in a position to bring this plan to completion and get it out there.

Ms. Brenneman suggested the plan make a recommendation regarding Telephone Hill . This is prime property that the City is looking to acquire from the State.

Ms. McKibben reviewed the organization of the action tables. She noted that page 14 has a guide to the plan and the action tables. She reminded the committee that the reason that each chapter does not start with the same action is that not every chapter includes all the actions. The overall table at the beginning of the plan identifies which chapter includes that action. The intent of the blue box is to highlight new ideas that came from this planning process verses those that have been brought forward from other plans. She agrees about the placement of goals pages, but explained that she could not decide where to remove it and instead left it in multiple places.

She reminded the committee that the idea of five top priorities is to highlight the priority areas of focus and that multiple actions will implement the top five priorities.

VI. Review of comments – table and compiled comments

Ms. McKibben explained that she and Denise Koch discussed the public comments about EVs and EV charging. Ms. Koch indicated that recommendations of the plan are good from her perspective.

Ms. McKibben explained that Ms. Koch and Ms. Pierce both suggested changing the recommendation regarding electrification of tour buses and city buses to be broader and not just electric. This will make it more attainable and provide support for grant opportunity purposes. Ms. Koch had noted that electric technology is challenging and might not be best, cost efficient way now and by broadening the recommendation it makes possible the exploration of other new cleaner technology.

Ms. Ware was not aware that the buses we have in Juneau do not meet emission standards elsewhere. McKibben clarified city transit busses do. Ms. Ware expressed concern and is hesitant to water down the recommendation.

Mr. Day said that it is not accurate that tour operators bring buses that are not compliant elsewhere. Some tour companies are working on biofuels. He does not think the public comment is accurate. He does agree with the goal for electric/hybrid city vehicles, dump trucks, etc. It may not be economical for fully electric vehicles in the immediate future.

Ms. Ware suggested language that acknowledges that the technology is involving. We as a community want clean technology. She was concerned City was looking for language that is less strong, but she is OK with language that is more flexible.

Ms. McKibben said she would work on some draft language for the committee to review, maybe including some language about incentives.

Mr. Heumann expressed concern with incentivize; he does not want to give funding to tour operators. He cautioned the group to think about the economics

Ms. McKibben suggested language that is stronger than incentivize and incorporates tour buses along with city transit that encourages use of cleaner technologies.

Ms. Ware likes the idea of mentioning of electric, hybrid, clean technology and trying to incorporate all of those words.

Ms. McKibben then reviewed comments provided by Michele Elfers, Deputy Director of CBJ Parks and Recreation. Ms. Elfers noted the correct organization to coordinate with for Gold Creek improvements is the Southeast Watershed Partnership and private property owners. She expressed concerns that it will be difficult to un-channelize the Gold creek because of its location and the way the area is developed. However, she is in support of the concept of improving the corridor and softening the visual effects. She recommends adding a crosswalk at Seward Street; noting that CBJ is in the process of collecting data to present to DOT. In regard to managing vendors she requested taking out the word implementation and instead put in using because she didn't want the plan to imply the program was not being used. She requested the addition tree falling concern to the section of the plan discussing landslides/avalanche/flood. Ms. McKibben presented a proposed language to added to the plan, stating that Ms. Elfers had reviewed it and found it acceptable.

Mr. Day reviewed the new language proposed and suggested process vs. system. Ms. McKibben said she would double check email and would defer to Ms. Elfers as to which is the appropriate word. Mr. Heumann asked if hazard trees are unique to downtown.

Ms. McKibben said no, but Parks and Recreation's goal is to have the concept in a plan somewhere as a starting point.

Mr. Glidmann is curious why it is only trees, not soils? Ms. McKibben said soils are covered in the discussion of landslides.

Ms. Brenneman asked if it is a plan or system?

Mr. Heumann asked what organization would be doing the hazard tree work?

Ms. McKibben explained that the concept is not that this review happens at the development stage but some sort of inventory or study.

Mr. Heumann mentioned insurance and the location of the tree, maybe being on private property and warns this could become a thorny situation.

Ms. McKibben said she hears the committee saying they have some concerns but are reluctant to add an action item. She asked if this is accurate.

Ms. Ware said she does not have a problem adding the recommendation.

Mr. Glidmann agreed with Mr. Heumann and does not like the idea of adding an action item.

Mr. Day believes people should be made aware of the problem but does not think it is productive as part of this plan.

Ms. Brenneman indicated she has no strong opinion either way.

Ms. Brenneman voiced concerned about the committee recommendation to support the visitor industry taskforce (VITF) recommendation.

