1. Call to order

Mayor Spano called the meeting to order 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), City Attorney (Mr. Mattick), Deputy City Manager/Human Resources Director (Ms. Deno), Director of Community Development (Ms. Barton), Communications Manager (Ms. Smith), Senior Management Analyst (Ms. Solano), and Recording Secretary (Ms. Pappas).

Guests: Patrick Crowe, developer; residents of St. Louis Park and Golden Valley over phone

1a. Pledge of allegiance
1b. Roll call

2. Presentations - none

3. Approval of minutes

3a. City council meeting minutes of Feb. 18, 2020

It was moved by Councilmember Kraft, seconded by Councilmember Mohamed, to approve the Feb. 18, 2020 meeting minutes as presented.

The motion passed 7-0.

4. Approval of agenda and items on consent calendar

4a. Accept for filing city disbursement claims for the period of February 22 through March 27, 2020.
4b. Reject the bids received on March 5, 2020 for the Louisiana Avenue Bridge Project.
4c. Adopt Resolution No. 20-067 to recognize Office Assistant Karen Murphy for her 25 years of service.
4d. Designate Visu-Sewer as the lowest responsible bidder and authorize execution of a contract with the firm in the amount of $314,318.05 for the sanitary sewer mainline rehabilitation project no. 4020-3000.
4e. Adopt Resolution No. 20-068 rescinding Resolution 17-177, removing permit parking restrictions at 2829 Louisiana Avenue.
4f. Motion to adopt Resolution No. 20-069 approving the preliminary and final plat of Cedarwood Dachis Addition.
Motion to adopt Resolution No. 20-070 approving a variance to allow accessory structure in the side yard.

4g. Approve right of way purchase for parcel 1 and parcel 2 for Dakota bikeway and bridge project.

_It was moved by Councilmember Brausen, seconded by Councilmember Mavity, to approve the agenda as presented and items listed on the consent calendar; and to waive reading of all resolutions and ordinances._

_The motion passed 7-0._

5. Boards and commissions - none

6. Public hearings - none

7. Requests, petitions, and communications from the public

A petition for the southeast bikeway project, specifically for the segment of Wooddale Avenue from 44th Street to Morningside Road, was presented by Lori Larson, 4379 Wooddale Ave. She stated 100% of the residents on this block have signed the petition, stating they prefer no parking bays on the street, and adding residents will utilize their driveways to accommodate their own and neighbor’s parking needs. Ms. Larson stated the neighborhood believes this plan is consistent with staff’s initial proposal and thanked the council for taking this under consideration in the hopes of making a change to the design council approved in March.

It was the consensus of the council to accept the petition presented and direct staff to bring the item back for council discussion at a future study session.

8. Resolutions, ordinances, motions and discussion items

8a. Cedar Place redevelopment Resolution No. 20-071 Resolution No. 20-072 Resolution No. 20-073

Ms. Kramer presented the staff report. She noted the developer, Patrick Crowe, requests city approvals in order to construct a new 79-unit apartment development on property located at 4900 Cedar Lake Rd., 4905 Old Cedar Lake Rd., and 5005 Old Cedar Lake Rd. The developer seeks a comprehensive plan amendment to re-guide the 5005 Old Cedar Lake Road parcel from office to high density residential; a preliminary and final plat to combine the three parcels into one; and a planned unit development to rezone the site. The development would meet the city's inclusionary housing and green building policies and construction would begin in spring 2020 and open for leasing in fall 2021.

Ms. Kramer noted the public engagement process included a project sign at the site, a project webpage on the city website, notifications on social media, a neighborhood meeting on January 23, 2020, and a public hearing on February 5, 2020. She stated
concerns from the public have been traffic, scale, and setting a precedent. Staff and planning commission recommend approval of all applications.

Councilmember Brausen stated he has visited the site several times and one feature of the property is the mature oak trees that surround it. He stated one tree will be taken down in the center but asked about keeping the others on Quentin and Cedar Lake Road. Ms. Kramer stated yes those on Quentin and Old Cedar Lake Road will be preserved.

Councilmember Harris asked if the city’s ground floor transparency policy only pertains to commercial districts, and if so, as it relates to PUDs, how does this meet the policy that the council recently approved. Ms. Kramer stated the policy applies to commercial and restaurants. Mr. Walther added the ordinance does not apply to all PUDs, although options can be explored.

