The meeting convened at 6:30 p.m.

Councilmembers present: Mayor Jake Spano, Tim Brausen, Rachel Harris, Larry Kraft, Anne Mavity, Nadia Mohamed, and Margaret Rog.

Councilmembers absent: none.

Staff present: City Manager (Mr. Harmening), Engineering Director (Ms. Heiser), Senior Economic Development Coordinator (Mr. Hunt), Director of Community Development (Ms. Barton), Senior Planner (Mr. Walther), Planner (Ms. Monson), Sr. Engineering Project Manager (Mr. Sullivan), Traffic Engineer (Mr. Manibog), Senior Management Analyst (Ms. Solano), and Recording Secretary (Ms. Pappas).

Guests: Mike Sturdivant, Paster Development; Sheldon Berg, DJR Architects.

1. Development proposal for the northeast corner of Texas Avenue and Minnetonka Boulevard

Ms. Monson stated Paster Development has an option for a purchase agreement for the vacant commercial building and vacant parking lot on the northeast corner of Texas Avenue and Minnetonka Boulevard. The developer proposes a rental apartment with 95 units in a traditional 3-4 story multi-family residential building at the corner of the site, and 11 walk-up style townhome units located in two, 2-story buildings on the northern half of the site. The development would include a mix of studio, one-bedroom and two-bedroom units.

Councilmember Harris asked if DJR, the architectural firm has done other projects in St. Louis Park previously. Mr. Berg stated yes, including Ellipse, E2, Parkway Residences, Parkway 25, Elmwood, and Bridgewater Bank headquarters.

Councilmember Harris stated, having done so many developments in St. Louis Park, it would seem that DJR has the city’s aesthetic sense. She asked if there have been updates to the project since she last spoke with the development team. Mr. Berg stated yes, based on feedback, there had been a few changes.

Councilmember Harris stated she is excited about the project, which will be a tremendous change for the neighborhood, adding she wants to stay in close communication with the developer to share resident feedback on the design.

Councilmember Mohamed agreed, and stated she is very happy with the development, which uses the land efficiently. She asked if there would be elevators included in the project. Mr. Berg stated yes and added that 20% of the units will be affordable at 50% AMI.

Councilmember Rog stated she is pleased with the plans, adding it will be a change for the neighborhood, and a good place for density. She added it seems there could be more
affordable units and asked why the developer went from 6 to 4 stories. Mr. Sturdivant stated he lives just north of the area, so reducing the height seems more fitting with the area, adding his team felt higher density in the area was a good fit. He noted if the council wants to look at adding more affordable units in a denser project, they will do so.

Councilmember Harris stated it would be helpful to have a staff report on neighborhood feedback from the Texa-Tonka Small Area Plan, adding she is pleased residents were able to provide feedback along the way.

Councilmember Kraft thanked Councilmember Harris for highlighting DJR’s experience and appreciated also hearing neighborhood feedback. He is excited about the density and affordability of this project, along with it being walkable, more environmentally friendly and fitting in with the city’s Climate Action Plan goals. He asked if the development is being set up for net zero emissions and solar readiness. Mr. Berg stated they are looking at national benchmarks for this project related to green communities, and will find the best materials for insulation, mechanicals, lighting, and solar readiness.

Councilmember Brausen stated he is excited to see development on that corner, which has been empty for over 20 years. He noted he was hoping for senior affordable housing and would like to see new housing target that demand, but he is supportive of the vision presented. He asked if the renderings are preliminary and stated he assumes the developer will use materials which fit in nicely with the surrounding area, as they have with past projects. He stated he is supportive of this plan.

Councilmember Mohamed confirmed the buildings will be ADA friendly and compliant, with the developer.

Councilmember Mavity stated she is generally supportive of this project and appreciates the developer’s efforts in moving the city towards its affordable housing goals.

Councilmember Harris asked about the underground parking and how many parking spots will be there. Mr. Berg stated half are underground and half are on grade.

Councilmember Harris stated she appreciates the developer’s commitment to adding walk-up units in the buildings and asked if the city can negotiate TIF in order to add more parking below grade.

Mr. Sturdivant stated there are constraints here, with remediation to be done and removal of a contaminated plume from a nearby dry cleaner, as well as ground contamination from a former gas station nearby, along with a potentially highwater table.

Mr. Walther added staff will look further into the constraints and also review council’s feedback.

Councilmember Mavity asked if there have been any discussions related to reductions of parking since the site has access to bike trails and bus transportation. She also asked about car sharing as a possibility as well.
Ms. Monson stated if council is interested in exploring this, staff will look into it; however, the development is not on the light rail, and the city typically does not grant parking reductions for multi-family housing. She added there is a lot of on street parking, but staff will make sure the numbers are correct for the parking that is needed at the development.

Councilmember Harris added utilizing transit-pass cards and offering them as an incentive, might be another option to look into for residents.

