

**WORKSESSION OF THE ANOKA CITY COUNCIL
ANOKA CITY HALL
CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS
FEBRUARY 28, 2022**

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Rice called the worksession meeting to order at 5:06 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL

Present at roll call: Mayor Rice, Councilmembers Skogquist, Weaver, and Wesp.

Staff present: City Manager Greg Lee; Police Chief Eric Peterson; Finance Director Brenda Springer; Assistant Finance Director Liz Douglas; Engineering Technician Ben Nelson; Electric Utility Director Greg Geiger; City Attorney Scott Baumgartner; Community Development Director Doug Borglund; City Planner Clark Palmer; Public Services Administrator Lisa LaCasse; Public Services Director Mark Anderson; City Attorney Scott Baumgartner; Communications Manager Pam Bowman.

Absent: Councilmember Barnett.

3. COUNCIL BUSINESS and/or DISCUSSION ITEMS

3.1 Discussion; Trunk Highway 10 Projects – Communications Update for Neighborhood Traffic Impacts and Implementation Plan.

Engineering Technician Ben Nelson shared a staff report with background information stating this spring the reconstruction of U.S. Highway 10 will start from the west City limit line with Ramsey to just east of the 7th Avenue interchange. The projects will transform this signalized corridor into a freeway providing a roundabout interchange at Thurston Avenue, an underpass at Fair Oak Avenue, a reconstructed interchange at Main Street, transformation of the Ferry Street interchange into a single point diamond interchange, the replacement/expansion of the highway bridge over the Rum River, and the addition of auxiliary lanes between Ferry Street and 7th Avenue. There will also be frontage road networks on both the north and south sides of a portion of the highway corridor. The construction costs are approximately \$100M dollars and highway improvements will require the adjacent roadway networks to absorb an influx of traffic that will be detoured around the construction. There will be substantial effects on the operational performance of the highways and local roads leading to an increase in congestion and delay during construction. As part of implementation of these projects; the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT), in partnership with Anoka County and the City of Anoka, will actively and continuously address issues or concerns during the construction. There will be

weekly construction coordination meetings and monthly major traffic changes coordination meetings.

Dan Lonnes, Principal Engineer with Bolton Menk, and Jennifer Wiltgen, MnDOT Metro North Area Coordinator, presented the construction schedule and staging update, how the team will react to expected concerns of diversion traffic during construction, the communication process, public outreach, and addressed Council questions. They said the project team will be hosting an in-person open house event for the Highway 10 Anoka projects on March 9 from 5:30-7:30 p.m. at Green Haven Golf Course and Event Center which will include a virtual option with information and graphics. They shared existing conditions, proposed phasing, and the main impact this summer at Main Street. They reviewed mitigation review efforts to date, proactive efforts, and local routes likely to be impacted during peak periods. They shared about communications and setting expectations that there will be delays which will help mitigate concerns up front. They shared signage plans by stage and the importance of maintaining emergency access throughout the project then reviewed next steps noting with a project of this magnitude the best plan possible will still generate complaints with traffic impacts and encouraged the City to defer to their communications team for consistent replies. They shared about the weekly coordination meetings that will occur for each project and how communication work will occur throughout.

3.2 Discussion; Anoka County Government Center Expansion.

Community Development Director Doug Borglund shared a staff report with background information stating staff has requested Anoka County meet with the City Council to discuss the proposed expansion plans for the Anoka County Government Center located in downtown Anoka.

Anoka County Administrator Rhonda Sivarajah reviewed the proposed projects and phasing, schedule overview, and next steps. She shared how Statute requires the jail to be located in the County seat and was originally constructed in 1983 for 140 inmates. She explained how the jail was the oldest in the metro area and how capacity increased in 1996 by double-bunking to 238 but how they can no longer house that many individuals due to functional capacity. She shared how the County population has grown from 206,000 to over 363,000 and by 2040 will be over 400,000 and how they currently house inmates outside of the County. Ms. Sivarajah shared how they worked to make operations more efficient but were now at the point where a new jail was needed then spoke about the need for increased safety for both inmates and staff.

Joel Dunning, Wold Architects and Engineers, introduced the project overview and phasing timeline that included demolition of Jackson block properties, construction of a new parking ramp on the Jackson site, demolition of the existing parking ramp and construction of a new jail and skyway, demolition of the existing jail, and construction of new surface parking. He spoke about the need

for close proximity to the courthouse to mitigate risk and the base capacity of 600 beds with an expansion capacity of an additional 140 beds. He shared the proposed schedule in detail that included full completion in March 2026.

