



**MINUTES**  
**Metropolitan Redevelopment Agency**  
**Board of Commissioners – February 15, 2022**  
**Held in the Executive Conference Room at**  
**800 Municipal Dr., Farmington NM**

**Virtual Participation Made Available via Zoom at**  
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86551245378>  
Meeting ID: 865 5124 5378  
Passcode: 191552  
or by dialing 1 (253) 215-8782

**Members Present:** John McNeill, D.D.S. – Chair  
Jill Tanis – Vice Chair  
Doug Dykeman – Commissioner  
Elizabeth McNally - Commissioner

**Members Absent:** None

**Staff Present:** Beth Escobar  
Shana Reeves  
Karen Lupton  
Warren Unsicker  
Tami Spencer  
Andrea Jones  
Karen Walker via Zoom

**Others Present Via Zoom:** Scott Nightingale  
Theodore Jojola  
Gloria Lehmer  
William Freimuth  
David Fosdeck

**1. Call to Order**

Chair McNeill called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m. Chair McNeill, Vice Chair Tanis, Commissioner Dykeman and Commissioner McNally in attendance. There being a quorum the following proceedings were duly had and taken.

**2. Approval of the January 18, 2022 Minutes**

A motion was made by Vice Chair Tanis and seconded by Commissioner McNally to approve the minutes of January 18, 2022, and upon voice vote, the motion carried unanimously 4-0.

**3. Discussion/Follow Up Action regarding Kansas State University Technical Assistance to Brownfields participation in the Animas District/Healthcare Hub Development Plan – Scott Nightingale**

Chair McNeill welcomed Mr. Nightingale and thanked him for participating. Chair McNeill informed the Commission they are looking for thoughts and considerations from Mr. Nightingale to put into the scope of work. Chair McNeill also stated Mr. Nightingale and other consultants had participated in discussions regarding this project have agreed they would not be bidding on this project. The Commission had reached out to Mr. Nightingale because he has been an excellent participant; he has been to Farmington and is familiar with the area.

Mr. Nightingale explained the Kansas State University Technical Assistance to Brownfields Program (KSU) works under an agreement with the USEPA to assist communities that are redeveloping brownfield properties. Brownfield is a property that is contaminated or potentially contaminated, and that is what is keeping the property from moving forward and being redeveloped. There are a variety of ways to help these communities and because they work with the USEPA, their services come at no cost to the City of Farmington. In February, Mr. Nightingale met with Chair McNeill and Commissioner McNally along with Ted Jojola and Michaela Shirley with the Indigenous Design and Planning Institute with the University of New Mexico, who provide a perspective on how to engage multiple cultures in the redevelopment process. Their assistance would be as a cultural consultant and offer ideas to help bring different cultures towards one influence. Mr. Nightingale also mentioned that KSU works on larger redevelopments like the Animas District, which contains definite brownfield properties. He also stated that KSU does not have grant money to give; they are able to help with the technical aspects for grant applications and accessing grant money from different entities. Mr. Nightingale added that they could look at the RFP and offer assistance with community engagement events. Their redevelopment assistance is geared towards the brownfield sites, but if it is inclusive in the whole Animas District, then they can help with that too. Chair McNeill added the main contribution the Commission will be looking for is KSU's involvement in what needs to be done for each site. Chair McNeill stated they would like their input in the initial plans and assistance with the scope of work.

Mr. Nightingale asked Chair McNeill if he wanted to share anything with the Commission from their meeting with Ted Jojola and Michaela Shirley from the Indigenous Design and Planning Institute. Chair McNeill replied it would be interesting to follow up on a comment that was made about having the different cultures involved with their stories and the history they had about the area. Chair McNeill would like to see the different cultures represented in the initial design and he would also like to see the cultures included in the street design and common elements throughout the entire district. Commissioner McNally agreed with Chair McNeill regarding the place making. She would like to include all the relevant cultures and make it dynamic.

Chair McNeill welcomed Theodore Jojola to the meeting. Dr. Jojola is the Director of the Indigenous Design and Planning Institute, which is part of the Community Regional Planning Program for the School of Architecture with the University of New Mexico. Dr. Jojola hails from the Pueblo of Isleta, which is south of Albuquerque. Dr. Jojola was able to share his observations and comments on this opportunity in beginning to help get direction for the RFP that will soon be issued, and beginning to tie in some of the historical connections for the development of the City of Farmington as related to the Animas River. He is working with the City of Albuquerque on the development of their Rail Trail Project that is a similar kind of project. Albuquerque would like to see how the Indigenous presence helped shape the development of the Rail Yard. Dr. Jojola also thinks that that kind of effort can also be instated within context to Farmington because it has such a rich history of working with the native

community. Especially the Navajo Chapters and it is an important place where other different groups have migrated to that area. Looking at it from the standpoint that there are different cultures and different kinds of stories that if told in a compelling way can add to the character and help to bring that definition to what is the City of Farmington and why is it a special place.

