

**MINUTES
CITY OF ST. CHARLES
GOVERNMENT SERVICES COMMITTEE
ALD. RON SILKAITIS, CHAIR
MONDAY, DECEMBER 14, 2020
IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THE CITY COUNCIL MEETING
CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS – 2 EAST MAIN STREET**

1. Call to Order

Chairman Silkaitis called the meeting to order at 8:47 pm.

2. Roll Call

Present: Ald. Stellato, Payleitner, Lemke, Bancroft, Gruber, Vitek, Pietryla, Bessner, Lewis.

Absent: None

3. First Street Plaza Project Update

Mark Koenen introduced the item, stating that the outcome of the Planning & Development Committee discussion on October 12 was to provide an update at approximately 50% through the schematic design phase, and we are just past that point now.

Peter Suhr explained that the schematic design phase has advanced and incorporated several improvements. Some challenging aspects have been eliminated as well as anticipated cost reduced, while maintaining all of the major concepts that had been previously shared. Marty Serena, the architect, has incorporated feedback from the Planning & Development Committee and simplified some technical aspects which will reduce the permit process from agencies such as IDOT and IDNR. IDOT approval for the right-of-way at the intersection of First Street and Main Street/IL Route 64 is pending, and this step is not expected to hold up the project.

In comparing the former concept plan with the latest plan, Pete pointed out that the egg-shaped gathering space remains, the solar-panel trellis system which surrounds the gathering spot is still in place, and walkway and ramp systems continue into and through the site. A placeholder for a future monument, which is still conceptual, remains in the design, albeit smaller and slightly moved to the east. The entire plan shifted to the west into the existing First Street. This move reduces technical challenges regarding cantilevered walkway systems. The entire project is now contained within the existing Manor Restaurant wall. New design features include a meandering pavement system that ends at Walnut Street which has potential to be used for alfresco dining, markets, festivals, and displays, among other activities and events. Wayfinding signs have been added, and could be interactive and electronic. Green space was added throughout the design. A crisscross lighting system was added between the building housing La Mesa and Alter Brewery. The team is starting to identify elements and materials that may be used.

Mark Koenen spoke about the evolving communication plans for the project. In a non-pandemic time, we would hold an open house to get public/traditional feedback and discussion.

Alternative methods need to be employed to solicit feedback about the plaza or the design plan. Comments received so far have been incorporated already, such as the request for additional signage for electronic notices and advertisements. The consensus is to retain outdoor dining capacity and rebuild First Street to improve aesthetics. As mentioned at tonight's City Council meeting by Alter Brewing, there is a potential benefit to repurpose parking areas into a flatter surface which could serve as dining spots.

A small subcommittee of residents who have marketing, sales, and communications expertise has been established as a subset of the St. Charles Initiative. These people also have sufficient contacts and community engagement to be influencers of the project. They will help to communicate the concept and the plaza's potential uses. As the group moves from informal feedback to a more structured approach, they will consider using Survey Monkey and social media to collect information, starting next month.

The Committee members expressed pleasure at the progress that has been made. Ald. Lewis asked about closing off Main Street and asked for consideration of restrooms so plaza visitors would not need to use restaurants' restrooms. Mark Koenen shared that the infrastructure needed to close the intersection at Main Street should be part of phase one construction. Ald. Payleitner wants to ensure that people who are providing feedback understand that there are not unlimited funds to build a dream project. Ald. Pietryla appreciates the adjustments to the focal point concept. Ald. Lemke would like to understand when First Street will be closed in order to reconcile with the outdoor dining plan options presented earlier this evening at the Planning & Development Committee meeting. He would also like to see more business representative input about how we can build on the successes of 2020. Ald. Stellato complimented the "gorgeous" design created by the committee and acknowledged the work and collaboration efforts required to get to this point. Ald. Bancroft agrees with Ald. Stellato and offers kudos to the committee, "it's the right direction and feel." Ald. Gruber is very excited about the project and its potential. In answering Ald. Silkaitis' question about the potential footbridge, Mark Koenen explains that this idea is for a link for the east and west riverbanks so pedestrians are not required to use Main Street to cross the river. It's expected that there will be a redevelopment proposal coming soon for the BMO bank property and this bridge would link plazas on both sides of the river and advance St. Charles as an entertainment destination.

4. Additional Items from Mayor, Council, Staff, or Citizens.

5. Adjournment

Motion by Ald. Lemke second by Ald. Pietryla to adjourn the meeting at 9:15 pm.

Voice Vote: Ayes: Unanimous; Nays None; Chairman Silkaitis did not vote as chair. **Motion Carried**

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