Councilmember Skogquist inquired about the number of stalls in the existing ramp. Mr. Dunning replied the existing ramp had 1,000 stalls and noted 100 were for visitors with the remaining for County parking which would be similar with the new ramp.

A member of the audience inquired about the height of the proposed ramp. Mr. Dunning replied the ramp would be seven stories tall to meet the 1,200-stall capacity compared to the existing ramp of four levels.

Barb Thurston, Anoka, asked of the 1,000 stalls how many were occupied by County staff and how much more would be needed. Ms. Sivarajah responded how they continued to convey to employees that it was a privilege to park in the ramp and not an expectation and how it was not acceptable to park in the streets and neighborhoods, adding parking was one of the items needed to be successful for both the City and the County and how they could use St. Stephen's Church parking for overflow and suggested the ramp be open on weekends at no cost for the church and others to help bring people off the streets during peak times.

Andrew Dykstra, Anoka County Facilities Director, spoke about the importance of strategizing to help with parking and how they relocated some services to the Blaine Human Services Center as well as offering hybrid offsite/onsite employee work options County-wide to help alleviate parking where possible. He said they were committed to reducing the parking requirement and would continue to meet with the Parking Advisory Board to address concerns.

Ms. Sivarajah spoke about parking charges of \$27/month for employees and how they would be looking at how to adjust that charge for the hybrid options.

Councilmember Weaver noted the neighborhood concern will be parking in the streets and noted that City parking is free.

Commander Chip Heath, Anoka County Sheriff's Office, spoke about the current wayfinding methods used which would be much more visible and generate employees to park in the correct space.

Councilmember Wesp said he felt it was presumptuous for the County to come to the City and take over a City street to add skyways. He said while he understood the responsibilities of being a County seat Commissioners come and go and most were not affected except Anoka residents and felt the idea should be reconsidered for other options. He said something similar happened in 1990 when the County building was constructed and relocated one operation to Blaine and suggested the same thing occur again, adding how this project would affect community

residents much more than County employees and Commissioners over a span of 30-50 years.

Mayor Rice commented about the importance of being good neighbors but suggested relocating or at least allow the City some input in the redesign with the understanding that while the jail has to be close to the courthouse it may be easier to move judges to the jail.

City Attorney Scott Baumgartner asked about inmate transport and where the proposed entrance and exit to the jail facility would. Mr. Dunning explained they were still unsure of the exact locations but said the plan could include a tunnel but was unlikely due to the easements. He spoke about the possibility of bringing the courts closer to the jail then said the entrance and exits have not been identified to date but would be based on the projected capacity of 660 inmates.

Councilmember Weaver asked if space will be leased to help generate revenue. Cory Kampf, Anoka County Finance Director, responded how the County was not being presumptuous and how these were only high-level conversations to begin some planning and how they were seeking input from the City first.

Councilmember Weaver spoke about calls being received that the Jackson Street buildings are being removed.

Mr. Lee asked how this expensive project had not been included in any comprehensive plan and what other options have been considered because the current zoning does not allow for a jail because other jail facilities are available in the MRTC area. Mr. Kampf said the cost would be approximately \$220 million and that he was not aware of other options and how those areas were too far from the court locations.

Mr. Dunning noted no cities had a zoning designation for a jail and how zoning would be part of the ongoing conversation.

Mayor Rice said it was important to not have an adversarial relationship and the need to find common ground and how the City just wanted an opportunity to provide input.

Councilmember Wesp thanked Chair Schulte for inviting the City to a recent review of the project but noted tenants from the Musingeing building have already been asked to leave. He noted Anoka currently does not have sufficient space and the need to engage in a conversation on impacts to Anoka over all, adding the Commissioners represent more than Anoka residents.

Councilmember Weaver asked about the 600 new beds and if any were being planned for lease to other jail systems and the impact to nearby residential

property owners. Commander Heath said the intent was to house only local County jail activities.

Mr. Dunning spoke about the shadow impacts in the nearby neighborhoods from the taller structure. Mayor Rice noted these townhomes were constructed many years ago and should be considered.

Mr. Dykstra said he understood the need for more discussion but from a facilities perspective the jail was 40 years old and over the last 13 years the County has spent \$10 million because it was so outdated. He spoke about electrical and parking ramp needs and how generators were being used as well as other long-term impacts and the need to do this right.

Mr. Lee proposed next steps that included continuing to ask questions and gather information to see the County's position. He commented how the lack of planning by the County created this response, adding this many inmates and the need for a parking ramp will be impactful to Anoka's historic downtown and more discussion would be needed to help determine what is best for the community as well as the need for trust between both entities.

Mr. Dykstra spoke about employee concerns regarding lack of maintenance of the ramp.

