

MAPS — THE BUDGET NUMBERS GAME

From CITYnet

■(OKLAHOMA CITY) The MAPS budget numbers game continued late Tuesday afternoon as a MAPS Citizens Oversight Board subcommittee voted to rearrange — again — budget numbers dealing with parking in Bricktown, building permits for all nine projects and the cost of adding a consultant requested by the mayor. The effect of Tuesday's actions was that the budget went up by \$1.5 million, then down by \$819,000, with no final figure on what the final cost really will be.

Members of the MAPS Finance Subcommittee were divided in their voting and opinions on several budget items, but overall agreed that the ultimate goal was to build MAPS properly and if that means spending an additional \$12 million as called for in the latest budget estimate, so be it.

Specifically, the subcommittee voted to:

- Recommend that the full MAPS Board reinstate \$1.5 million that had been eliminated from the budget for a 1,200-space parking lot in Bricktown. City officials had removed the budget figure based on assumptions and discussions with possible private and public investors who would like to construct the parking there. City officials said today that several private entities, including Bricktown 2000 Inc., had made preliminary offers to construct and operate private parking in the area. There is also a possibility that COTPA (Central Oklahoma Transportation and Parking Authority) would refinance some or all of its bond debt and use any proceeds derived from the refinancing to construct the parking areas. Assistant City Manager Jim Thompson said a decision from COTPA could be forthcoming in 30-60 days.

- Recommend the deletion of deduction of \$819,000 worth of building permits called for by City officials. Previously there was discussion that the city would exempt itself from having to pay for building permits for public buildings, but pending city council budget talks and private sector pressure is said to be responsible for the change. City officials don't want to be seen as excusing themselves from paying for a permit that any other developer would have to pay.

- Recommend the overall budget as presented with the above exceptions.

Mayor's Proposed Consultant Questioned

Members of the subcommittee also called into question the need for the mayor's office to hire yet another MAPS consultant, this

one to report directly to the mayor and council. A request for proposals went out recently to firms nationwide. The chosen firm would review design agreements, budgets, monitor A&E firms and schedules, and be responsible for a number of other duties.

The idea for an additional consultant came about after bids for the Ballpark at Bricktown came in extremely over budget and internal sniping between city staff and hired MAPS consultants caused Mayor Ronald Norick to step in with a promise to "take control" of MAPS.

Norick said the idea for a consultant was to bring in a nationally-recognized firm that could cut through some of the communications hurdles that have bogged MAPS down and caused a city-wide public relations nightmare.

While generally applauded by most city hall observers, the Mayor's idea was questioned Tuesday by MAPS Citizens Oversight Board Member David Sellars. Sellars questioned the additional cost to MAPS funds to pay for the consultant as well as the additional layer of bureaucracy. He asked the board:

"Couldn't FSB or someone else hold the

mayor's hand, instead of adding all of this?"

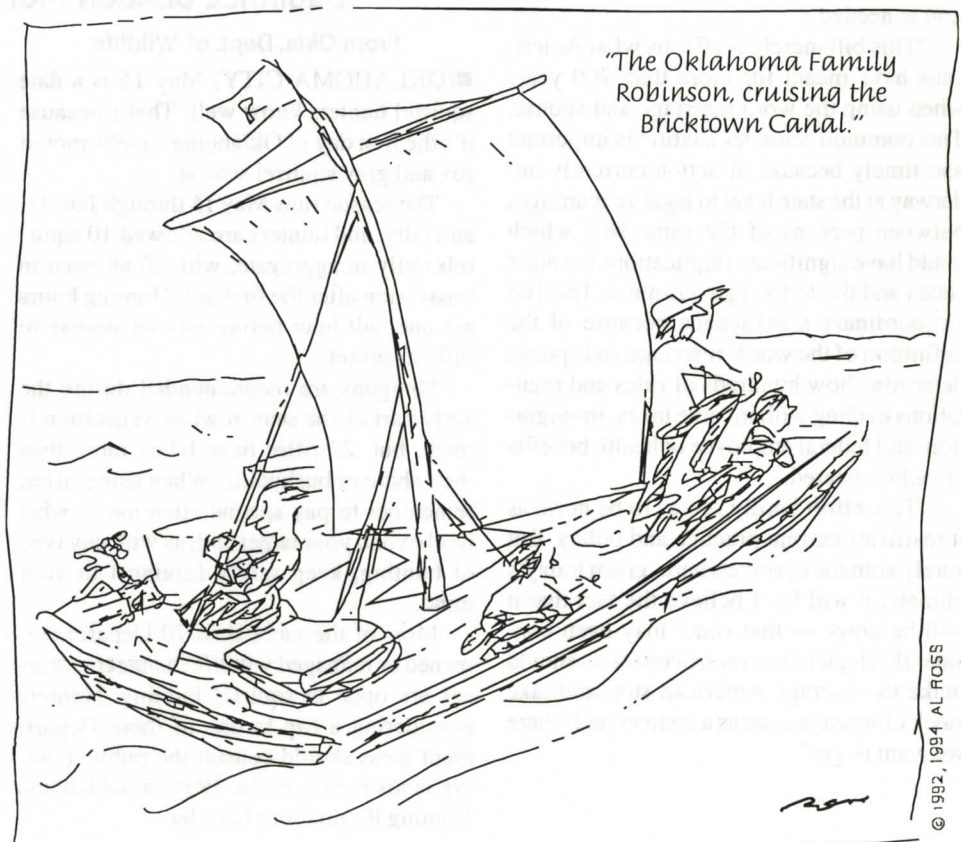
Local Business Plan Future — Uncertain

Meanwhile, the highly touted Local Business Utilization Plan — put into place as a resource for small disadvantaged or minority businesses — is in danger of running out of funding.

City officials and MAPS consultants said Tuesday that the program only has about \$60,000 in funding left which should carry the program through another four months. MAPS officials said they may recommend that the City take over the LBU process, although City officials said nothing has been determined at this point. It would take a contract amendment and additional funding for the LBU to continue under the stewardship of FSB and Oklahoma City-based TVR Communications.

TVR is the FSB subconsultant that originally set up the program and has been running it since the beginning of MAPS.

The LBU has been touted as a way for small, disadvantaged or minority firms to have an opportunity to bid on MAPS-related work. It has been both criticized and praised by various entities participating in MAPS.



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