Councilmember Harris noted in the staff report, it states a portion of the building could be converted to commercial if less parking is needed in the future. She stated walkability design may be worth considering if this occurs.

Councilmember Mavity agreed with Councilmember Harris and added the council must be clear about walkability and the pedestrian experience, by putting pedestrians first with the design and when new designs are created within communities. Councilmember Mavity asked about the density, and if a PUD was not included, would the number of units be allowed under this site, and how many floors would be allowed. Ms. Kramer stated this area is all currently zoned high-density residential so fewer units would be allowed if there is no PUD. She added building height would be allowed under the current zoning.

Councilmember Mavity noted Connect the Park plans included another pedestrian bridge connecting over Highway 100 and asked if that was still in the plan. Ms. Heiser stated the west side bridge is more feasible at this point.

Councilmember Rog asked about the shadow study conducted on the project and what the results were. Ms. Kramer stated a shadow study was conducted and met all city requirements. Ms. Kramer presented the shadow study slide to the council for review.

Councilmember Kraft asked about the good neighbor agreement on the project. Mr. Crowe, the developer, stated this agreement was drafted related to the issue with cut-throughs in the neighborhood, adding that signage would be included, and it would also be noted in the lease agreement that cut-throughs are discouraged.

Councilmember Kraft asked about the traffic study and if staff could clarify the number of trips. Ms. Kramer stated the planning commission directed staff to do an additional traffic study and trips per day were in the range of 348-400.

Councilmember Kraft asked if this is less than 5% of what is on the roads today. Ms. Kramer stated if all trips from the apartment building were on Quentin, this would
increase traffic by less than 5%. Mr. Walther added the trip numbers in the staff report are an estimate only.

Councilmember Kraft asked Mr. Crowe if the solar array on the roof will utilize the full space of the roof. Mr. Crowe stated the solar panels will take up 70% of the roof and is sized at 86 kilowatts.

Councilmember Kraft also asked if the building will be able to support electric heating at some point. Mr. Crowe stated it will, adding that 25% of the units will have electric heat and in the future additional units will be able to change out the HVAC and have solar or electric heat as well.

Councilmember Brausen asked if the first floor of parking could be converted to additional apartments and not commercial. Mr. Crowe answered yes and stated if they are converted to retail or commercial at a later date, the parking area can be expanded to walkouts and windows can be added to the walls for retail or a coffee shop.

Residents living near the development spoke by telephone to the councilmembers.

Diane Karpen, 1400 Natchez Ave. S., Golden Valley, stated she is the co-sponsor of a petition that has over 163 supporters. She noted their prime concern is traffic on Natchez Avenue, and added she has been working with Golden Valley. She stated data on the traffic study compared to 2015 showed a 50% increase on Natchez Avenue, since the West End was developed, because there are very few passes, so many drivers cut through. She stated they are able to prove the city’s studies may not be projecting traffic correctly and with three more developments coming to the West End, there will be incremental traffic added to the concern. She said there is a sign related to not cutting through the neighborhood, but it has been ineffective. She added they do not trust the good neighbor comments, and noted their street is used for pedestrian traffic as there is no sidewalk there now, and that should be considered as well.

Evan Sundquist, 1632 Princeton Ave., stated he lives just adjacent and north of the proposed development. He is concerned with the way the meeting is being conducted tonight and that the neighborhoods’ voices will not be heard. He stated he has looked at the proposed parking in the West End area and added up about 4,500 additional parking spots, which means about 3,500 additional cars will be coming in the area to get into the parking ramps. He stated there is current traffic cutting through to Benilde, this area is not the West End, and all buildings north of Benilde are no more than two stories tall.

Jessica Duplessis, 1632 Princeton Ave., stated she is concerned about the size and scale of the proposed property. She noted this is a 6-story building going into an area that has only 1-2 story homes and will fundamentally change the character of the neighborhood. She stated the West End is a commercial district and she is concerned the lighting will shine into her bedroom 24/7. She is also worried about light pollution and sound pollution in the neighborhood.
Betsy Decortez, 1425 Natchez Ave., has concerns about traffic and safety. She stated traffic calming needs to be included and the good neighbor agreement is nice but will do nothing. She stated the traffic cut throughs will continue to increase, and she strongly requests traffic calming be included now versus later.

