

CITY OF ANOKA
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
FEBRUARY 11, 2016

Call to Order: Chairperson Kelly called the EDC meeting to order at 7:30 a.m. at Anoka City Hall, 2015 First Avenue North in the City of Anoka.

Roll Call: EDC Members present were: Tracy Kelly, Gary Fahnhorst, Jason Peters, Tom Redmann, Kelsey Swokowski (arrived at 7:32 a.m.), and Jessica Thunder. EDC members absent were: Jerry Cotton, Dr. Gene Dvoracek, and Andy Peterson. Staff present: City Manager Greg Lee.

Approval of Minutes: Chair Kelly noted that this item should be tabled until the Commissioners have sufficient time to review the minutes.

Mr. Lee stated that his goal is to distribute the Commission packet one week ahead of time to ensure there is sufficient time to review and apologized that he was not able to do that this month.

MOTION BY COMMISSIONER FAHNHORST, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER PETERS, TO TABLE THE MINUTES OF THE JANUARY 16, 2016 EDC MEETING, AS PRESENTED. MOTION CARRIED.

Oath of Office: Mr. Lee administered the Oath of Office to Commissioner Tom Redmann.

Commissioner Swokowski arrived.

OLD BUSINESS:

Projects Update: Mr. Lee stated that there has been some progress on the riverboat noting that staff met with the Director of the Twin Cities Gateway Visitors Bureau to determine how that item could be marketed. He noted that they will meet again in order to draft a marketing plan for the riverboat and will then meet with the party that is possibly interested in running a riverboat operation.

Chair Kelly noted that multiple members of the City Council included the riverboat as a goal for 2016.

Commissioner Redmann asked if this would be a solely for profit operation or whether there would be City support.

Mr. Lee noted that there would be a process of negotiation. He explained that the operation would run through Penn Point, noting that the parking lot has already been upgraded for use. He stated that there are facilities that could operate as a ticket office at

Penn Park. He stated that additional negotiations could occur to determine the infrastructure that would be needed and City reimbursement that could occur. He referenced TH 10 planning, noting that a working group has been developed with neighboring cities and Anoka County to develop a coalition in attempt to create a plan and funding and work with legislators for the needed updates to the roadway. He stated that the group met on January 27th and will meet again on February 18th, noting that the group will next discuss whether it would be best to request the full amount of funding for the entire project or prioritize segments of the project.

Mr. Lee noted that there is a section of the TH 10 plan scheduled to move ahead this spring in Anoka, which would be a pedestrian crossing project, which will add trailways on the north side and widening of the frontage road on the south side and will direct pedestrian traffic to Fair oak. He stated that there will be an impact to the businesses in Anoka along the south frontage road for about six weeks during construction, noting that the traffic will be allowed moving westbound only. He stated that unfortunately none of this project will be part of the ultimate design for the roadway and therefore will be essentially “throw away” money. He explained that there have been a number of fatalities in that area and therefore the County was the driving factor in completing this safety upgrade. He noted that even if the funding is secured for the entire project, it would still take five to seven years to come to fruition, so the safety upgrade will assist in the meantime.

Mr. Lee advised of the other TH 10 upgrades requested by other neighboring cities, such as Ramsey and Coon Rapids. He referenced the TH 47/Ferry Street railroad crossing which has had multiple fatalities and has 21,000 vehicles per day on a two-lane road. He stated that there is not another road in the State that has this volume of traffic on a two-lane at-grade railroad crossing and, therefore, the State is finally looking at this roadway to determine what would be needed in order to make this a grade separation. He referenced Riverplace Counseling Center and noted that there is a proposal for the City to exchange the current parcels the business owns along Ferry Street with the City owned properties along Highway 10, which will be reviewed by the City Council the following week. He displayed a plan of what the new business site could look like along Highway 10. He stated that initially the property would have right in/right out access and ultimately access will be provided by a frontage road. He stated that if this goes through, the counseling center buildings would be removed and the area would be opened up to a pedestrian corridor and greenspace, which will change the gateway aesthetic as people come into Anoka. He believed that this would be a win for the City and the business.

Commissioner Redmann stated that one of the buildings could have historical value.

Mr. Lee stated that the intent would be to create a riverwalk system, which would create a walking loop, noting that there is already a system in place on one side of the river and the City has continued to accumulate the necessary properties on the other side of the river. He noted that once the dam is upgraded the intent would be to create a walkway over the dam as well.