Mayor Rice compared this to the Highway 10 project and how it helps everyone outside of Anoka but the message is the need for the City to have a say in the project.

Councilmember Weaver spoke about how there was nothing worse than seeing business owners taking pride in creating a destination then seeing an inmate being released downtown and how that immediately destroys the working being done in the community the County offices are located in.

Commander Heath shared how they implemented a policy years ago to not release anyone wearing their uniform jumpsuits by donating and purchasing clothing, adding that would not have been the response given by the County Board Chair.

A member of the audience likened Anoka to Stillwater and said she moved here for this reason and was frustrated about impacting the integrity of the City.

Borgie Bonthuis, Anoka, shared her frustrations with how this project started in 2017 but was now here today and suggested talking to Commissioners about the impacts and where the funding was coming from. She suggested filling in the parking ramp by charging for parking, whether employees parked there or not.

Mr. Dykstra explained how the County would be bonding for part of the project with the remaining funding coming from reserve.

Councilmember Skogquist referred to the courthouse, jail, AMRTC, and the Historical Society then spoke about the small level of mistrust and the future of the AMRTC area and need to understand the long-term plan.

Mayor Rice said we understand this is a plan which will need further review before anything could occur and encouraged further discussions.

Mr. Lee said this was a difficult project with many concerns and noted the County's proposed timing may not work but said the City will gather their thoughts and expectations and share with the County.

Mr. Dykstra said they will meet with the County Board to further identify concerns.

3.3 Discussion; Anoka Agricultural Area – Feed Mill, Grain Bins, and Silos.

Mr. Borglund shared a staff report with background information stating staff first discussed the modification of the grain bins at the May 24, 2021 City Council worksession during a discussion regarding relocating the Farmers Market to 2nd Avenue and Harrison Street in the shared gravel lot near the grain bins/agricultural area. The area is co-owned by the City, feed mill, and mill site. The 2021 farmers market occurred on Tuesdays from 2-6pm from mid-June through October. The market experienced a fluctuation of vendors and patrons each week. At the end of the season, staff met with the farmers market organizers to get their feedback on the location; the majority of comments were positive. They acknowledged the dust was a problem initially, parking was an issue, one vendor felt they lost business with the move in location even though they experienced some days where they sold out their product. Overall, they were pleased with the location and are planning to return for 2022; first day of the market is scheduled for June 21. He reviewed general issues of the site and summary of concerns of the farmers market then said staff will continue to work with the farmers market, mill site, and Anoka Grain & Feed to mitigate parking and dust concerns for the upcoming summer market season in 2022. Over the past year, there has been much discussion regarding the modification of one or multiple bins. Staff has been working with a structural engineer to design the structure. One idea was to modify the bins to open sided picnic shelters. A structure that could be used as a sales hut for the farmers market, a shelter, an event gazebo, etc. Funds for the modification were included in the 2022 Capital Budget. Modification design has ceased until further direction is received. Staff has met with Emily and Darin Larson, owner of the Mill Site, and Kevin Peterson, owner of the Anoka Grain and Feed, to discuss concerns regarding the concept of modifying the grain bins and the issues with the farmers market. Mr. Borglund summarized concerns with the grain bin modifications and future ideas for the Anoka agricultural area and said staff has found other examples/images of grain bin modifications, silo modifications, and feed mill repurpose projects completed around the US and Canada with one located in St. Paul. He explained how

Alchemy Architects is responsible for the modification of the grain bin that houses Bang Brewing Company in St. Paul and that staff has reached out to Alchemy regarding the potential modification of one/multiple bins in Anoka. Currently there is \$50,000 budgeted in 2022 for the grain bin modification. Also, the City Council has agreed to hiring a landscape architect to assist with developing a vision for the site.

Public Services Administrator Lisa LaCasse spoke further about the need for efficient parking and concerns from vendors with dust.

Mr. Borglund said staff experimented with ways to address the parking challenges which would be 56 stalls overall and impacts to the existing grain bins and examples of other locations that could work in this area.

Councilmember Weaver spoke about the energy of this area and how this could enhance the Mill Site and was looking forward to the idea. He said while he understood some concerns with vandalism and homelessness, he felt they could be addressed.

Councilmember Skogquist agreed this could be a nice area and business and supported putting work into this site then asked about interest from the private sector.

Councilmember Wesp said his family held an event at the Mill Site recently then spoke about similar sites and was in favor of improving the parking as he wanted the owners to succeed. He shared his support for the farmers market as well and the importance of synergy in this area.

Ms. LaCasse said the farmers market was separate and could require reconfiguration of the property if needed.