Peter Beck spoke on behalf of Fiat Luther at 1820 Quentin Ave. He stated they are not opposed to the project but do share some concerns on traffic and removing office use between the dealership and the project. He stated there will then be incompatible uses without the buffer, residents will be looking down on the dealership, and they are concerned there will be complaints about the dealership. He stated they asked the developer to put a notice in the lease about the dealership so residents are aware, but the developer would not do this – so they are asking the city to add this. He added changing the area from office commercial to residential will change the impact of the noise ordinance and reduce it, which may be a problem for the dealership.

TJ King, 2532 Joppa Ave., stated she is in support of the project and added it is a good choice for use of the land. She would rather see something attractive and well thought out, such as this project. She prefers to see a project that people live in vs. a coffee shop and she hopes residents will use the bike paths. Ms. King stated the project will provide work for people, especially now when many are out of work, noting Mr. Crowe lives in the area, knows the area, and has concerns about the area. She stated he is a man of vision, makes logical choices, puts himself into projects, and this will be good for the city and the area.

Jessica Anderson, 1345 Natchez Ave., stated she supports development in this area but is not happy about the scale of the project, which could create problems. She is sorry about the format for tonight’s meeting since many more would have come to speak, but she does appreciate the traffic study. She has concerns about the infrastructure of the neighborhood and doesn’t believe the good neighbor agreements will work. She asked if there is a way to allocate funds to the trails in neighborhoods most affected by developments, added the scale is too high for residential, and asked why set this precedent.

Councilmember Brausen stated he will support the proposal and staff recommendations, noting this is a Ward 4 project. He thanked Mr. Crowe for bringing this project to the city and making the financial commitment to develop here. He thanked staff and the residents both from St. Louis Park and Golden Valley who shared their thoughts.

Councilmember Brausen stated this is a thoughtful development which enhances the city’s housing resources. It is near major highways and the developer will support pedestrian and bike trails at his own expense. He noted the property abuts the car dealership to the west, office and multi-family homes on the south and east, and single-family residences to the north. It will only have 79 units, 5 stories, and will reach a height of 55 feet on the north side of the property, which is not much taller than the former farmhouse northeast of the site.
Councilmember Brausen stated the parking is adequate and exceeds code requirements by 14 spaces and there will be 112 bike spaces, again in excess of the city’s requirements. He stated the development will create 8 affordable units for folks who make 50% of our area median income, which is 8 more units than the current market is delivering. He noted almost one-half of the community lives in rental housing, which is a reflection of the high cost of housing in St. Louis Park. He added that most residents would want to own their own house in St. Louis Park, but limited income and the high cost of building now keeps a majority of residents unable to do so. He added he could not even afford to purchase a home in St. Louis Park today, and those that can are very lucky. He noted the city is fortunate developers find St. Louis Park a desirable location for building rental housing.

Councilmember Brausen added this proposal is a model of green building, which will preserve mature oak trees, provide solar and a partial green roof, while using native plants, provide electrical vehicle charging, high efficiency HVAC, energy efficient building systems including LED lighting, motion sensors, low flow showers, duo flush toilets, natural ventilation, and reduce carbon emissions and greenhouse gasses over time. He noted some are concerned about traffic, but staff has modeled traffic flow and stated there will be 400 or fewer car trips per day originating at the site – with all of it going onto Cedar Lake Road, which already handles thousands of cars daily. He stated the roads in that area can handle this less than 5% increase of traffic, as noted in the staff report. Assuming less than 25% of the traffic goes in that direction, with the vast majority on Cedar Lake Road, the increased traffic on Natchez Avenue will be under 100 additional vehicles daily.

Councilmember Brausen noted city staff will continue to monitor traffic and use mitigation measures as necessary. He stated given the current economic market in this country, financing new development will be challenging. He stated he is glad this proposal addresses so many of the city goals and he will support it.

Councilmember Mavity stated she will support this project, while noting she does understand the neighborhood concerns. She stated the current guided use is what the development proposes, and it is also consistent with the city’s 2040 vision. She added the project supports green communities and is aligned with what the city is committed to. She suggested there might be ways to manage the traffic between Golden Valley and St. Louis Park, by creating some one ways and improvements as needed. She does not like the parking on the first floor, but does like the design that anticipates future development, so she can live with that. She added the council will need to be clear this is not the kind of design that is desired in the city.

