COMMUNICATIONS

Sean Walther shared that on Monday, August 5, the city council approved the 2040 Comprehensive Plan. The council also reviewed the first reading of the ordinance for the Comprehensive Rezoning, which rezones 72 parcels and approval was recommended without any amendments. The ordinance is scheduled for a second reading on the consent agenda for August 19.

Mr. Walther explained there will be a neighborhood meeting held for the Sam’s Club on Thursday, August 8 at the Municipal Service Center from 6:15 – 7:30 p.m. The presentation that was shown at the planning commission previously will be shown as an informational item along with the specifics of the comprehensive plan amendment, transit oriented development and the rezoning from general commercial (C-2) to a mixture of business park (BP) and high density multiple family residential (RC). This will help prepare for the public hearing that is planned for August 21 with the planning commission.

Tuesday, August 13 will be a second planning workshop for the Texa-Tonka small area plan. It will be from 6:00 – 7:30 p.m. at Lennox Community Center.

Mr. Walther then did a staff update and explained community development intern Akua Opoku resigned and her last day was Tuesday, August 6, and Jacquelyn Kramer, Associate Planner, will return in about 12 days from her leave of absence.
A preview was given for the next Planning Commissions agenda on August 21. The agenda includes the Sam’s Club public hearing and the C1 Zoning District Amendments, which restricts the size of retail. There may be a Study Session regarding a parking overlay for the Historic Walker Lake District.

Mr. Walther said he is anticipating an environmental assessment worksheet to be submitted to the City for review and comments related to future phases of the Parkway 25 development.

2. Elections

Elections Specialist Michael Sund went over the voting outreach plan and how rank choice voting works. He explained how discussing rank choice voting at all the Boards and Commissions will help increase turnout and participation in elections. Michael also spoke about the Ambassador Program, which is for anybody who is a community leader and can be a resource for people within the community.

3. Efficient Buildings Ordinance Presentation

The Environment and Sustainability Commission was also in attendance for this item.

Brian Hoffman, Director of Building and Energy, explained the presentation being shown tonight will also be presented to business owners in September for public outreach. This ordinance will be brought to City Council in October for first and second reading to become adopted by the end of the year.

Katie Jones, with the Center of Energy and Environment, began the presentation. She explained benchmarking and the framework happening around the ordinance.

One of the commissioners asked how the energy is measured.

Ms. Jones explained it is measured by a special tool called the Energy Start Measure Portfolio, which is provided by the EPA.

Ms. Jones said Cities who have saved between 1 to 3 percent annually and a total of 7% in the first year.

Commissioner Johnston-Madison asked what the average cost might be for the business owners to get started.
Ms. Jones responded it’s about 4 to 10 hours for the setup and ongoing would it would be up to 3 hours in subsequent years. This is what is typical for Minneapolis who has been doing this for about 5 years. There are no fees, so the cost is in staff time to track and enter the data.

4. New housing policies and programs overview, including fair housing update

Marney Olson, Assistant Housing Supervisor, shared information with the planning commission regarding the city’s fair housing policy update which clarifies which staff person at the city will be designated as the fair housing official. That person will be the human rights commission staff liaison. The fair housing official will help refer people to appropriate agency at the State or Federal government to file a formal complaint. Another element of the policy update is to provide fair housing training to staff and training opportunities for area rental property owners and managers about who is protected under the fair housing regulations and how they are protected. The last component is data collection regarding new housing development. These updates are required as a condition of grants.

Ms. Olson also shared information about the city’s compliance processes for the city’s inclusionary housing policy. She shared that the policy is available on the city website under housing and affordable housing. The policy was recently amended to include a 1 for 1 replacement when naturally occurring affordable housing is being removed as part of a development and requires developments that request a planned unit development or a comprehensive plan amendment to comply with the inclusionary housing policy. She described the guidebook, the initial meetings staff hold with the property management, staff review of files to verify compliance with both tenant income qualifications and rent being charged. If the development is a tax credit project, they can substitute the tax credit certification to demonstrate compliance.

Commissioner Robertson asked what happens when a tenant’s income increases. Ms. Olson responded that is addressed in guidebook and policy, and it is consistent with tax credits regulations. If qualified a tenant qualified when they began renting the unit, their income can increase to up to 140% of eligible income limits. If that higher income has been sustained a period of time, then that tenant would no longer be eligible to continue to receive the reduce rent.

Commissioner Roberston asked if a property owner could switch the rental unit that is subsidized in order to avoid making a tenant move. Ms. Olson responded, yes, there is flexibility to do so if the unit meets the requirements and property manager/owner wants to handle it in that way.
Ms. Olson shifted the presentation to the tenant protection ordinance for naturally occurring affordable units. Marney described the process that led to this proposal. If an owner wants to sell property that meets the definition of NOAH, there is a 3-month period where tenants are given a notice of any rental rate changes or non-renew leases. If less notice is provided, then the new property owner is required to pay relocation expenses for the tenants that are displaced. This give the tenants more time to identify a new place to live that meets their needs.

Ms. Olson also shared information about the newly established local housing trust fund. It will be funded by the Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA) levy which can be used for grants, loans, rehabs, or financing of housing. While the policy is in place, there is not yet any funds collected and available. It is expected that in 2020 the city will prepare for how to best direct those funds. The fund would also be able to accept donations from other sources to fund activities.

Commissioner Dumalog asked if the city does work with a land bank to preserve sites for affordable housing. Ms. Olson responded that the Economic Development Authority has acquired sites for future affordable housing development and in that way behaved similar to a land bank’s approach.

Commissioner Robertson asked if affordable housing is taking precedence over previous goals of filling a gap in larger houses for families. Ms. Olson stated that affordable housing is the top priority, but the city continues to promote housing programs to incentive rehabilitation and expansions of single-family houses in the Move Up in the Park loan and assistance program.

Other programs described were the 4d program, multiple-family rental rehabilitation loan program, Kids in the Park rental program, down payment assistance program, and the addition of 15 family unification vouchers and 8 mainstream vouchers this year which allowed the city to serve more people. Ms. Olson shared that the new housing policies and programs overview are all detailed in the city’s annual housing activities report, which is also available on the city website.

The study session adjourned at 8 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Elena Roberts
Recording Secretary