

The meeting convened at 6:30 p.m.

Councilmembers present: Mayor Jake Spano, Tim Brausen, Steve Hallfin, Rachel Harris, Anne Mavity, Thom Miller, and Margaret Rog.

Councilmembers absent: None

Staff present: City Manager (Mr. Harmening), Economic Development Coordinator (Mr. Hunt), Director of Community Development (Ms. Barton), Planning Zoning Supervisor (Ms. McMonigal), Planner (Ms. Monson), and Recording Secretary (Ms. Pappas).

Guests: Will Anderson, Sherman Associates

1. Future study session agenda planning – October 2019

Mr. Harmening presented the proposed study session agenda for October 2019. He noted the budget discussion and capital improvement plan topics will be on the October 14th agenda.

2. Update on Sherman Associates proposed Beltline Blvd Station redevelopment

Mr. Anderson from Sherman Associates presented an updated conceptual site plan and project program for the Beltline Station Redevelopment Site, as well as the project's needs for financial assistance. He stated this is only a preliminary vision. Mr. Anderson stated Kimley Horn is doing a traffic study of the overall site, adding this information is critical for the developer to work on modifications to get into the site by all transit modes.

Councilmember Mavity asked about timing of the traffic study. Ms. Barton stated it will be completed by early November.

Councilmember Hallfin asked how much other road construction projects around the Twin Cities effect the traffic studies being currently conducted in St. Louis Park. Mr. Anderson stated he will check into this and get that information to staff.

Councilmember Brausen expressed concern over the idea of a left turn into the site, adding he will wait for the traffic study professionals to come back with their opinions.

Councilmember Hallfin asked who owns the various parcels and added he will want the details on what the EDA purchased the properties for and what their proposed selling prices will be when the developer's request for financial assistance is presented. Mr. Hunt stated those details will be presented in the upcoming staff report, adding the EDA owns the eastern portion of the parcel, the city owns the northwest portion, and Sherman Associates owns the parcel on which the parking structure will be located.

Mr. Hunt noted the site has a lot of extraordinary costs such as a very high water table and all utilities will need to be relocated.

Councilmember Rog asked if there have been any conversations yet with the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District. She noted communication on storm water run-off will be important and encouraged staff to communicate sooner, rather than later. Mr. Hunt indicated that staff has discussed the site and the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District.

Councilmember Rog added flooding is changing for communities in unexpected ways, and the city needs to be mindful of not creating any new flooding problems with this project.

Councilmember Miller stated with a gap of \$4.2 million, what will the TIF request be. Mr. Hunt stated the developer's request for TIF assistance will likely be substantially more given that there are significant extraordinary costs to overcome, such as utility relocations, structured parking, affordable housing and other infrastructure costs.

Councilmember Miller added he will want to understand how this all lines up with the value of the building vs. other projects within the city. Ms. Barton stated it will be difficult to compare this project to others, as the projects are located in different parts of the city and each had different circumstances.

Councilmember Miller added as the numbers get more refined, he would like to understand if there will be a higher level of affordability at this project. Ms. Barton noted Sherman Associates plans to go above and beyond with affordable housing at 20% with 50 AMI.

Councilmember Rog added she is also interested in seeing larger units with 2 and 3 bedrooms, in the affordable units.

Councilmember Mavity stated she is not in favor of the parking structure on the first floor but understands the Met Council is pushing for this. She noted also anything that can be added for pedestrians that is better than a cement walkway would be appreciated.

Mr. Anderson stated Sherman is committed to having a portion of the first floor be commercial, in the parking structure.

Councilmember Harris asked if the developer is considering green roofs and vertical green walls. Mr. Anderson stated they are looking at this, adding this will be driven by the architectural design, but he will make sure this desire is incorporated. He added Sherman will also work to implement nice urban streetscapes.

Councilmember Harris asked if there is any possibility of transforming the parking structure into a living structure in the future. Mr. Anderson stated they have considered that; however, noted this would come at a substantial cost, adding oftentimes parking structures do not translate well into housing, but may be more conducive to office space. Mr. Hunt also noted the Met Council placed a transportation easement on the parking structure parcel in perpetuity, so changing the usage of the parking structure may not be an option in the future either.

Mayor Spano stated if a grocery store were added to this plan, this would be the sixth grocery store in the area.

Councilmember Rog stated since this grocery store would be in Ward 1, could it be a co-op, as this is what her constituents are asking for.

Councilmember Mavity stated she prefers to let the market decide, but questioned when this will reach saturation, and does the city risk having some grocery stores empty if another one is added here.

Mayor Spano stated he looked at the strategic priorities as they relate to this project, stating he likes the affordable housing component, the solar panel concept, and the transit approach. However, he did not see anything on race and race equity and social cohesion. He noted the parking ramp might be the place to address these concepts and he is excited for the project to move forward. Mayor Spano added the ramp is a giant canvass for the city and an opportunity.