#### **4. Continuing Discussion regarding the Scope of Work for the Animas District/Health Care Hub**

##### **Plan**

Chair McNeill confirmed that Planning Manager Escobar had received items the Commission would like to see in the RFP. Chair McNeill wanted to add to his list. He would like to see recognition of the significant cultural and historical aspect of the area. He also wanted to know how to incorporate that in planning the development of this area. How do we integrate the history of who we are into the plan, whether it be way finding or storytelling. Vice Chair Tanis agreed with Chair McNeill. She also wanted some input on what kind of financing strategies are available to developers, individuals, public and private partnerships. Is there anything that had been successful in the past for the revitalizing of an area like the Animas District? Vice Chair Tanis wanted to know if there a way to help bring more funds together in a collective type capacity, that way it's not just one person or entity trying to do everything.

Chair McNeill has had discussions with Mayor Duckett and Councilor Jeanine Bingham-Kelly regarding this plan. Councilor Bingham-Kelly is interested in what the impact would be to residential neighborhoods in that area. She would like to see a lot of the area used for residence and improve the nature of neighborhoods communities for people to live in that would support the hospital or provide living space for hospital employees. Chair McNeill stated Mayor Duckett was more concerned about the funding and getting economic developers in that area. Mayor Duckett mentioned there were properties the City owned in the area already that would help with that kind of development. Commissioner McNally wanted to add that part of the EPA's program for revitalization does have a financial resources prong that is part of the program. Commissioner Dykeman added that he had a conversation with a Farmington resident that stated to him that the Animas District was a junkyard. Commissioner Dykeman stated that needed to change, and that most of the equipment yards looked abandoned. He wanted to know what tools they had to deal with that, and when they get the tools then they could invite people back in there to live. Vice Chair Tanis asked about a vacant building ordinance that was being worked on. Economic Development Director Unsicker stated the legal department and the fire department were working on that, but he was unsure of the progress. Planning Manager Escobar interjected it was something that was under discussion and is being worked on. She also stated it would definitely make an impact in this area. Vice Chair Tanis stated there are so many vacant properties with absentee owners and the absentee owners probably do not know what the conditions of the property are. Vice Chair Tanis believes it would be very helpful to have a database with that information on it. Chair McNeill asked who the contact would be on that issue. Ms. Escobar answered it would be the City Attorney Jennifer Breakell and she offered to get a status report and get back with the Commission.

Chair McNeill asked Planning Manager Escobar and Economic Development Director Unsicker what is the next step in taking the information they have and getting the RFP. Planning Manager Escobar stated they would get together and bring a draft to the next MRA Meeting.

#### **5. Main Street Advisory Board Business – Karen Lupton**

Ms. Lupton is continuing to work on her training which has all been moved to virtual. Chair McNeill asked Ms. Lupton how much contact she's had with the business owners Downtown. Ms. Lupton replied she talks to different owners weekly. There has been some movement, Nizhóní Soaps is moving next to Main St. Grinds. The City has moved out of the 119 Main St. so the Chile Pod can start their expansion. Ms. Lupton also stated they have their next trash clean-up scheduled for Mid March. Economic Development Director Unsicker also noted the transformation that has taken place at Locke

Street Eats. Vice Chair Tanis asked if they have the number of vacant storefronts Downtown. Mr. Unsicker replied that Ms. Lupton is working on that list and that they have the database up and running again and it is being updated. Ms. Tanis asked to be notified when for the next trash cleanup in March. Ms. Lupton stated they have the local National Guard group coming to help; they actually have them signed up for all four of the cleanup dates that are scheduled for this year.

#### **6. City Staff Updates – Warren Unsicker**

Mr. Unsicker stated there is continued interest in downtown; he has had a few entrepreneurs reach out to him that are considering businesses downtown. There are existing developers who continue to invest and expand their presence in the downtown corridor. He also added the Totah Theater is moving right along; right now, they are waiting on materials, they will start installing them when they come in. It will be a keynote venue for downtown when it is completed. They are also working with the Arts Council on getting a technical assistance program from the State on the public artwork initiative. He also stated that the Wells Fargo Bank building is under contract by a local group. Commissioner Dykeman noted that he had given Sherry Roach information on brass plaques for National Registered buildings; he wanted to know if that is something that is still being worked on. Mr. Unsicker replied he does not know, but he will reach out to Ms. Roach to find out any status on that. Mr. Dykeman thinks it would be an added touch since Main St. looks so nice.

#### **7. Business From**

**Floor** – There was no business from the Floor.

**Chair** – There was no business from the Chair.

**Members** – Chair McNally asked if the State building next to the Indian Center is occupied. Mr. Hawkins replied they are occupied. Vice Chair Tanis stated, they did a large remodeling project and it looks like the staff is starting to move back in.