Mayor Spano stated he is broadly supportive of the policy questions, and encouraged the developer and architect to be deliberate, thoughtful and creative with the development, to make it part of the neighborhood. He added this project will largely define this intersection, and he encouraged the architect to take advantage of that.

2. **Southeast area bikeway project**

Mr. Sullivan provided an overview. He noted the project comprises 1.8 miles of bikeways and stated staff has worked through an extensive community engagement process beginning in December 2017. A public hearing is scheduled for February 18, and if approved the project would be constructed beginning fall 2020 to spring 2021.

Councilmember Mavity appreciated the work of staff on this project and the community engagement as well. She noted this is a critical link in the city, and helps connect to light rail, midtown bike trail and the lakes area. She added to put this into context, the residents most concerned about this project are focusing on one-third of a mile, within the total 1.8-mile project.

Councilmember Mavity stated she has met with residents many times over the last two years on this project, and clearly Wooddale is the right route for this. She stated the question is how to manage the route, and make it more walkable and bikeable, and aligning with the active living policy of the city.

Councilmember Mavity added safety is also an issue, and the city needs to think of pedestrians first, then bikes, and finally cars. Additionally, she noted parking and trees are a concern as well, and how to support the city’s policies, while mitigating impact directly on homeowners. She stated she created the ESC, is a champion of green policies, and does not want to see trees taken out, adding the city is not going to take out beautiful, large canopy trees that are so distinctive of the community. She noted staff is trying to balance trees with parking.

Councilmember Mavity asked how many total trees are on the Wooddale corridor, and of the ten trees proposed to be removed, what is their average size. Mr. Sullivan stated there are 90 trees in the public right of way from 42½ Street to 44th Street along Wooddale, and the city is proposing to remove ten, in order to construct parking bays. He stated the impacted trees are existing green ash, lindens, elms, and smaller oaks – all under seven inches in diameter and few approaching ten inches in diameter.
Councilmember Mavity noted the residents’ signs posted to trees, are on trees not slated to be removed. She asked if there is a need for more parking, will there be an area available for that. Mr. Sullivan stated yes, and that smaller trees would be removed if needed.

Councilmember Mavity stated she would not support removal of crosswalks in the area. Mr. Sullivan stated all existing crosswalks will be retained and refreshed. He added the intersection near Susan Lindgren will also be realigned better to the intersection, which will help with snow removal and be better for pedestrians and bikers to get in and out of the area.

Councilmember Mavity stated the road width is not changing, nor is the road infrastructure, except to add parking bays. She asked if adding bollards might help with designating clear bike lanes. Mr. Manibog stated bollards would not fit within the width of the road on Wooddale.

Councilmember Mavity stated nothing the city is doing will drive additional car traffic to the road, adding the goal is to make it safer with designated areas for bikers. She added she wants to explore stop signs and slowing traffic there as well.

Councilmember Kraft thanked staff for their instruction on this issue and asked them to explain who the city is targeting with bikeways. Mr. Manibog stated the city is encouraging the interest, but concerned group of bikers, people of all ages and abilities, which is about 51-56%.

Councilmember Kraft stated then the council needs to think about this group the most. He added he understands the concerns raised by the community, but some are based on misunderstanding or misinterpretation, adding the city does not plan to add more traffic to the area.

Councilmember Kraft stated in his view, the road is effectively not being widened here with the parking bays. Parking will be impacted, and some trees will come down, but trees will be added, and staff works closely with the city forester on this, so there is minimal risk and a good track record with trees. He pointed out not only bikes, but scooters need to be included here, and asked also if there are any other options for Wooddale, such as making it a one-way.

Councilmember Mohamed thanked staff and residents for their concerns. She asked staff why some roads in the city are share the road, and others have dedicated bike lanes.

Mr. Sullivan stated vehicle speeds and volumes are the two factors to affect the safest bike facility.

Councilmember Rog appreciated the hard work of staff on this as well as the community engagement. She stated she agreed with many points made by Councilmember Mavity, and that Wooddale is the best area for this. She has concerns for safety, but noted she is a highly confident biker and is interested in the concerned biker group who will not ride in the bike lanes that staff is suggesting. She stated if the council is serious on this, the policy should be for new mobility lanes, shared road, and separate lanes or multiuse trails, and then make it feasible.
Councilmember Harris thanked staff and noted her goals, along with safety and the environment, is to create a transportation and bikeway system to benefit the most people possible. She asked staff what the most optimal way is to get more people biking in terms of infrastructure. Mr. Manibog stated looking at the most separation overall for bikers from cars, and then also bikers feel safe when there are many bikers – so safety in numbers.

Councilmember Harris stated she recently attended a conference on biking infrastructure and found that lanes for bikers enhanced confidence and noted the addition of planters to create a bike lane was used in one city, which seems to be a great alternative to painting stripes on the road. She stated she would like to see separated bike lanes going forward and noted in general she supports this project with some tweaks.