Emily Larson, Mill Site, spoke more about the small events and parking towards the corner and how they could better park the area, adding they have never placed signage or turned away parking that was not for an event.

Discussion was held about the shared used and access easement agreement and where the eight designated stalls were located and which were the City's.

Councilmember Wesp spoke about using the City's security team for staging. Mr. Lee said that could occur but was only a short-term solution and the need for more parking was a better solution.

Ms. Larson asked if the City wants to modify the grain bins and buy and preserve the site and if private partnership was out, adding they did not want to do something that would inhibit future development and investment but create a nice destination location that could also have larger space.

Mr. Lee recommended hiring Kimley-Horn to review the site to maximize the value of the area while protecting the historic aspect of the site as it is important not to lose this history. Councilmember Skogquist agreed.

Darrin Larson, Anoka, spoke about the amount of rip rap and other improvements needed to address the riverbank as part of this process.

HPC Commissioner Barb Thurston spoke about the silos and the potential for several concepts and after seeing the proposals could see public art, panels depicting the silos, and the need to save this corner and the existing silos.

HPC Commissioner Elizabeth McFarland said the bins could complement the current business and make preparation suites for weddings, storage, VRBO, etc.

Councilmember Weaver emphasized importance of keeping parties interested on progress throughout this process.

3.4 Discussion; 4th Avenue and Johnson Street Development Concepts.

Mr. Borglund shared a staff report with background information stating the City Council provided direction to staff regarding the 4th Avenue and Johnson Street development site owned by the City regarding a proposed use. Staff has been discussing the site with MWF Properties regarding a nonowner occupied market rate product. The site is 2.55 acres in size and currently hosting the surface lot leased to the Met Council next to the NorthStar Rail parking ramp. In December of 2021, the City Council was presented with a letter of interest and concept plan with elevations from MWF. The City Council provide feedback on the concept and wanted to see the incorporation of patios and walkup units to show a more pedestrian friendly façade along Johnson Street and update the exteriors to break up the facades a bit more from what was shown in the previous schemes. MWF has revised their concept based on the City Council's comment. Staff was informed on February 22, 2022 that a developer currently working in the City has a strong interest in the 4th and Johnson site to build a market rate residential building. They would like to have their proposal heard at the April 25, 2022, work session meeting and staff wants to make the City Council aware of all interests and opportunities for this site.

Matt Yetzer, MWF Properties, shared about the opportunity, their community and development experience, the type of product being proposed, example elevations and amenities, and market rate rental demand then spoke about the preliminary timeline and other factors. He reviewed features based on feedback and the north side of the building and work to match nearby housing, discussions about a whistle-stop and how infrastructure was in place but that main highlights were walkability and interactivity elements then shared proposed elevations.

Mr. Borglund spoke about the potential of a working track as part of the Anoka Station Plan and that the existing station was ADA accessible and staff's work with Amtrak in Chicago for a proposal for a stop at NorthStar. He explained how this project would include working with the Metropolitan Council but would not need a specific property but would work with the existing station to allow Amtrak to have a stop.

Councilmember Weaver shared his support for a whistle-stop in Anoka.

Councilmember Wesp spoke about the lack of market rate apartments in Anoka as it seems many are being built but not along a commuter line. He said when commuting returns to normal this location will be important then said he supported the façade and the approach to Johnson Street and continuing conversations.

A member of the audience spoke about noise and vibration impacts on the south side of Johnson Street against the railroad tracks then asked what health studies have shown regarding the impacts of outdoor living near trains. Mr. Yetzer said they have not conducted any studies yet but have development in downtown Rochester which requires certain building code standards and other techniques such as increased insulation and windows to decrease noise impacts, adding they have seen success in Coon Rapids near their station with a similar project.

Mayor Rice noted some people will like living near tracks while others would not then asked if MWF has ever built owner-occupied or hybrid option projects. Mr. Yetzer said that type of project would typically be in more urban areas but noted that type of product was not included in their business model.

Mr. Borglund stated this is a City-owned site so a decision will be needed on who to work with.

Councilmember Weaver supported the concept as proposed. Discussion was held regarding building access and security and the walk-up access to apartments and not being able to access interior hallways.

Council consensus was to hear a presentation from the other interested group then review further.

3.5 Discussion; Letter of Intent for Restaurant Pad Behind City Hall.

Mr. Borglund shared a staff report with background information stating the City has received a letter of interest to acquire the restaurant pad that has been marketed behind City Hall. He shared that staff was informed on February 22, 2022 that an established local downtown business also has a strong interest in the restaurant pad site and building a new facility and would like to have their proposal heard at the March 28 work session.

