

**MINUTES**  
**CITY COUNCIL WORKSHOP**  
**SPECIAL MEETING OF THE CITY COUNCIL**  
**JUNE 26, 2023, 5:00 PM**

**1. Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Vitek at 5:00 pm.

**2. Roll Call**

**Present:** Ald. Silkaitis, Ald. Foulkes, Ald. Bongard, Ald. Muenz, Ald. Lencioni, Ald. Gehm, Ald. Pietryla, Ald. Wirball, Ald. Bessner (5:02 pm), Ald. Weber

**Absent:** None

**Staff:** Heather McGuire, Bill Hannah, Peter Suhr, Jenn McMahon, Derek Conley, Russell Colby, Police Chief Jim Keegan, Fire Chief Scott Swanson, Larry Gunderson, Tracey Conti

**Absent:** None

**3. Mayor's Strategic Priorities for the Next 2 years**

Mayor Vitek stated that her priorities are the Council's shared priorities, with results focused on the 33,000+ residents and needs of the community. Communication and transparency are important, and keeping an open mind. Council members are asked to be open and honest with one another, staff, and the public. This includes agenda items, comments, etc.

The Mayor shared the following priorities:

- Continued focus on Infrastructure
- Development
  - 1<sup>st</sup> Street Plaza
  - Downtown Grocer
  - East Side Development
  - Charlestowne Mall
  - Residential Growth
- Support existing businesses

**4. Tax Increment Financing 101**

Attorney Peppers provided information about Tax Increment Financing, using the embedded presentation.



TIF Presentation  
6-26-2023

Mr. Peppers stated that Pay As You Go is the preferred TIF method. The City now has four active TIFs, and several were concluded recently.

There is an annual requirement, through the Joint Review Board, that the City meet with all of the tax districts to review and explain the status of each TIF.

## 5. Former Police Department Site Analysis

Heather McGuire explained that this conversation is about a proposed feasibility study for development of the former Police Department site, and not about issuing a request for concept/design for the site.

Derek Conley shared background about the site and explained that the current proposal is to hire a consultant to conduct a property feasibility study. Potentially a planning firm and/or an engineering firm would be retained. Staff is looking for feedback about what a consultant would study, as well.



Downtown  
Riverfront Property

The property is owned by the City and the majority of the site is in the Central Business District (no height maximum per zoning criteria) and a portion is CBD2/transitional. Previously the site was used for industrial purposes and a Phase 1 environmental study needs to be undertaken. Located along the Fox River, there is bedrock that would provide challenges for utility infrastructure, foundations, and any underground parking structure. This area is also in the floodplain which also challenges development. Other considerations are the demolition for existing structures (process and costs), a traffic study for street congestion avoidance and assessment of impact on the Fire Station, and an analysis of parking capacity.

A planning component could include public engagement - community meetings, surveys, project website, and other tools for gaining input. The consulting firm could also potentially offer concept designs for what they feel is the best use of this property, considering the site restrictions. These would be very general, with areas designated for commercial, residential, open space, and not detailed. They would span across low, medium, and high-density projects, offering a variety of options.

Public engagement would be similar to the Bikeability/Walkability Plan process, and somewhat like the previous comprehensive plan.

Existing buildings on this property are very old and in poor condition. Finding a new use for them would be difficult.

Heather McGuire shared with the council that she has already discussed the property with Park District staff and board members at least four times, and their response has been consistent. They will not participate in discussions about the future of this property because the land belongs to the City and not the Park District, so they will not issue an official statement.

If the City engages professional assistance with this project, it is likely separate consultants would work on the technical vs. the engagement aspects. Mr. Conley is unsure whether the \$100k budgeted amount will cover all of these services.

The alderpersons provided comments and questions:

- Ald. Weber wants to understand the technical aspects of the property before any public engagement or planning work is done.
- Ald. Bessner asked about the cost of the public engagement process and Derek Conley offered an opinion that it would be less expensive than the technical evaluation of the property.
- Ald. Wirball wants the public to be engaged before a traffic study is undertaken, to find out what the residents want before a concept plan is created. He wants to consider keeping this land for public use. If the cost of demolition is high and the existing buildings are not worth saving, could the land be converted into a municipal park? He would like to see minimal building on this property. Preferably buildings could be repurposed, as an arts cultural center or children's museum. Ald. Wirball favors moving forward with the technical assessment and utility pieces, with community engagement happening afterwards. He wants a public amenity piece as part of the development and asked whether sponsors could pay for that. He wants to be creative in the approach.
- Ald. Pietryla agrees with doing the technical assessment first, and also having robust public engagement, similar to the Bikeability/Walkability Study. He would like to see multiple concept plans from which the council could refine a vision before requesting proposals from developers.
- Ald. Gehm wants to understand what's technically possible, environmental challenges, utilities, etc. He would like to get ideas and then public input.
- Ald. Lencioni wants to engage a consultant and get more information. He believes the council needs help to balance what is possible and what the public wants. He would like to understand the options for repairing the riverfront walkways. He believes the City should own as little land as possible and have this land as property tax revenue generator. It's important to understand what is best for the greater St. Charles community as well as those in the immediate neighborhood.
- Ald. Muenz wants to focus on fiscal responsibility and would like the City to undertake the technical study. The process needs to include a public engagement piece and she is concerned about how it would be done. She would like to see engagement of all groups in the community, all demographics. It is her opinion that the City is not doing enough, especially for older folks who do not use social media, etc. She asks what will this look like in 10-20-30-40 years? She wants to think very long term. This is a key location and big decision. Forward

thinking is important. She feels there is a unique opportunity to build a future vision, and does not want to rush this long-term decision.

- Ald. Bongard agrees that the City should undertake studies and public engagement. He believes the City Council should come to a general consensus on acceptable ideas for the property. Public engagement will be at extremes all over the map, so the 10 Council members need to agree on what they will support.
- Ald. Foulkes wants to see it done right, with no short cuts. This development will be here 40 years from now, so this is a big decision. Any consultant expertise is helpful. He wants to know what specifically cannot be put there but not feasible because of xyz. Mr. Conley affirmed that a consultant could come back with that information. Engineering anything is possible, but some things may be cost prohibitive.
- Ald. Silkaitis agrees with a technical study, but does not want to address traffic and parking yet, until the Council has decided what the development is desired to be. People he has talked to would like to see nothing there. They want more green space and less buildings. He wants the Council to try to please most people, acknowledging that public feedback will be in a wide range.

Mr. Conley summed up what he heard from then group, that they want to pursue technical aspect and public engagement but not a concept plan yet. The results of a technical review would then be used by the City Council to create general recommendations.

Heather McGuire stated that low medium high use scenarios would be used for capacity evaluation.

One use of a consultant would be for interaction with each City Council member regarding their vision, and help to establish an area of overlap.

Staff aims for the August Planning & Development Committee meeting to revisit this topic.

## 6. Development Process Overview

Heather McGuire introduced this agenda item and stated that staff wants to inform and clear up confusion that may exist regarding the development process, how preliminary concepts are further developed, and steps to finalize. Staff has tweaked processes to be efficient and business friendly.

Russ Colby shared the imbedded presentation which is meant to be informative and provide an overview of the development process. It is a political process and also follows ordinances and state statutes.



Development  
Process



The Council had the opportunity to ask questions, and the following were clarified:

- The concept stage of the development process is required for Planned Unit Developments, and is not required for other applications. This is somewhat onerous for a business proposing a small project, and is sometimes recommended if there are other implications.
- The warranty for infrastructure is one-year, and staff will check whether it is possible to extend it to two years.
- The Zoning Board of Appeals has been a busier group recently and there is no pressing decision to eliminate this committee, as had been discussed in the past.
- The time limit for temporary occupancy varies, depending on the tasks remaining to be done. Usually there are fees for extending this timeframe.
- Improvements are being reviewed for the development process and new materials may be produced soon.
- If a PUD expires after two years, it may be extended for one year with Council approval, or it lapses and returns to its underlying zoning district.
- The 250-foot distance for notifying residents is a minimum, and as a Home Rule community it can be extended. Attorney Peppers cautions that stakeholders outside any distance threshold can make an argument to increase the distance.

## **7. Committee of the Whole**

In previous conversations with all of the Council members, Heather McGuire observes that the group is evenly split on whether to change the committee structure to Committee of the Whole. This agenda item is a chance to have further conversation about how St. Charles may benefit from such a change.

By ordinance, there are currently four Monday evening meetings per month. Ms. McGuire shared details about how the committee structure has changed six times over the years 1980-1997. Sometimes there are very short meetings, 1-10 minutes. To enhance the decision-making process, foster collaboration, and improve overall efficiency, Council may decide to adopt a Committee of the Whole structure. This is in place in many other communities. The COW would include all Council members, and not the Mayor. City Council meetings would remain on the first and third Mondays of each month, and be followed by a COW meeting, which would include any agenda items which are ready for review. This change would be especially impactful for the Planning & Development and Government Services Committee which meet only once per month.

