

## **Minutes of the River Plan Committee – North Reach**

**March 21, 2006**

**5pm – 7pm**

**Portland Bureau of Planning, 1900 SW 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Room 4a (4<sup>th</sup> floor)**

**Committee Members Present:** Pauline Anderson, Brian Campbell, Jason Graf, Don Hanson, Melissa Powers

**Absent:** Bob Naito, Krystyna Wolniakowski

**City Staff Present:** Sallie Edmunds, Julia Gisler, Roberta Jortner, Chris Scarzello, Arianne Sperry, Deborah Stein, Joan Hamilton (Recorder), Planning; Kate Green, BDS; Mike Reed, Dawn Uchiyama, BES

**Others Present:** Mike Abbaté, Sebastian Degens, Steve Durrant, Greg Theisen, Greg Weston

Hanson convened the meeting.

### **Committee Business**

- Sallie Edmunds introduced new River Plan Team member Arianne Sperry.
- River Plan Committee members deferred consideration of the just-produced minutes for February 21, 2006, until the next meeting.

### **Updates**

- Edmunds and Campbell reported on their presentations at the Planning Commission hearing on the River Concept on February 28, 2006. Edmunds reported two additions to the River Concept's text: 1) language requested by St. Johns neighbors regarding a potential future bridge in North Portland, and 2) language regarding efficiencies of clustering industries on the industrial area of the harbor. Campbell reported that the Planning Commission was supportive and appreciated the River Plan Committee's efficiency.
- Edmunds reported the date of the City Council hearing on the River Concept as Wednesday, April 26, at 2:00 p.m. Edmunds announced plans for outreach to the community concerning the upcoming Council hearing and revised report.
- Edmunds distributed a draft schedule showing next steps for task groups, integration and plan development, and decision-making. Edmunds noted that the timeline lists briefings on issues to the River Plan Committee that have been completed or are still pending.

### **Bank Design and Permitting Task Group**

#### *1. Task Group*

Edmunds distributed a handout with an outline of the task group's structure and proposed activities. She reported that the group of 8-10 members with expertise in hydrology, geomorphology, landscape architecture and natural resources management will meet for a few months to focus on issues related to bank design and permitting. She noted that 'top of bank' is the current reference point for measuring the greenway setback, but development can change the location of the top of a bank. She described discussion topics, including regulations concerning river banks, possible amendments to the Willamette Greenway Plan, methods to get better bank designs along the Willamette River, and improvements to the permitting process.

## *2. Willamette Riverbank Design Notebook*

Mike Abbaté, Greenworks P.C., reported how the City of Portland commissioned the *Willamette Riverbank Design Notebook* that Greenworks developed with help from Portland Development Commission, Bureau of Environmental Services and the Planning Bureau in 2001. He explained that the notebook is a voluntary tool to help determine appropriate landscape treatments for riverbanks based on conditions and characteristics of the sites. He outlined basic components of the process as 1) assessment of characteristics influencing riverbank design; 2) assessment of existing riverbank conditions; and 3) identification of design objectives such as habitat conservation and restoration; protection of development, infrastructure and commercial use; creation of habitats with minimal impact; protection and improvement of water quality; protection of access for fish and wildlife; enhancement of aesthetic quality; and safe public access where appropriate. Abbaté explained that the notebook helps designers evaluate characteristics, conditions, and objectives for application to a matrix of possible design solutions. He concluded by showing a case study, including pictures and worksheet analysis related to riverbank design at Port of Portland Terminal 4.

## *3. Bank Design Permitting Experience*

Sebastian Degens, Port of Portland, provided an overview of recent experiences with river treatments at the Port of Portland's facilities 2, 4, 5, and 6. He explained that the Port had to consider stability of riverbanks and erosion control in response to flooding in 1996. He stressed it is important to consider: 1) how the site functions and whether there is activity near the top of bank; 2) what are the conditions of the soil; 3) what contaminants need to be addressed; 4) how can the site be integrated with sites upstream and downstream; 5) what are potential future needs; and 6) what are possible sustainable practices. Degens showed examples of different applications at Port terminals that involved traditional waterfront development as well as experimental designs and improvements, depending on needs and uses. He concluded with observations on how to achieve successful riverbank design by recognition that: 1) each site is different and requires a unique approach or multiple approaches; 2) riverbank design has to coexist with all the site's objectives and does not stand alone; 3) redevelopment opportunities are scarce and need "nurture"; and 4) the current regulatory process serves more as an impediment than a facilitator.

In discussion with Committee members, Degens noted issues where improvements have cost more than the value of the land, environmental requirements require costly hand-weeding and watering of new plantings, and the need to expand operations sometimes arises after the investment has been made in landscaping.

## *4. Bank Design and Permitting Experience*

Greg Weston, OTAK, described experience with riverbank development on the South Waterfront site, where it was necessary to clear debris, identify appropriate places for flood control and habitat recovery, consider erosion control from the high water mark on up because of the force of wave action on the slope, and relate riverbank work to development of infrastructure, new construction, and the goal to dispose of all stormwater on site. He stressed that the success of the public/private development requires agreement on the appropriate elevation and conditions for work on the riverbank slope. He cited the huge risk

for developers and conflict among agencies on how to proceed. He stressed the value of the City's facilitation of the permit process so that developers can apply savings to the riverbank.

#### 5. *Streamlining Team*

Mike Reed, Bureau of Environmental Services, presented a report on "*Integrating Multiple Agencies and Overlapping Regulatory Requirements: The City of Portland's permit Streamlining Experience.*" He provided background on the project, starting with the focus of Mayor Katz and three federal agencies on multiple federal mandates and a streamlined response to the Endangered Species Act (ESA), a Streamlining Agreement signed in 2003, and eventual addition of State agencies (DSL, ODFW, DEQ), and the City's Bureau of Development Services (BDS) in 2005.

Reed described the federal, state, and City regulations that apply to riverbank treatments, water quality, and habitat protection, identified various agencies responsible for jurisdictional waters, and listed shared components of Federal, State, and City review and approval processes. He described steps of Federal and State procedures for permit approval and stressed the importance of a public review process for each. Reed noted common application mistakes that create problems, including lack of early coordination, failure to establish jurisdictional limits, failure to understand timeframes, failure to consider alternative designs with minimum impact, project descriptions that fail to identify entire actions and impacts, and design drawings that don't depict the extent of work. He reported that the team identified two stages for coordination among agencies 1) early project scoping at planning and predesign stages; and 2) steps for permit application submittals. He concluded with proposals for streamlining: 1) early review to allow agencies' input into designs; 2) identification of multiple public requirements and concerns; 3) identification of and agreement upon conservation measures; 4) attempts to reach consensus on ESA effects determination; and 5) agreement upon application review and approval timeframes.

Committee members thanked presenters for the excellent information.

#### **Public Comments**

There were no comments from the audience.

The meeting adjourned at 7:00 p.m.

#### **Next Meetings**

[Minutes approved at  
meeting on April 18, 2006]