

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Date and Time: Tuesday, June 2, 2020 at 5:15 p.m., Council Chambers

Members Present: Tom Neal (c), Lisa Rasmussen, Sarah Watson, Becky McElhaney and Tom Kilian

Others Present: Anne Jacobson, Chris Schock, Katie Rosenberg, Lou Larson, Patrick Peckham, Sean Fitzgerald and Michelle Van Krey

In accordance with Chapter 19, Wisc. Statutes, notice of this meeting was posted and sent to the Daily Herald in the proper manner.

The Economic Development Committee meeting was called to order by Neal at 5:15 p.m.

Agenda Item #1 Approval of the Minutes from 3/19/2020, 4/8/2020 and 5/5/2020

Motion by Rasmussen, second by Kilian to approve the minutes. Motion passed 5-0.

Agenda Item #2 Discussion and Possible Action on the update of City's Request for Proposal (RFP) Template.

Schock introduced Sean Fitzgerald, the new Business Development Specialist for the City of Wausau. Fitzgerald explained that the department is taking a look at revamping the RFP process and template. He highlighted the current and previous processes outlined in the packet. Rasmussen commented that moving away from the point system that had been previously used has allowed the City to entertain more unique proposals that may not have scored well using the point system but are still valid proposals. She questioned who would be involved in the point awarding process if it was brought back and encouraged the Alder of the district to be involved in some way. Watson and Kilian echoed that involving the Adler who represents the district where development is being proposed would be a good process to consider. Rasmussen recommended that if the point system returns that points should be awarded to proposals which remediate environmental concerns of a site or find safe ways to reuse contaminated sites.

Fitzgerald will take the committees thoughts and recommendations and return at a future committee meeting with a more polished proposed change to the RFP process and template.

Agenda Item #3 Discussion and Possible Action on the issuance of a Request for Proposal (RFP) for various city-owned parcels in the Near North area, around 2nd and Bridge Sts. and 3rd Street near Short St.

Schock presented a possible RFP for the Near North area. The committee had previously received a proposal from Aedifix Holdings (Blenker) for this area and encouraged staff to allow for other proposals before making a decision. If Aedifix was still interested they would have to reapply during the application period for this RFP. Kilian asked if the neighborhood had been included or informed of any of the plans for this area. Neal and Schock answered that the neighborhood had not been engaged in any process other than the normal open meetings. Neal indicated that as the Adler of that neighborhood he is aware that it has been distressed and felt that the neighborhood would welcome development. Rasmussen recommended that, in general, before engaging neighborhood groups it is better to have the actual proposals so that they can comment on what is actually being proposed rather than just an idea of the type of development that may go in.

Motion by Rasmussen, second by Watson to move RFP forward. Motion passed 5-0.

Agenda Item #4 Discussion and Possible Action on the proposals received for 1300 Cleveland St. (former City Incubator) property.

Schock shared that four proposals have been received for 1300 Cleveland St and they are included in the packet. They are being brought to the committee today to discuss the next steps for this property and what is needed so that the committee is able to make a recommendation. Schock noted that multiple proposals could fit together on this property so it doesn't necessarily have to be a decision to select just one of the proposals.

Neal commented that he would not welcome a motion to accept any of the proposals tonight since there is still work to be done to determine if multiple proposals could be accommodated on the site and some of the developers have been having those conversations but nothing has been decided yet.

Rasmussen reflected that when this property was originally put out for RFP the committee asked for an updated Phase 1 environmental assessment and a Phase 2 assessment to be started on the property. Before she would be comfortable accepting any proposal that includes housing she would want all of the environmental concerns to be checked out. Rasmussen spoke in strong support of the Community Partners Campus proposal because it will be providing essential services to those in need in our community. She believes that the impact that this project could create for populations in need is worth much more than the tax benefit we could get out of it if a different proposal was chosen.

Neal questioned if this site was the ideal or only spot that the Community Partners Campus could go and if the housing project could potentially go somewhere else. Watson also asked if the Near North parcels had been considered for the Danna Capital proposed housing project. Schock shared that those parcels, and others, had been presented as options for the housing project. Watson echoed Rasmussen's thoughts and support for the Community Partners Campus. Rasmussen noted that this location is an ideal spot since it's on a bus line and close to other resources like St. Vincent de Paul. Finding an alternative site for a housing project would be easier than finding an alternative site for Community Partners Campus.