Reducing the number of Monday meetings will reduce the required staff support and also reduce confusion from the public about which topics will be heard at which meetings.

Ms. McGuire shared details about surrounding communities and frequency of public meetings. Most meet twice per month. St. Charles City Council meetings average 26 minutes. It is expected that twice per month City Council and COW meetings would last approximately one hour in total.

At any point, a special meeting could be added. Calling extra committee meetings is not an ideal option as it is outside the standard handling process, creating confusion that indicates our standard

process is not satisfying our needs. A beneficial aspect of freeing up two Monday evenings per month is that workshops could be added so that Council may engage in collaborative discussion.

The chair of the COW could be a designated person or a rotating assignment between Council members.

The individual Council members shared their thoughts, including the following:

- Four evening meetings per month is not an efficient use of after-hours staff time.
- Public engagement is expected to be greater with fewer meetings.
- Currently there are only four Mondays per year with no evening meeting scheduled.
- The more meetings the City offers, the more possibility for public engagement.
- Comfort with the current schedule was expressed.
- There was support for the idea of allowing enough time between meetings to fully develop the agenda items before presentation at City Council.
- The schedule and committee structure could be changed again, if needed, as has been done in the past to adapt to changing environment.
- The COW allows more flexibility to bring topics to the Council as needed.
- Newer council members are in a learning stage and would like maximum opportunities to get to know staff, processes, and council roles.
- COW is business friendly. Emphasis should be placed on residents.
- More opportunity for public to attend is good for the community. Fewer meetings limit citizen participation.
- Council members have expressed displeasure about canceling and combining meetings and also putting agenda items on alternate committee agendas.
- Some would like to consider adding more discussion items to the committee agendas.
- Are we making the best use of the meeting time? Council members should be more proactive in determining use of the meeting time and topics.
- COW would increase efficiency and effectiveness.
- Consider moving Government Services Committee meeting to follow the Government Operations Committee meeting.
- It is difficult to schedule a special meeting because of Council members' busy calendars and limited availability to get a quorum.
- If COW is adopted, there should be checks and balances and have multiple committee chairs to provide input on meeting agendas.
- A suggestion was made to have more open conversation opportunities in the City Council agenda.

In response to a request for staff input, Jenn McMahon expressed her professional opinion that the current committee structure is antiquated. The COW is more typical of what other committees are doing right now.

Details about how this would work could be presented and explored more in a future committee meeting, if the Council wishes.

## 8. Top 10 Development Priority Sites

Derek Conley shared an outcome of the Strategic Plan, Balanced and Thoughtful Development. This may evolve into an annual review of priority sites for development.

1. **Former Blue Goose Property** – A development agreement was approved last week and a tenant is expected on the property within two years.
2. **Charlestowne Mall** – This is the most challenging site and will take years to redevelop. Urban Street Group has this property under contract and is doing due diligence to understand the nuances of this property. They are working with the City's consultant.
3. **Pheasant Run Property** – The Honda car dealership is already open, a Kia dealership's plans are under review, and the golf course will be converted to industrial use.
4. **Prairie Center** – this Shodeen property on the west side is mixed use and had been somewhat dilapidated. Thus far residential buildings have been completed and commercial sites will be added.
5. **Woodward Drive area** – This area is currently vacant and without good frontage, as it sits behind the Audi dealership on Randall Road. Staff needs to look at what purpose is best suited to this location.
6. **Lot 4 Building 8** – A contract with Frontier Development was terminated earlier this year. With a new tenant going into the Blue Goose property across the street, the prospects for this location should improve.
7. **Downtown Riverfront Property** – The Former Police Department site has already been discussed during this meeting.
8. **Former Coca-Cola Property** – The business is relocating closer to Interstate 90. This is an opportunity to find another industrial user or possibly a different site use that would generate less truck traffic. Improvements are needed for the site. A car dealership would be a good use for the site.
9. **On the Border/7 vacant acres** – On the Border continues to pay the property lease, so the owner is less incented to find an alternate tenant. Staff would like to see another restaurant in this location. The vacant acreage behind that building is owned by the same entity as owns the Jewel grocery location, and has never been developed. Staff thinks this location has potential.
10. **20 acres behind Meijer** – This property is currently zoned for commercial use and there has been some interest for residential development.
11. **Former Chili's Restaurant** – Staff is optimistic that this will be occupied within the next year. There are several leads which cannot be shared publicly at this point.

