

CITY OF ANOKA
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
MAY 12, 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: Jerry Cotton, Dr. Gene Dvoracek, Tracy Kelly, Jason Peters, Andy Peterson, Tom Redmann, Kelsey Swokowski, and Jessica Thunder. EDC members absent were: Gary Fahnhorst. Staff present: City Manager Greg Lee and Deputy Director of Community Development Doug Borglund.

Approval of Minutes: MOTION BY COMMISSIONER COTTON, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER DVORACEK, TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE APRIL 14, 2016 EDC MEETING, AS PRESENTED. MOTION CARRIED.

Introduction of Doug Borglund – Deputy Director of Community Development: Mr. Lee introduced Doug Borglund the new Deputy Director of Community Development, noting that following today Mr. Borglund will become the new staff contact for the EDC.

Mr. Borglund introduced himself and provided a brief summary of his career experience, noting that he has 20 years of experience in local government positions. He stated that he looks forward to working with the members of the EDC.

The Commission welcomed Mr. Borglund.

OLD BUSINESS:

Projects Update: Mr. Lee stated that the Council recently granted approvals for the City to purchase four properties from Riverplace and approved the final plat for the relocated Riverplace site which is along Highway 10 and also approved a Planned Unit Development (PUD) for that new Riverplace campus. He stated that all the necessary approvals have been issued with the exception of the Development Agreement which will go before the Council on May 16th. He stated that the actual construction on the new Riverplace site will begin in the next two weeks and the business has 180 days to complete construction, which would mean that the business will relocate before the end of the year. He stated that the Park Board and Historic Preservation Society will begin discussions on the plans for the existing Riverplace site and potential riverwalk, noting that the buildings will most likely be removed at the beginning of the next year. He referenced the east liquor store owned by the City and advised that the City placed an offer to purchase the property west of the liquor store. He stated that the City completed an environmental review of the property and there were no issues identified as the underground tanks that existed on that site were removed years ago. He stated that if the purchase is accepted the City would expand the parking lot and then determine plans for expansion of the liquor store. He stated that the City is a member city of the Minnesota

Municipal Power Agency which has determined that they would like to increase actual power production in various locations within member cities, specifically building natural gas powered plants. He noted that the agency began in Chaska and has identified Anoka as the next location. He stated that the agency has said that although it's a power plant it can be designed to look like a residential building. He noted that the agency has identified a potential location near the train station at 501 Pierce and is working with staff to determine if the site fits their needs. He stated that the facility would create waste heat that could be used by a surrounding user, but noted that the surrounding users would not require that type of heat but there could be a potential to link that waste heat to the government center.

Commissioner Redmann stated that there seems to be some risk in the economics using one energy source to create another. He asked what would happen if the cost of natural gas rises and the cost of electricity decreases.

Mr. Lee stated that the agency has researched the economics and would have more information on that aspect. He stated that the agency is looking to place the plants in the larger communities that are members, which were Chaska, Anoka and he believed Elk River. He noted that the agency is open to conform to the architectural preference of the City and advised that the City has referenced the architecture of the parking ramps in downtown and near the train station in order to provide a reference.

Commissioner Dvoracek noted that this would be a fairly clean source of energy. He asked the timeline.

Mr. Lee replied that the agency is aiming for 2018.

City of Anoka Marketing – Development Opportunities Booklet Update: Mr. Lee stated that the marketing booklet has been completed but noted that the booklet will be a working document that will constantly be evolving and updated.

Commissioner Peters suggested linking the PDF version of the booklet to the PID links which would easily allow users to conduct further research on the tax statements.

Mr. Lee stated that there are parcels currently owned by the County that were included in the booklet and explained that the City can acquire the parcels in the future when there are development proposals.

Commissioner Peterson stated that a link to Google maps might also be helpful as that could provide potential buyers with a quick look at the area surrounding the site.