Councilmember Rog added she would also like to see commercial spaces added on the first floor of the parking ramp and would like them to be affordable and support minority-owned businesses. She added she would like to see more native plantings here as well, and have this area be as environmentally friendly as can be. She would prefer to see more affordable units for families vs. singles.

Councilmember Mavity, however, pointed out that there is a market demand for affordable studio and one-bedroom apartments as well, by the senior population.

Councilmember Rog asked where a bike facility and bike parking would be located at the location, and if there is space for secure bike storage. She noted consideration of biking, walking, and mass transit reflect the communities' priorities.

Councilmember Brausen stated he is in favor of the concept plan and it makes sense. He shares concerns on the art, green areas, and TIF, but supports the plan in general.

3. Quarterly public forums at city council meetings

Councilmember Rog noted various other cities including Hopkins, Minnetonka, Edina, Fridley, Bloomington, among others that have open forums at every meeting. She added these open forums can be 10 minutes long, either held at the beginning or end of the meeting and could be held on a quarterly basis.

Councilmember Rog stated residents are frustrated by the fact that they cannot talk to council at meetings unless a specific item is on the agenda.

Councilmember Harris stated residents all reach out in different ways, and this could serve as a way to alleviate residents trying to reach out directly to council members. She added in this way, residents could reach all council members at once, along with staff – and then staff could get back to residents with follow-up information.

Councilmember Miller agreed, stating he is supportive of the concept which allows for two-way communication with the council and constituents to discuss a wide array of topics. He also would like to move the meetings around to different locations within the city, in order to reach a broader audience.

Councilmember Brausen stated he is not in favor of this, adding the council members do spend a lot of time communicating with constituents already, and are very responsive. He stated he has seen these forums at use at other city council meetings, and they tend to drag on and turn into complaint sessions. He stated this is a representative form of government and he works to represent his constituents, adding he does not want to sit through this on a regular basis at council meetings.

Mayor Spano added he was not in support of this, but added if this moves forward, there will need to be clear expectations in place. He added they should be more frequently than quarterly, topics should be screened beforehand, should focus on city-wide issues, and should be after study sessions. He stated the forums could be monthly and folks would need to sign up in advance to speak, adding he would want to avoid grandstanding.

Councilmember Mavity stated she is inclined not to do this, but has seen them at other city's council meetings, adding they can be productive.

Councilmember Rog stated this would not be to replace any process the council already has in place but would be a forum for folks to get effective answers from all council members.

Councilmember Mavity added, however, residents can contact any one of the council members at any time. She also stressed she has concerns on forums elevating neighborhood groups, which are not representative of who lives in St. Louis Park. She stated the forums can be piloted and there would need to be equity benchmarking conducted as well.

Councilmember Hallfin stated when considering this, Pandora's Box comes to mind and his first inclination is to say no. However, he stated after listening to his colleagues, there could be some good that comes from this, and if we move forward, he would like to see it be reviewed over time. He stated he knows his colleagues respond to constituents and wonders what the council is trying to solve by doing the forums.

Councilmember Brausen stated he would like staff to review this first and get back to council with recommendations.

Mr. Harmening stated staff will survey other cities to see how it works for them, look at the pros and cons, and how the forums are framed, along with expectations of residents.

Councilmember Mavity referenced the Monterey Drive written report, stating she would like to see information in the staff report for the public hearing in October related to U-turns at Excelsior and the right turn at Monterey.

Councilmember Hallfin noted the private alleys written report and stated there is an additional private alley at the 4200 block of Ottawa.

Councilmember Harris asked about the Parkway Pizza alley and if it is possible to obtain an easement so that would not be a dead end, and also to alleviate parking concerns for folks related to bike lanes. Mr. Harmening stated he will note this.

Councilmember Mavity asked for an update on the PLACE project. Mr. Harmening stated the written report reflects an accurate account of where the project is to date.

Mr. Harmening noted the joint meeting of the council and school board will take place on Oct. 22, 2019 at 5:30 p.m., with location to be determined.

Communications/meeting check-in (verbal)

Mr. Harmening updated the City Council on two incidents, related to dogs in the city.

The meeting adjourned at 8:20 p.m.

Written Reports provided and documented for recording purposes only:

- 4. August 2019 monthly financial report**
- 5. Monterey Dr/Beltline Blvd/36th Street Bikeways**
- 6. Update – PLACE Via Sol and Via Luna projects**
- 7. Accepting ownership of private alleys**
- 8. Texa-Tonka small area plan**
- 9. Parkway Residences Environmental Assessment Worksheet**

Melissa Kennedy, city clerk

Jake Spano, mayor