Councilmember Mavity noted concerns about light pollution and stated there were also complaints at Fresh Thyme on Excelsior Boulevard, but the owners made corrections after the fact. She stated she would ask the developer of this project to make adjustments on the north side related to lighting, so it is minimized in this single-family neighborhood.
Councilmember Kraft added he supports the project as well but does understand the concerns residents addressed. He noted traffic is one such concern but added it does not seem this development will significantly increase traffic, in light of the study conducted. He is glad the city is working with Golden Valley on the cut through at Natchez Avenue, and encouraged staff to review the three-way stop at Quentin and Cedar Lake Road as well. He stated the size of the building is a concern; however, it does still fit the guidance of the area. He stated he will support the project as it would help the city meet its rental needs and reduce upward price pressure.

Councilmember Kraft stated it is a thoughtful development and he is impressed with the environmental component including the solar array and the green roof on the parking structure. He added he is happy to see the affordable housing component as well. The improvements in the bike and sidewalk infrastructure should improve safety for pedestrians in that area, especially for kids waiting at a bus stop. He is happy that Mr. Crowe is from St. Louis Park as well.

Councilmember Harris stated this project is an example of taking a smaller development and maximizing an opportunity. She supports the density of the project and thoughtfulness of the ecological design, walking/biking and affordability is also appropriate. She stated she would rather see it as 4-5 levels vs. 6 levels, but the amenities balance it out and she will support the project.

Councilmember Mohamed stated overall she is in agreement with the project and agreed with Councilmember Brausen’s points on demand for rental property in St. Louis Park, as housing is so expensive in the city, and this will address that issue. She added she would have appreciated more affordability in the project, but it meets the requirements of the city, so she is grateful for that.

Councilmember Rog asked about the rent for the non-affordable units. Mr. Crowe stated the rents will be 7% lower than at the West End residential units currently.

Councilmember Rog asked what the maximum occupancy in the one-bedroom units is. Mr. Crowe stated two people.

Councilmember Rog stated she still has concerns about the notification and timing of the project from the city to residents, adding the city can do better at that, so neighbors feel better about the process. She noted that she acknowledges the 6-story building will have a negative effect on the area, but she is glad to see this blighted property proposed for development, and is happy about the tree preservation, affordability, and mitigation for the neighbors.

With regard to affordability, Councilmember Rog stated while the project complies with the city’s policy, at the same time, the West End has the most expensive rents in the metro area. She stated in the future, the city can do better on this, adding St. Louis Park does not need to be incentivizing new development that is 90% luxury apartments. She added it’s important to think about the signals we are sending developers about what
our priorities are. She also reiterated the importance of making sure the affordable units are aligned with the market rate units in terms of size.

Councilmember Rog stated she would like to see more traffic calming measures, as residents have requested. She added that the city’s light ordinance may warrant revisiting in relation to this and other projects in the city.

Mayor Spano stated he will support the project as well, and thinks the project is a good step in the right direction. He stated he would want greater affordability and acknowledges the sustainability aspects of the project. He understands the issue with lighting, adding he hopes the developer will respect the residents’ wishes here, and make changes, similar to what Fresh Thyme and Methodist Hospital did, as members of a resident neighborhood.

Mayor Spano stated residents noted there are no sidewalks in the neighborhood, and suggested the city reach out to Golden Valley to discuss their interests in installing sidewalks in this area, working together to support infrastructure in that area.

*It was moved by Councilmember Brausen, seconded by Councilmember Mavity, to adopt Resolution No. 20-071 approving the amendments to the 2040 Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Plan Map, as well as related figures, tables and text.*

*The motion passed 7-0.*

*It was moved by Councilmember Brausen, seconded by Councilmember Mohamed, to adopt Resolution No. 20-072 approving the preliminary and final plat for Cedar Place Addition; adopt Resolution No. 20-073 rescinding Resolutions 1953 and 1988 relating to property located at 5005 Old Cedar Lake Road; and, approving the first reading of an ordinance adding Section 36-268-PUD 16 to the zoning code and amending the zoning map from R-C high-density multiple-family residence to PUD 16, and set the second reading for April 20, 2020.*

*The motion passed 7-0.*

9. **Communications**

Mr. Harmening stated the city website has daily updates on COVID-19.

Mayor Spano stated he has been doing a video also on Tuesdays and Fridays for residents to view, which has generated many questions. He thanked staff for answering these questions quickly on social media.
10. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:55 p.m.

Melissa Kennedy, city clerk

Jake Spano, mayor