Kilian shared some documents (see attached) in reference to the environmental history of the site. He highlighted some of the past areas of concerns and potential chemicals that have been used on the site. As the Alder of this district he has received some feedback from the residents of this area. The feedback received includes:

- Insufficient lighting concerns
- Additional police patrol requested if development occurs
- A summary of proposals in Hmong have been requested
- Industrial expansion is unwelcome
- Housing development is concerning due to the environmental history of the site

Kilian echoes Rasmussen and Watson on the need and importance of a community center and he supports the proposal contingent on environmental assessment results and would like the committee to hold off on making a decision so some more neighborhood input can be collected.

Rasmussen agrees with everything Kilian said and believes we should be trying to make our residential areas less industrial, not more industrial. Rasmussen would like to see Phase 2 testing be done in the area where the building is proposed as well as the areas highlighted in the documents provided by Kilian. She

would also like to see the safety concerns of the residents addressed by including lighting in the planning for this site and would like alternative sites to be explored for the Danna Capital housing project.

Schock reminded the committee that the Phase 1 environmental came back with the recommendation that no further testing is needed and the City environmental engineer indicated he was unclear of where to proceed if the committee want more testing. Staff can use the list provided by Kilian for further testing.

Kilian's support of the project is contingent on the environmental concerns checking out and the support of the proposal from his constituents.

Staff will use the documents provided by Kilian to determine testing sites for Phase 2 environmental and bring back a quote to the committee for more testing.

Agenda Item #5 Discussion and Possible Action on the previous proposals received for the Thomas Street Phase 2 Remnant parcels.

Neal clarified that the intent of this agenda item is to discuss the plan for community engagement on these proposals and not to discuss the proposals themselves. The proposals were received a few months ago and residents as well as former council member, Mary Thao, asked that the neighborhood be given an opportunity to provide feedback to the proposals. Before this could be scheduled COVID-19 happened and put a hold on all non-essential meetings.

Kilian spoke in favor of input sessions since he was one of the residents that asked the former committee to consider including the neighborhood. Rasmussen believes that public engagement is most effective when the City goes to the residents so she suggested the possibility of an outdoor event so residents could engage in a safe way. Mayor Rosenberg suggested that a video with the proposals could also be made so it could be shared via the website, social media and media to get even more input. Kilian is in favor of both outdoor, in person meetings and digital

Lou Larson, District 10 Alder, shared some feedback from his constituents in regard to the properties being built on the West end of Thomas Street. Some concerns included the style of the units not matching with the neighborhood, driveways being too short and pitched and the units being too large next to single family homes.

Staff will work on setting up neighborhood engagement sessions and creating digital content with the proposed projects.

Agenda Item #6 Discussion and Possible Action on the proposal received from Cherry Street Dental for a proposed commercial office building in the Riverlife area.

Schock presented the proposal and possible next steps the committee could take. Neal commented that he was surprised to see a proposal from a dental office since the plan for the Riverfront has been housing or mixed use retail development, not professional or office use. Rasmussen believes that this is not the best use of the riverfront property and would have difficulties encouraging incentives for a professional building that could easily go elsewhere in the City. The riverfront should be reserved for projects that fit with the goals and strategic plan of that area of development. She even received constituent feedback questioning how a dental office fits with the goals of the riverfront development.

Motion by Rasmussen, second by Watson to release an RFP for that area to be due 7/31/2020. Motion passed 5-0.

Agenda Item #7 CLOSED SESSION pursuant to 19.85(1)(e) of the Wisconsin Statutes for deliberating or negotiating the purchase of public properties, the investing of public funds, or conducting other specified public business, whenever competitive or bargaining reasons require a closed session:

Closed session was not required and no action was taken.

Agenda Item #8 RECONVENE into Open Session to Take Action on Closed Session Items, If Necessary

Closed session was not required and no action was taken.

Updates-given by Schock

• **Wausau Center Mall Planning**

Planning is ongoing for the Mall. WOZ hired Eppstein Uhen Architects to consult on the redevelopment of the mall. The city and council will continue to receive updates on the progress.

• **N Riverfront Unified Site Plan**

The city is working with a site planner to incorporate the different proposed uses for the site. The housing project and brewery are still interested but the restaurant is no longer interested.

• **Wausau Cares Loan and Grant Program for Small Businesses**

McDevco is accepting applications for the loan and grant program for small businesses affected by COVID-19.

• **Department Overview**

Schock provided hard copies of the department overview that the council received at their training and encouraged committee members to reach out with questions.

• **Department Staffing**

Neal announced at the beginning of the meeting that this would be Schock's last committee meeting as he is retiring as of June 29th.

Public Comment

Kevin Noel and Brian Gumness from the Community Partners Campus proposal commented on the urgent need for a community center like they've proposed and thanked the committee for their consideration.

Adjournment

Motion by Watson, second by Kilian to adjourn the meeting. Motion passed 5-0.

Adjournment Time: 7:13 p.m.