Stephan Hesse, Eclectic Culinary Concepts, Inc., spoke about their Lucky's 13 Pub concept in suburbs and communities and their proposal for a restaurant on this site. He shared proposed ideas that included over 80 years of experience in restaurants with a focus on guests and staff and their desire to match Anoka. He said they want to be part of the community and not compete with existing restaurants but complement. He shared how they would create solid menus that do well and revise quarterly to match seasons.

Councilmember Weaver said he liked the goal to preserve snowmobile trails and the vision that complemented current restaurants then suggested creating something similar to a restaurant in Columbia Heights.

Councilmember Skogquist said there are not many sites adjacent to the river so it will be important to complement what is already in place and not create a high-end restaurant but more of a modern concept with walk out ability that complements an urban core and breweries.

Councilmember Wesp spoke about past attempts to do a French restaurant which did not do well but said others would, similar to those on 50th and France in Edina.

Council consensus was to continue discussions with the Eclectic Culinary Concepts for the restaurant pad site.

3.6 Discussion; Special Event Policy, Ordinance and Review of Charitable Donations.

Communications Manager Pam Bowman shared a staff report with background information stating at the November 22, 2021 worksession, staff made a recommendation to update the Special Events Ordinance to implement a new Special Events Policy and adjust the associated fees for a special event permit application. The purpose is to make the application process more efficient and streamlined and help recover some costs. After discussion, Council directed staff to proceed as proposed and the fees were included for approval on the new Master Fee Schedule at the December 6 the City Council meeting. There was concern from Council if the fees would inhibit organizers from bringing their event to Anoka. In response, staff prepared additional information that noted costs the City incurs for special events and fees required in Minneapolis as a comparison. Staff also spoke with organizers of the Anoka Food Truck Festival about the proposed new fees and learned they had no concerns. At the December 20, 2021 City Council meeting, the Council had questions about the 80% revenue sharing requirement for a non-profit organization in the special events ordinance. This item was addressed on November 22, 2021, in which staff proposed the requirement be removed from the ordinance or the amount be reduced. Staff does not always receive the information following an event and/or it is difficult to confirm the accuracy if reported. Staff is preparing to bring the revised ordinance

and new policy to the Council on March 7, 2022 for final approval after discussion of the revenue sharing.

Mayor Rice said he was not worried if an event sponsor was concerned with fees because it was not the City's responsibility to fund the charity and the amount of money given to any charity was not the City's concern as the sponsor would likely donate enough if we are lending the use of our property. He acknowledged the difficulty in identifying local organizations.

Ms. Bowman spoke about private business giving back to the community but noted staff does not audit those amounts either.

Ms. LaCasse asked if Council wanted the amount tied to a percentage because it is difficult for staff to know the accuracy of an organization's totals, adding if the sponsor was for-profit it was even more difficult.

Councilmember Weaver spoke about the history of private business operating on public property which led to the special event ordinance and suggested creating something similar to local gambling areas.

Councilmember Skogquist said the City does not really know how much the food truck festival brings in and suggested the need for some strength in the ordinance for them to provide the information to confirm.

Ms. LaCasse suggested the City require a for-profit entity to have a local non-profit partner then determine the need and verify if requested, adding fees could be waived based on a certain percentage donation.

Mayor Rice suggested asking what percent do they donate to the non-profit instead, adding the City should not waive fees in general unless we are participating as well.

Councilmember Weaver spoke about ancillary impacts to having people in the downtown at restaurants and stores and how cross-promotion helps the City's reputation. He noted how being the County seat no longer drives people downtown and can actually be a hinderance then suggested a fee be collected from each food truck at the food truck event.

Council consensus was no set percentage and that if needed Council could determine if we want the event based on the proposed percentage.

4. OTHER BUSINESS

Councilmember Skogquist said he had received a request to change the bridge colors to yellow and blue in support of Ukraine. He spoke about how allowing

this request could result in similar requests for color changes based on other events or organizations and could result in concerns and the need for clarification.

Councilmember Weaver said changing the colors would go against the public policy. Mr. Lee agreed but then suggested changing colors for similar days of recognition and keeping content neutral but allow for humanitarian or other reasons.

Discussion was held on impacts and the recent ordinance that did not allow for this request. Council consensus was to include the topic on the next Council meeting to request an opinion from the City Attorney.

5. ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Councilmember Skogquist, seconded by Councilmember Wesp to adjourn the Worksession at 8:56 p.m. Motion carried.

Submitted by: Cathy Sorensen, *TimeSaver Off Site Secretarial, Inc.*

Approval Attestation:

Amy T. Oehlers, City Clerk