

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

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November 11, 2015

Representative Rick Youngblood
Idaho State Capitol
700 W Jefferson Street
Boise, Idaho 83702

Re: Legislative Interim Committee on Urban Renewal

Dear Representative Youngblood,

I have received a copy of several proposed modifications to the Urban Renewal Law submitted to your committee by Representative Clow and Senator Souza. It is my understanding that the committee will not be taking public testimony at the upcoming committee meeting so I am submitting written comments for your consideration.

Election of URA Board Members – I wouldn't have an objection to providing an "option", by local ordinance, for an election of board members. Although considering the cost to hold an election, the fact that it is an unpaid, typically low profile position, I have my doubts about a city opting to go that route.

Board Members – Restricting the sponsoring city elected officials from comprising a majority of the URA board is consistent with our current practice. I think it is a good idea. It might help avoid the "alter ego" criticism.

Appointments and Terms of URA Board Members – The term limits aspect of this recommendation could be problematic for some agencies, particularly smaller ones. I find it note worthy that in Idaho the notion of term limits has consistently been rejected by the legislature. I believe it important to insure that the appointing council or commission retains the ability to remove URA board members under the same process that is available for the removal of other local appointed officials in cities.

URA Support Staff and Operating Expense – I concur with this recommendation as written.

Limits on Use of TIF – I agree that the local sponsoring government should be able to identify the uses of TIF financed projects if done by ordinance at the time a new district is formed. I don't know why that couldn't be done under the current law.

Limits on Revenue Allocation Areas – I believe the items in this section are already requirements imbedded in the current statute.

Impacts on Local Governments and overall market values – I presume this is meant as a clarification to insure that the base assessed value for a district is not decreased as the result of removing a building or some other improvement from a parcel of land.

Revenue Streams directed for local government services – This provision would be an absolute nightmare to administer and track. It is the responsibility of the sponsoring entity to consider growth impacts to all taxing districts at the time of implementation. The public hearing and agency comments submitted as a part of the district creation process is the vehicle to consider impacts. Many districts end up reducing service loads as a result of their efforts. An example would be facilitating the razing of an old, out of code structure with a new up to date replacement. In Garden City that example is a new apartment complex that is built to current building and fire codes that replaced a trailer park comprised of units that were decades old in most cases. Our URA's participation with upgrades to sewer and water mains allowed this project that arguably reduces the city's fire and police loading.

Transparency – Bullet 1; some small URAs may not have websites and the scale of the agency activity may not warrant the expense of a website. Bullet 4; I am assuming this is an effort to block the usage of URA funds to belong to an organization like the Redevelopment Association of Idaho (RAI). RAI gives a voice to agencies from cities that could not afford to interface with the legislature on their own. Lobbying groups representing all sorts of local government or sub-units of local government are numerous. Examples include associations for counties, cities, sheriffs, clerks, city administrators, city attorneys, county assessors, finance officers and so forth. Most of these groups provide value to the legislative process as a resource of expertise on a variety of topics essential to the decision making process. A specific example for your subcommittee would be your ability to call on Ryan Armbruster and Megan Conrad to provide expert testimony at your pleasure. RAI pays the bill.

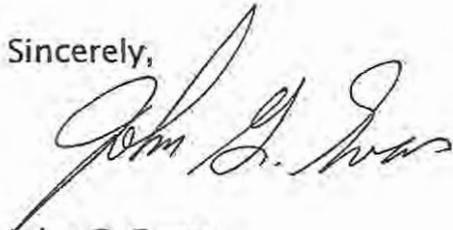
Public Buildings Funded by URA – Personally I like the proposal you brought a couple of years ago that limited URA funding to less than 50% and exempted the provision for expenditures under a million dollars. Regarding this proposal I would encourage the committee to define an “administrative” public safety building. Does that mean a fire station or police substation would be eligible? Also, who would determine if a public building is necessary for economic development?

Oversight – Is the responsibility of the sponsoring local government. Again, retaining the power to remove URA board members is an important oversight safeguard.

Penalties – A press release describing the non compliance would probably do the trick.

Thank you for taking on the daunting task of both protecting this vital tool and addressing the concerns of the legislature.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John G. Evans". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "J".

John G. Evans
Mayor