NEW BUSINESS:

Downtown Signage: Mr. Lee stated that this is part of a larger issue that will be discussed at the June 27th City Council Worksession. He noted that the discussion will include downtown business signage, utilizing the sidewalks by businesses in the

downtown area, and for businesses that serve alcohol (specifically along Jackson Street) whether a portion of the sidewalk could be used for outdoor seating. He stated that this group would first discuss the issue of downtown signage. He noted that temporary signage is sometimes used in the downtown area, such as sandwich boards used to advertise specials, and displayed photographs of examples. He noted that there is a fine line between what is best for downtown businesses and what is best for the aesthetic of the public right of way. He noted that in one instance a business used a very large sandwich board sign that completely blocked the sidewalk, which is not safe for the public walking down the sidewalks. He stated that although the items along the sidewalk (signs, benches, tables and chairs) increase in the summer, there are instances in the winter as well. He did not think there were major problems but believed that this is the right time for the City to determine their preferences and set some guidelines. He asked for comments and recommendations from the EDC and noted that ABLA will also be consulted prior to the Council Worksession.

Commissioner Peterson stated that he has lunch on Jackson Street a few times a week and also frequently walks through the downtown area. He stated that staff can contact the businesses without ordinances through many sources (such as ABLA, Discover Anoka, or the Chamber of Commerce) and was not in favor of adding more ordinances.

Commissioner Dvoracek also believed that staff could contact the business owner if there is a problem identified rather than adding another ordinance.

Commissioner Peterson suggested that a procedure be identified that could be followed and a staff person could be identified that could monitor problems. He stated that he has never had a problem with the signs along Jackson Street. He stated that there is a need for the garbage cans and ash trays to prevent litter from the street area.

Mr. Lee stated that the sidewalks were widened to allow additional pedestrian movement and there needs to be direction on the mix allowed between signs and other items and pedestrians. He noted that if there is not an ordinance it can be seen as objective enforcement.

Commissioner Peters stated that there could be language included in a tenant's lease that would address the amount of signage and placement allowed.

Commissioner Dvoracek agreed that the issue should be dealt with locally as much as possible. He noted that if complaints arise then it could be taken further.

Mr. Lee stated that he did not want to wait for complaints to come in and would rather look at the issue proactively. He noted that other communities also use sandwich boards and he does not oppose those boards but simply wants to see it done tactfully.

Commissioner Swokowski stated that she would be more interested in the issue of table and chairs being allowed.

Mr. Lee replied that the Commission will discuss that issue at their next meeting. He noted that there is an ordinance that allows a business to utilize one third of the sidewalk up to three feet, noting that there has not been a problem thus far.

Commissioner Peterson referenced one or two businesses along Main Street that have a small table and chairs that have not been a problem.

Chairperson Kelly stated that there seems to be consensus that access should not be restricted and perhaps instead there should be discussion of how much space is needed for access.

Commissioner Peterson noted that there is already the limit of one third, or three feet of the sidewalk, and that information could be placed into a flyer and distributed to the businesses.

Mr. Lee agreed but noted that the problem that arises if that businesses are placing their signs further out away from the building rather than keeping the signs closer to the building. He agreed that the information could be developed into guidelines rather than an ordinance.

Mr. Borglund stated that when he worked in Forest Lake they had a similar issue and began with guidelines that evolved into an ordinance because business owners were critiquing each other and their application of the guidelines. He agreed that it would not hurt to start with something gentle and that could evolve into something further if needed. He noted that the business owners were involved in the creation of the ordinance in Forest Lake. He noted that the issue is not uncommon for cities.

Commissioner Redmann suggested that visibility be considered as well since that is an element of safety.

Mr. Lee agreed and noted that the reason the bump outs were created was to increase visibility of pedestrians but are now sometimes being used for sandwich board signs.

Commissioner Redmann stated that permanent landscaping can also be an issue with visibility, but acknowledged that is another topic.

Commissioner Peterson noted that monument signs and landscaping around the signs can be an issue with visibility. He stated that if a pylon sign is done correctly that can sometimes be a better choice.

Mr. Lee stated that the use of the sidewalk will be discussed at the next meeting to continue this discussion, with the last portion of the discussion centering on businesses that serve alcohol and whether patio type activity should be allowed on the public right-of-way.

COMMUNICATIONS AND REPORTS:

Marketing and Communications Updates:

- Discover Anoka: Commissioner Peterson provided a brief update on recent events there were held. He stated that there was a planning meeting held earlier in the week which had great attendance, noting that they are looking to remarket Anoka. He stated that a Committee was created to bring ideas to the Discover Anoka group for a general marketing plan.

