



Council Worksession
April 12, 2022
5:00 pm

Present: Mayor Kari Niedfeldt-Thomas
Councilmember Abdullahi Abdulle (attending virtually)
Councilmember Graeme Allen
Councilmember Pam Axberg (attending virtually at 6:15 p.m.)

Absent: Councilmember Emily Dunsworth

Staff in Attendance: Devin Massopust, Craig Schlichting, Ben Gozola

Guests in Attendance:

Updates from Department of Community Assets and Development

Massopust stated staff would be providing the Council with an update from the Community Assets and Development Department at this meeting.

Gozola commented on the projects being completed by DCAD which included the Zoning Code update, the Silver Lake Road corridor study, review of the licensing process for single family and duplex units in the community along with code language for accessory dwelling units. He noted the Zoning Code was approximately half way completed and staff hoped to have the entire document reviewed by the end of 2022. He commented further on the timeline for the Zoning Code review project and shared examples of how the new code would look. He discussed the Old Highway 8 study noting it was approximately two-thirds of the way complete. The community engagement that had been completed was described and noted the City received a large number of comments from the public regarding this project.

Mayor Niedfeldt-Thomas thanked Councilmembers Abdulle and Dunsworth for serving on the Zoning Code Steering Committee. She requested further information on the community engagement that would occur for the draft concept for the Old Highway 8 corridor study. Gozola described how the business owners and land owners would be educated and asked for input on the new City Code. He stated this work would be done in the next week or two.

Mayor Niedfeldt-Thomas asked if both tenants and building owners would be contacted. Gozola reported direct mailings would be sent to the buildings and staff would be visiting properties as well.

Mayor Niedfeldt-Thomas questioned when the community engagement process would begin. Gozola anticipated this would begin at the end of the month until the end of June. He reported this phase of community engagement would be conducted online.

Mayor Niedfeldt-Thomas recommended information regarding the Old Highway 8 corridor study community engagement process be included in the May newsletter. She suggested City staff also hold one in-person event

to allow the public to attend an event in either May or June.

Councilmember Abdulle encouraged staff to find ways to engage with and reach out to peoples of color for the Old Highway 8 corridor study.

Councilmember Allen questioned what type of public hearings or public outreach would be done when the Zoning Code nears completion. Gozola stated this would be something the Council could guide staff on. He reported public hearings would be held, but he did not anticipate there would be a great showing from the public.

Councilmember Allen anticipated if there were zoning changes around a homeowner's property they may have feedback for the City. In addition, he believed if finishing standards were changed in the City, there would be comments from the public. Gozola explained at this time he was cleaning up the Zoning Code and was removing inconsistencies in order to make the code easier to read and use.

Councilmember Allen requested staff be willing to take comments from the public on any code changes that were substantial, such as for a new land use classification and for any finishing changes that may occur.

Mayor Niedfeldt-Thomas agreed the more we can help people to see the activity occurring at the City the more they will feel connected with the City.

Councilmember Abdulle suggested the housing portion of the code be further considered through an equity lens to ensure there was fairness. Massopust stated staff was not intending to do a content edit of the Zoning Code, but rather was working to improve usability and layout. He explained the Council could pursue changes to the housing portion of the Code, but this would be done through another process. Gozola reported he had reached out to the City of Hopkins noting they had completed an equity audit of their City Code. He stated this was something on the minds of staff and would be done in the future.

Mayor Niedfeldt-Thomas questioned how much of the Zoning Code was not aligned with Minnesota Statute. Gozola commented this was another reason why staff was updating the code. He noted City Attorney Sonsalla would have a better idea on what portion of the code was not in alignment with Minnesota Statute.

Mayor Niedfeldt-Thomas inquired if the City Attorney was reviewing this document as it moves along. Gozola reported the City Attorney has been given the revised sections as they were completed by staff.

Schlichting commented further on the work he would be doing on the City's Climate Action Plan (CAP). He discussed the sustainability initiatives the City has already pursued which included solar panels on City buildings, an electric vehicle charging station plan and working with Xcel Energy on an energy action plan. He commented on the quotes staff had received from consultants that would assist the City with the CAP, noting staff would recommend the Council pursue a contract with paleBLUEdot.

Councilmember Abdulle commended staff for their efforts on the CAP and for finding a consultant that would assist the City with this work. He then discussed the Justice 40 program from the federal government. He reported there may be ways to tap into federal dollars to assist the City with its efforts.

Mayor Niedfeldt-Thomas requested staff not create survey confusion between the two surveys that would be completed by the City (the community survey and the Partners in Energy survey). She recommended the community workshops be held in the summer or early fall months and not February or March. Schlichting commented the timing for this meeting can be shifted.

Councilmember Allen asked the City to use National Night Out to publicize the community survey or any other survey the City may be sending out around that time.

Schlichting commented on the New Brighton Exchange (NBE) property, discussed how the site had developed over time and reviewed aerial shots of the site. He described how the value of this property has increased over time. He noted Block B remains undeveloped and commented on the sizeable cost for developing this site. He described how TIF could be used to assist with the development of this property. He stated this was a valuable piece of property given its location, but would take some effort to develop.

Councilmember Allen questioned how Block B was zoned. Gozola reported Block B was zoned NBE (New Brighton Exchange). He discussed how staff has used a broad reading of code for the development of this area. Further discussion ensued regarding how this site could potentially develop in the future.

Mayor Niedfeldt-Thomas inquired if a hotel was could be considered for this lot. Schlichting stated at this time, a hotel may be on pause because additional approvals would be needed from the MPCA. He commented further on the number of hotels that have opened in Roseville recently.

Mayor Niedfeldt-Thomas discussed the broker agreement that was in place and questioned if the City needed a new broker or a new view on this property. Schlichting reported the City has experience with this company and has printed brochures. However, he noted the City could consider using a new broker. He indicated the party interested in Block B at this time came to the City outside of the broker.

Councilmember Axberg joined the meeting at 6:15 p.m.

Councilmember Allen commented solving the financing for a structure on this property would be the biggest barrier to developing Block B. Massopust stated this was the case, noting \$4 million would need to be invested in pilings on the site prior to a building even being constructed.

Mayor Niedfeldt-Thomas questioned if there were federal or state funds that would be available to assist with the redevelopment of Block B. Schlichting explained there were pockets of money available and if a project were to come forward, these dollars could be pursued.

Councilmember Allen stated environmental regulations may change going forward which would impact the expense for construction.

Councilmember Abdulle asked what type of dump was on this site. Schlichting reported this was a construction or building material dump site.

Worksession adjourned at 6:24 pm

Respectfully submitted,



Terri Spangrud
City Clerk