Councilmember Brausen thanked the community for their emails to him and noted he does travel up and down Wooddale. He added this project is similar to the one on Texas Ave from Cedar Lake Road to Wayzata Boulevard and the trees there were saved, and new trees planted. He stated the project in front of them is an important connectivity issue and he is supportive of it.

Mayor Spano asked for clarification about share the road and asked about an alternative route such as Browndale. Mayor Spano asked about the budget for this project. Mr. Sullivan stated it is more cost effective to paint stripes and use signage, and this project is part of the CIP for 2020.

Mayor Spano stated he would agree to sacrifice some trees to bring additional parking to the road and would agree to intersperse added parking there. He asked staff if there is any data on traffic incidents with bikes and cars on Wooddale. Mr. Manibog stated staff works with police on this, but to his knowledge there were not heightened increase in collisions of safety breaches in this area.

Councilmember Harris asked about managing seams in the curb apron and also using bike friendly storm drains. Mr. Manibog stated the details are not final yet, but staff will look into this.

3. Draft legislative priorities

Ms. Solano presented the updated draft of legislative priorities. The main focus topics are:
   • housing
   • climate
   • transportation
   • general – such as maintain local control, opposed levy limits, and others noted in the staff report

The council asked for several updates and additions/changes to the draft including:
   • including tenant protection policies
   • affordable housing and climate action be moved to the top
   • use climate change vs. climate action
   • add state match for local housing trust funds
• add a lead in sentence that explains affordable housing and climate action are the top concerns
• adding information about strategic priority of race equity

Ms. Solano stated the council will meet with the legislators at the Feb. 3, 2020 special study session, to discuss the priorities.

4. Future Study session agenda planning and prioritization

Mr. Harmening referred to the Feb. 10, 2020 agenda for review. The councilmembers discussed which topics might come off the agenda, to tighten up the timing of the meeting.

Ms. Solano noted she developed a year-long calendar for 2020 of items the council addresses each month on an ongoing basis, as well as quarterly topics for discussion. The calendar will be circulated among the council for input and feedback.

Mr. Harmening noted to the council that there are many topics to address this year, as well as open times where the council can decide what topic to address.

_The councilmembers agreed to move the ADU topic to another meeting._

Mayor Spano noted he’d like to have a discussion on the process of appointing board and commission members.

Councilmember Mohamed stated there needs to be stricter timekeeping on agenda topics, in order to respect council and staff’s time.

Councilmember Mavity added the discussions need to stay at the policy level.

Councilmember Mavity noted the Notice of Eviction written report and had concerns about moving to a 7-day notice. She proposed there be either a 10- or 14-day notice. She added communicating by electronic mail might not be the most effective way to reach this group of residents and stressed the importance of hard copy delivery of eviction notices.

Councilmember Brausen stated moving to 14 days can cause issues for landlords, adding that 7 days seems to be a good compromise.

Councilmember Rog has concerns on unintended consequences, noting her preference is to see what the state legislature does, adding this process feels rushed.

Mayor Spano agreed and stated he would also like more time to process this before a decision is made.

Councilmember Mavity pointed out there has been a study session, a panel discussion and much information presented on this, and the process has not been rushed.
Mr. Harmening stated the council can continue to review this item but at some point, the ordinance will need to be finalized.

Both Councilmembers Kraft and Mohamed agreed they would like more time to study this and need more background.

Mayor Spano encouraged the councilmembers to discuss any further questions related to this item with staff.

Councilmember Kraft asked about the written Investment Report, noting the commercial paper investment in Koch industries and asked if we can consider our investments relative to our strategic priorities, such as climate change.

Mr. Harmening stated if the council wants to look further into the companies the city invests in and that is a directive, staff will look into this and bring back information.

**Communications/meeting check-in (verbal)**

Councilmember Mohamed stated for the past 3 years, she and a city staff member have been presenting at Iftar dinners. This year, the Mayor of Golden Valley has asked her to present at no cost to her or the city. She noted the date is not yet set, but she would like to do it as a joint St. Louis Park/Golden Valley event.

Mayor Spano noted the Bridges of Peace presentation by Safra Ali on Saturday, Feb. 22, from 4-6:30 p.m. in Minnetonka at the Al-Aman Center on Smetana Road, and encouraged all to attend.

The Empty Bowls event will be held on Feb. 13, at Westwood Lutheran Church, as a fundraiser for STEP, and all are encouraged to attend.

The meeting adjourned at 10:05 p.m.

Written Reports provided and documented for recording purposes only:

5. Fourth quarter investment report (Oct-Dec 2019)
6. Annual Health in the Park update
7. Notice of Eviction
8. Permit for phone art from Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT)
9. Community survey update

______________________________________  ______________________________________
Melissa Kennedy, city clerk               Jake Spano, mayor