Commissioner Fahnhorst stated that it seems that Riverplace would be getting a great deal as this would move them from a busy area to a more secluded area.

Mr. Lee noted that the parcel the City owns was purchased for \$355,000 while the tax value of the current Riverplace is \$1,200,000 and the real estate value is \$1,800,000 to \$2,000,000. He explained that when you move someone you pay a premium, usually 1.4 times the value of the property. He stated that Riverplace can currently service 42 clients at the current location and would be serving 40 clients at the new location, noting that there could be a possibility to add on to the new facility in the future.

Commissioner Thunder noted that she recalled previously that the buildings were not in good condition and would need to be removed.

City of Anoka Marketing – Development Opportunities Booklet Update: Mr. Lee stated that Mr. Thorvig had created this booklet about one year ago, noting that staff is in the process of reviewing this booklet to update it. He asked that the Commission review this and noted that this item would be the main discussion item at the next meeting. He explained that the goal is to update the properties and market the booklet and properties with the assistance of a real estate agent. He asked the Commission to look at the parcels to determine if all the needed information is provided. He also asked the Commission to consider the highest and best use of the properties to ensure that the highest level of development is obtained.

2016 Goals: Mr. Lee reported that the City Council held their goal setting session earlier in the week and simply wanted to provide the City Council goals to the Commission. He displayed a summary page and highlighted some of the development and redevelopment goals. He provided an update on the proposed conversion of three of the cottages on the State hospital property into veterans' housing, noting that Common Bond is attempting to obtain funding at this time.

NEW BUSINESS:

COPPS Program – Officer Schley: Mr. Lee stated that the City has developed a COPPS program and has hired Officer Schley to head this program, which will focus on the downtown area and downtown businesses. He noted that two security officers have been hired for this program, which will provide more of a police presence, walking the downtown area and talking with the businesses. He stated that this program will deal with panhandling, homelessness, rental licensing, and will also work with the homeless shelters. He noted that this would be in addition to the police presence along Jackson Street on the weekend evenings. He reported that the program has started, with training beginning in the winter months so that the program can be in full swing this spring. He stated that a brochure will be distributed to the downtown businesses to inform them of the program. He hoped that this will help to create a small town feeling and improve connections.

Hiring a Deputy Community Development Director: Mr. Lee stated that he has begun the process of hiring a Deputy Community Development Director, and advised that the position has been advertised with applications due by February 19th. He explained that he would like to merge the planning and economic development departments, as is done in some smaller communities. He explained that initially this position would report to Ms. Braun and she would train the person to ultimately oversee both the planning and economic development departments. He hoped to introduce the new hire to the Commission in April or May.

Commissioner Fahnhorst stated that he would be interested in seeing an organizational chart at some point.

Mr. Lee noted that he is working to develop that as there are some changes being made in other departments as well.

COMMUNICATIONS AND REPORTS:

Marketing and Communications Updates:

- Discover Anoka: No comments made.
- ABLA – the February 2nd meeting was canceled: Mr. Lee noted that ABLA did provide a quarterly report summary, which was included in the Commission packet. He provided an update on the nature preserve and the park the City created as well as the trail you can take along the river all the way to the nature preserve.
- Winterfest – January 29-31, 2016: Chair Kelly reported that overall Winterfest was a success. He stated that the participation numbers increased for all the activities compared to the previous year. He noted that there were not many outdoor activities but believed there was a good use of the indoor space. He believed the event will continue to grow.
- Anoka Enterprise Park Annual Meeting: Mr. Lee reported that the meeting will take place on Wednesday, March 16th from 11:50 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.
- Anoka Area Chamber of Commerce – State of the Cities Luncheon: Mr. Lee stated that the Chamber of Commerce annually hosts the State of the Cities Luncheon, noting that each member city will be provided with the opportunity to highlight some of the activities that have occurred during the previous year. He noted that he included the presentation in the Commission packet that Anoka provided.

MISCELLANEOUS:

Discuss Next Agenda: March 10, 2016.

Chair Kelly reminded the Commission to review the development opportunities booklet in anticipation for the March meeting discussion.

Mr. Lee noted that staff is working to create a draft list of questions for the City Council in regard to the properties in the booklet in order to obtain their input. He provided additional information on the road improvement projects scheduled to occur within the City, noting that the City is investing in its infrastructure.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned upon a motion by Commissioner Fahnhorst, a second by Commissioner Peters, and a unanimous vote of those present at 8:38 a.m.

Amanda Staple, *TimeSaver Off Site Secretarial, Inc.*