Chair McNally asked Mr. Unsicker if they could get a quarterly update on other leases the City might be negotiating in the Animas District. Mr. Unsicker replied that he is not aware of any. He added the hub with Black Bear Unlimited, the rafting guide service and the food hub group, which has applied for an EDA grant in partnership with the City to add a kitchen to that part of the equation. They are waiting to hear back from the EDA. Mr. Unsicker added whenever there is something of note; he would definitely share it with the Commission.

Chair McNeill asked if there was anything happening with the old library building on Broadway. Mr. Unsicker replied there might be a lease negotiation going on for the bottom floor, but he is not quite sure, that would be a question for Assistant City Manager Baird when she is able to join us.

Vice Chair Tanis asked for a follow up from October/November, there was a property the City was looking to purchase south of Pinon. Mr. Unsicker stated nothing else has transpired on that because there was some considerations whether to push for a land swap. The swap would have been detrimental to another piece of City owned land, so that has not moved forward.

Chair McNeill stated San Juan Historic Society is looking for space for storage, meeting room space and display space that could be used for walk in. They have research capabilities that they would like to be able to easily share. Mr. Unsicker asked Chair McNeill to have them reach out to him and he could help them find a location.

Chair McNeill also stated as Chair Person, at some point once this plan gets started, he would like to step back from Chairmanship with the Commission. Probably by the end of the year he will step off the Commission completely, with the one vacancy we have now, there would make potentially be two at the end of the year.

**Staff** – Planning Manager Escobar informed the Commission that Mr. Hawkins is working on a project in the Animas District, at Cedar St. and Commercial Ave. This will require a zone change, that will go to Planning & Zoning on March 24<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Hawkins would like to schedule a presentation of his project at the March 15<sup>th</sup> MRA meeting, to get your input.

Tristan Hawkins 5009 Largo St. Farmington stated that listening to this meeting; the Commission has hit on every issue he had, as someone who is interested in doing small developments. Mr. Hawkins has two properties, and possibly a third, which are between Auburn Ave. and Apache St. down to Pinon St. and Miller Ave. He is trying to pick up property closer to the hospital, not for commercial development; there is plenty of vacant commercial properties in the area. He stated we need to get people down there. One of the projects he did was at the corner of Ross St. and Auburn Ave. He tore down the old building and rebuilt townhomes. Mr. Hawkins also has property across the street from the District Attorney's Office on Miller Ave. He has had a hard time finding people to work, so he brings people in from other places, and will usually put them up in a hotel. He would like to use that property at Cedar St. and Commercial Ave. to put his workers up in, or as a rental if he does not need it for his crew. He stated there is also interest from the company that rents his Auburn Ave. townhouses for additional housing. Mr. Hawkins believes the City wants a bigger developer to develop the Animas District. He also stated one of the issues he had with the property owners in that area is they are under the impression that they are going to strike it rich on something the hospital would like to build in that area, but the hospital isn't interested in a 1/3 acre lot, they want 30 of them. Mr. Hawkins wants to see it go residential; he believes that the area is underused. He has also heard that it is too dangerous and dirty in that area and he would like to figure out a way to fix those issues. He feels there is many little things that can be done to make the area more inviting.

Mr. Hawkins stated he is looking forward to making his presentation to the Commission next month.

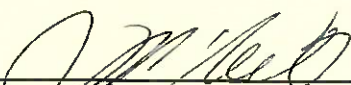
Chair McNeill let Mr. Hawkins know that a number of the comments he made are the same ones the Commission has heard and are looking to do something about in the downtown area. The safety issues, the absentee/unoccupied buildings and trash issues. Mr. McNeill thinks that once there is a plan and there are people like him becoming invested, the perception will change. Mr. McNeill also thanked Mr. Hawkins for his thoughts about the Animas District.


Vice Chair Tanis and Commissioner McNally also thanked Mr. Hawkins for his interest in the Animas District and let him know they are looking forward to seeing his presentation next month.

Mr. Hawkins stated he sees the potential and he sees the obstacles, but you have to start somewhere. He asked the Fire Marshal for the five of the worst properties he would like to see cleaned up. Mr. Hawkins contacted all five-property owners and three of them were holding out for the big payout from the hospital. Vice Chair Tanis thought when the community meetings are held, it would be interesting to have a representative from the hospital there to explain what their plans are, maybe that would clear up some of the perception.

## 8. Adjournment

A motion was made by Vice Chair Tanis and seconded by Commissioner Dykeman to adjourn. The motion passed unanimously 4-0. The Metropolitan Redevelopment Agency meeting was adjourned at 4:59 p.m.

  
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John McNeill  
Chair

  
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Tami Spencer  
Administrative Assistant