## 9. Open Discussion - Council Member Initiatives

Mayor Vitek asked the Council members for topics that they would like to see discussed in the future. Staff will create a list, and items can certainly be raised later, as well. A possible future schedule might be to have workshops every few months for Council discussion, including these topics.

- Ald. Lencioni
  - Consider how the City Council can proactively show positive leadership to the community. Development community standards, i.e. maintain positivity in comments. Help people feel important, even when they disagree. Promote productive communication.
  - Financial performance updates.
- Ald. Muenz
  - Going above the bare minimum (State requirements) regarding the ethics ordinance. As much transparency as possible. Do benchmarking with other municipalities and receive feedback from residents and Council.
  - Help Council members to be more familiar with other areas of the City outside their wards. Understand the impact on the people in the areas of interest. Group field trips or individual visits.
- Ald. Bongard
  - Financial reporting, challenge to understand with the volume of detail. Understand what does financial wellness look like for the City.
  - Wants Council to take a more active role in responsibility for the City.
- Ald. Foulkes
  - Overall vision of fellow council members.
  - How to generate more community involvement.
- Ald. Silkaitis – support for local businesses. All City procurement, buy local whenever possible.
- Ald. Gehm – nothing to share at this time.
- Ald. Pietryla
  - Discuss possibility of curbing liquor licenses.
  - Ethics Ordinance.
- Ald. Wirball
  - Piano Factory Bridge, get landmarked, what is timeline for refurbishing.
  - Ethics Ordinance.
- Ald. Bessner
  - Consider threads that can connect the outlying area of the City together, i.e. streetscaping, ambient lighting, and connect so that it looks similar. Create standards or guidelines.
- Ald. Weber
  - Financial health of the City, highlight trends (good and bad).
  - Additional Items from Mayor, Council, and Staff, alderpersons should use that section of the agenda to discuss other items.
  - Bury overhead power lines on Riverside Avenue.

## 10. Public Comment

Tom Anderson would like to ask for several things.

- Advocate Bike Walk Drive Safe for St. Charles. How can the City educate everyone to make the town safer, and have cars share the road?

- Downtown Riverfront property should remain a green City campus and not become private property.
- What does the City need for parking?

Paul McMahon lives in the historic district and supports the studies on the downtown riverfront property and public engagement to gain feedback on that site. He wants to see low rise buildings that complement the river. TIF districts should be for distressed properties, not for prime real estate.

Dean Mimas wishes that any consultant who is hired to do a study on the Downtown Riverfront Site not be asked to create a concept plan. He requests that the consultant then the City what can be done at high/medium/low costs. The City should create their own concept plan.

Nick Smith has several questions, and was informed that the public comment portion of the agenda is not for discussion, so questions would not be immediately answered. He was informed that he can also contact his alderperson for dialogue. Ald. Wirball stated that the Council did not follow the City policy on public meetings on March 20. Mr. Smith's questions and comments are:

- What was said about the redevelopment of the Police Station site? He has interest in the property.
- How would the City determine how much money to spend doing all of the things that were discussed this evening?
- How will the City Council decide whether to maintain public ownership of the property vs. conveying it to a private entity? What is the City's process to make this decision?
- The roundtable discussion was great to hear tonight. Thank you for having this meeting.
- St. Charles has some of the worst sign ordinances in the State of Illinois.

Arthur Lemke expressed concern about the parking and traffic concerns with the move of the fireworks launch site to Langum Park.

#### **11. Additional Items from Mayor, Council or Staff - None**

#### **12. Executive Session (5 ILCS 120/2 (c)(4))**

- Personnel – 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(1)
- Pending, Probable or Imminent Litigation – 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(11)
- Property Acquisition – 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(5)
- Collective Bargaining – 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(2)
- Review of Executive Session Minutes – 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(21)

#### **13. Adjourn**

Motion by Ald. Wirball, second by Ald. Bessner to adjourn the meeting at 8:18 pm.

**Roll Call Vote:** Ayes: Ald. Silkaitis, Ald. Kalamaris, Ald. Payleitner, Ald. Bongard, Ald. Bancroft, Ald. Pietryla, Ald. Wirball, Ald. Bessner, Ald. Weber; Nays: None. Motion Carried

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Nancy Garrison, City Clerk

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Nancy Garrison, City Clerk