Ms. Ware said the committee discussed the Norwegian Cruise Lines (NCL) proposal extensively, and held a vote. She remembers being uncomfortable with that vote. She noted there had been robust discussion over multiple meetings. She said that the comments from people who took the time to comment on the plan show they are concerned about where we are headed. She stated that we want the plan to be responsive to meetings, public comments. Maybe we cannot re-vote but we could add language perhaps an explanatory statement along the lines that the committee discussed the topic at length, contentious, and supported VITF but recognize Juneau is conflicted of continued growth, additional ship. She believes we would be doing a disservice that this is a continuing challenge for our town.

Ms. McKibben suggested setting this discussion aside tonight. She recommending bring this and a couple other topics at a future meeting. She suggested it would be helpful to have Alix Pierce the CBJ Tourism Manager, who staffed the VITF and committee member Laura McDonnell (Martinsen) who was on the VITF with Mr. Day at the discussion.

Mr. Day said that this dock does not add a ship; CBJ will limit to five ships a day in 2024 regardless of whether there is a new dock or not. Currently an MOU is being developed between CBJ and CLIA.

Mr. Day asked (pg.14) about establish a MOU with CBJ and CLIA. He suggested revisiting this with Alix Pierce and to consider changing the language describing phase 1 to "may include"....

Ms. McKibben said she planned to share Dale Whitney's comments to with the Historic Resources Advisory Committee HRAC). She noted that he felt the renovation of his building was not helped by any

of the programs discussed in the plan. She said he asked for the photo of his building to be removed (or moved elsewhere) so not to imply the building renovation was funded by the programs. She said it would be easy to move the photo. She would like to keep it because it is a good illustration of successful downtown revitalization.

Ms. Brenneman thought the photo near discussion on waterfront uplands environment, does not fit.

Ms. McKibben stated she would work on language about access to the water for downtown based on the information shared by Ms. Elfers – that a kayak launch at Overstreet Park is not safe.

Ms. McKibben noted there are conflicting comments that came in and is not necessarily a bad thing that people don't agree.

Ms. McKibben said the committee needs to decide to whether or not to address individual comments.

Ms. Brenneman said it would be nice to address these things if able to legally.

Mr. Heumann is glad we are still working on the plan. He noted that hearing about the 5-cruise ship limit changed his opinion of NCL endorsement. He then asked if it is accurate that the City does not have the capacity to do enforcement. He noted that Mr. Whitney suggested taxing or penalizing empty or dilapidated buildings. He thought the committee discussed this. He remembered a recommendation.

Ms. Brenneman agrees enforcement is not strong enough – put in plan more enforcement of what is on the books.

Ms. Ware said that if this property owner had to pursue private litigation and we value downtown but we are not helping someone who has renovated a property. We should ensure we have language that recommends enforcement of existing codes. It does not make sense to incentivize to do something, if we do not support them.

Mr. Glidmann asked how we would write this – we know you do not have funding to renovate your property but we are going to fine you. Health and sanitation is one thing – he does not see how you can win that battle. He believes that ultimately time will take care of the problem.

Mr. Heumann said you could raise the mil rate and provide discount for people that maintain property, or the city could purchase blighted buildings and rehabilitate.

Ms. McKibben suggested adding this discussion to the list to bring back and she would provide some language for consideration. She noted she thought there was a recommendation about this but was not finding it now. She asked if there were other topics to bring back.

Mr. Day said Bruce Botelho, in his comments, brought up the new concept of civic center. He asked if this concept is in the plan.

Mr. Glidmann found the recommendation regarding blighted property and read it to the committee. It was agreed the language is accurate and there is no need to bring back this topic for discussion.

Ms. Brenneman said she had suggested previously that some language about Telephone Hill be added to the plan.

Ms. McKibben said it had not been added. She then briefly explained that the CBJ is in process of obtaining land in the Telephone Hill area from the State. There is also a locally designated historic district in the area.

Ms. McKibben briefly touched on the comments regarding the history of the planning area. She said that committee member Ricardo Worl provided help in drafting this language. She would prefer to defer to him as to whether or not he felt it was sufficient and adequately addressed indigenous history.

Mr. Worl said he had not seen the comment. He would review it. He then asked for details about warming shelter/homeless downtown and city housing officer summary.

Ms. McKibben noted some updates need to be made.

VII. Committee Comments

Ms. McKibben said she would send out a new doodle poll for future meetings dates. They did not have a quorum for any of the other dates in the previous poll. Ms. Brenneman said she would be out of town until mid December.

VIII. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 7:56 pm.

Next Meeting Date TBD; Zoom Webinar & Telephonic