

City of Tuscaloosa
Riverfront Public-Private Partnership Steering Committee
April 20, 2006 – 3:30 p.m.
Tuscaloosa City Hall, City Council Chambers
AGENDA

TNT notes in italics and blue print

Welcome: Chairman Mary Ann Phelps

Introduction of Speakers:

-Bill Dooley, Chairman and Director, the University of Alabama College of Arts and Sciences will talk about placing temporary public sculpture along the Riverwalk and the Black Warrior River. *Proposes rotating sculptures that would remain in place for extended time periods, but not permanently. They would not be owned by the city and, thus, would not cost the city in upkeep/maintenance. Showed a slide show with photos of other sculptures on exhibit in other places. Chairman Phelps suggested assigning a committee to work on this proposal.*

-Jim Bowen, Vice-President of RiverCity Company in Chattanooga, Tennessee, will talk about the implementation of the Tennessee Riverpark Master Plan, Chattanooga's 22-year, 22-mile blueprint for riverfront and downtown development. *Mr. Bowen gave an extensive PowerPoint presentation on the Chattanooga river front project which is quite impressive. (Of course, Chattanooga is a much larger city than Tuscaloosa, but some of the elements could easily be incorporated in our town.) He explained that before the project their downtown was a victim of suburban flight and was blighted. They used a series of "visioning" public meetings to reach consensus with the public on the various aspects of the project. Note that the City itself did not spearhead the river development. Rather, it was his non profit company which was well-funded and able to apply full time personnel to matters of land assemblage, making loans and applying for grants. They intentionally built their first park to the absolute highest standards so that would set the bar for the remainder of the project. Their riverfront is designed to flood and is handicap accessible from end-to-end. He discussed the value of public plazas and free downtown electric shuttle transportation. The downtown housing market has now taken off and they are having to "hold back" residential development there. They were able to take over an old bridge over the river and convert it to a foot bridge that is now a big hang-out and "happening place." It is not open to vehicular traffic at all. They have taken over an old school campus and are developing it into various purposes. They have multiple, lighted parking areas with restrooms. Their miles of walkway go through wetlands and they refer to them as "Learning Walks." They have historical markers and placards that give educational information on the flora and fauna as well as the various aspects of industry which the trails pass. They turned a brownfield site into a large market area for produce, etc. He stressed that each of the following are of equal importance in planning such a development: quality of design, quality of construction and quality of maintenance. It is also important to have city celebrations of each phase of completion.*

1. Approval of Minutes

2. Sub Committee Reports *Due to time constraints the committee reports are to be turned in and included in the official minutes, however, later in the meeting, Lee Garrison stated the following in regard to the amphitheater: They are in contact with Live Nation a booking agent spin-off of Clear Channel and are discussing funding with it and what the possibilities are for drawing big-name acts here.*

-Riverfront Amphitheatre	Lee Garrison
-Private Development	Willie Lang
-Parks and Recreation	Don Kelly
-Riverwalk Infrastructure	Bob Almon
-Corps of Engineers Relocation	Johnnie Aycock
-Riverfront Marketplace	Robert Ratliff

3. Present Projects Update

-Queen City Bathhouse/Transportation Museum *Teresa Lewis reported that someone whose name I did not catch has offered a museum-quality model of a steam boat to the museum for free.*

-Riverwalk Phase IA (restrooms, police sub station, concession area, fountain improvements, landscaping, improvements and amenities at old Parker Towing site)

Lee Garrison reported that the US Fish and Wildlife Dept. has donated \$50,000 to this phase. There are several requirements which must be fulfilled, but they should not be problematic. They are working on making the fountain by the Riverboat impressive, long lasting and kid-friendly. Almon Associates has been hired to design this phase (as well as phase III.)

-Riverwalk Phase III - (will connect Phase II and Phase IV) *Lee Garrison reported that there is around \$1 million available for this phase, but it must be spent within a certain length of time which I understood to be 2 years, but it could have been that it had to start to be spent in 2 years. There is a problem in getting the Corp. of Engineers out of their spot within that time period. Apparently, the Corp. moving is the hold-up in starting construction.*

4. Grants Applied For – West End Park Improvements – (\$200,000); Queen City Park Phase I Trails (\$130,000); Riverwalk Phase IA Restrooms (\$50,000); Retaining Wall (\$1,591,922) *The West End Park Improvement grant application was denied. They haven't heard back from the rest.*

5. New Project

-Tuscaloosa-Black Warrior River Scenic Byway Eligibility Application-

Dr. Richard Cobb and Teresa Lewis will provide a PowerPoint presentation at the May 18, 1:00 p.m. meeting of the Alabama Scenic Byway Advisory Council in Montgomery. The Advisory Council will offer suggestions and decide if the proposed scenic byway meets the criteria to proceed with the Designation process.

6. New Business. *Chairman Phelps read from a letter from Committee member Gary Fitts regarding the power station that Alabama Power is planning to build on the riverfront. There was much discussion about this. Apparently, the power plant is to replace the one that is currently somewhere behind the Copper Top bar. The power company is anticipating that the riverfront development will require a much greater amount of power than the current station can supply. Also, the current location is where the "Paramount Project" is proposed. This is a big condominium, hotel, restaurant, etc. development that might be built in the area of the old Sable steel company. The problem is that the Paramount Project is still in its earliest planning stages and may never even take place, whereas the riverfront project*

is already taking place. The power station will be a detriment to the riverfront development and it would be a shame to move it down there rather than just expand in its current location, especially if the Paramount project never comes to fruition. The Committee decided to put its opposition to the relocation of the power station in writing in a letter to various people, including, of course, the power company.

7. Announcements

-Next Meeting – May 18, 2006 – 3:30 p.m. -Tuscaloosa City Hall, Council Chambers

Adjourn