Chairperson Kelly asked if the group is funded by the business members.

Commissioner Peterson noted that ABLA contributes \$10,000 per year and the members of the group also have a monthly membership fee, noting that the fee is kept low to ensure that all businesses can participate.

- ABLA – May 3rd Meeting: Mr. Lee stated that the group met on May 3rd and he introduced Mr. Borglund to the group at that meeting. He advised that the Halloween Stamp event was discussed which will be held on September 29th at 11:00 a.m. He stated that ABLA also discussed the possibility of creating their own website and the group is working to determine how that would be maintained and updated.

- Celebrate Anoka Day – Annual Celebrate Anoka Day, September 12, 2016: Mr. Lee had nothing new to report but wanted to ensure that the event remains on the calendar for the Commissions. He stated that historically a coach bus was rented to visit the different sites in Anoka to highlight current development and available sites. He noted that although the bus tour was not held the previous year he believed that the tour would continue this year.

Commissioner Dvoracek believed that the event was held on a separate day from the golf event in the past.

Mr. Lee stated that staff would determine if it would be best to have the bus tour on the same day or a separate day.

Commissioner Thunder stated that she would prefer to keep the events separate as she does not golf.

Commissioner Dvoracek noted that keeping the events separate would also help to ensure that people are not choosing between the events and may increase participation.

MISCELLANEOUS:

Transportation Services Brochure: Mr. Lee stated that at a previous meeting he mentioned the transportation services brochure that was developed in the past to highlight the transportation opportunities. He stated that the document was included in the Commission packet for review.

Commissioner Thunder asked how frequently the brochure is updated. She noted that often the people that use the document are not going online frequently to find information and therefore the paper document would need to be updated as well.

Mr. Lee noted that the document was updated four or five months ago and has been distributed to certain locations. He stated that he could have staff verify the information and update the brochure on an annual basis.

Other: Commissioner Peterson asked for an update on real estate brokers and marketing of City owned properties.

Mr. Lee provided an update.

Mr. Borglund stated that the City is currently working with three firms that have about six properties each. He noted that the HRA has decided to hold their properties for the time being.

Discuss Next Agenda - June 9, 2016: Mr. Lee noted that the downtown signage and use of the sidewalk discussion will be continued at the June meeting.

Commissioner Peters asked if there has been any discussion with the liquor store regarding the potential of Sunday sales being passed through the legislature.

Mr. Lee stated that the liquor store manager does not believe that there will be increased sales but noted that the store would need to remain open on Sunday in order to be competitive.

Commissioner Swokowski asked if there is a cost analysis that has been done for other states that have Sunday liquor sales to show business owners, as that could ease some concerns and help guide decisions.

Mr. Lee stated that the municipal liquor store would be open if Sunday sales are allowed, whether they are making money or not, in order to remain competitive and retain customers.

September 2015 EDC Meeting - Cablecast: Chairperson Kelly stated that he wants to ensure that the items that will be discussed will fit within the typical 90-minute timeframe for the meeting.

Mr. Lee agreed that the agenda is becoming larger and may need to be pared down.

Chairperson Kelly stated that the update from Open to Business could be made at a regular Commission meeting rather than including that in the cablecast meeting.

Commissioner Thunder noted that cablecast meetings typically run quickly because the Commissioners often have less discussion and comments because of the camera and therefore the presentations are helpful. She noted that a time limit could be set for presenters.

Chairperson Kelly stated that the Open to Business update could still be moved to a regular Commission meeting, noting that the most important item in his opinion would be TIF.

Commissioner Peters stated that he did a presentation for his masters on TIF and could provide that as well. He agreed to send it to Mr. Lee.

Mr. Lee provided an update on an upcoming expansion for Vista Outdoor. He advised that MnDOT has secured funding for a study to determine what would be needed to create a grade separation for the railroad crossing at Ferry Street, which is the highest ranking crossing in the state of Minnesota. He stated that the study should be completed by August of this year and if it is feasible MnDOT would continue right into the design phase.

Group Picture: The Commission took a new group picture following the meeting.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned upon a motion by Commissioner Redmann, a second by Commissioner Dvoracek, and a unanimous vote of those present at 9:00 a.m.

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