

**SPECIAL WORKSESSION OF THE ANOKA CITY COUNCIL
ANOKA CITY HALL
CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS
MAY 9, 2022**

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Rice called the worksession meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL

Present at roll call: Mayor Rice, Councilmembers Barnett (arrived shortly after meeting started), Skogquist (participating remotely), Weaver, and Wesp (participating remotely).

Staff present: City Manager Greg Lee; Community Development Director Doug Borglund; Senior City Planner Clark Palmer; City Attorney Scott Baumgartner.

Absent: None.

3. COUNCIL BUSINESS and/or DISCUSSION ITEMS

3.1 Discussion; Proposed Anoka County Government Center Building Expansion Project.

City Manager Greg Lee shared a staff report that Council, staff, and representatives from Anoka County had discussed the proposed Anoka County Government Center building expansion at the March 30 worksession. He said since that date he has not heard from the County outside of the direction to develop a task force to further study the proposal. He said he wanted the Council to talk more about strategies and positioning prior to the next meeting with Anoka County. He said if position taken is adversarial the City Attorney can review and suggest action, such as the County overriding the City's zoning and the vacation of Van Buren Street.

Mayor Rice said there currently was no placed zoned in the City for a jail and noted the land by the State hospital near the high school would be a good site for the jail.

Mr. Lee noted the military was looking to relocate the armory to central part of the 80 acres at this site, south of the high school.

Councilmember Weaver said it made sense to be where there is another secure facility such as near the sheriff's office.

Councilmember Skogquist said we could share how the City is trying to work with the County but we do not want them to take Van Buren Street, adding it was his understanding the workhouse is not being planned to move there. He said being proactive on zoning makes sense and instead of the proposed property suggested using the former softball field or others. He said it was important to be reasonable but also be prepared based on the City Attorney's advice. He added ownership was by State but there were other parts owned with the AMRTC.

Senior City Planner Clark Palmer outlined how the area could be changed by a zoning simple text amendment.

Mayor Rice noted we have already done the text amendment for two-thirds of the land so we would just need to do the remaining one-third, adding it was important to reach out to the County to start a conversation now so the project does not get too far and then we have less input.

Mr. Lee said there must be more information on the project instead of the presented phasing document.

Mayor Rice said he thought there was discussions about building the kitchen and laundry to the greatest capacity for future growth.

Councilmember Skogquist suggested using the Comprehensive Plan update as a reason to review zoning and clean up the City Code, adding the workhouse may not be allowed but instead just make nonconforming into legal uses.

City Attorney Scott Baumgartner said he was curious about the County's other alternatives and would like to see what they have considered to see what they have first in the event their proposal is good. He said based on the alternatives it is difficult to combat an unknown.

Mayor Rice said the City currently does not have any zoning for a jail and suggested working with the County but we will assist in designating the best location.

Councilmember Skogquist said we would need to review financial information too to help identify the best information, including why the Lino Lakes site is no longer being used and why.

Mr. Baumgartner said he believed the Lino Lakes location was still operational then spoke about the number of transports of inmates will be lessened over time, especially in light of COVID-19 and suggested building a holding facility in the County seat with the actual jail in another location for longer term stay.

Mr. Lee noted the County's Finance Director did not seem to know how the proposed project would be funded outside of bonding,

Councilmember Wesp said he believed they had a detail drawing and likely knew the costs and said the County needs our approval to vacate Van Buren Street or if not would have to condemn.

Mayor Rice asked how many acres the County was planning to use for the parking ramp and jail facility. Community Development Director Doug Borglund said the amount of acreage was 4.48 acres in the current jail area.

Mr. Lee suggested this topic be posed at the candidate forum for sheriff candidates, adding the location should be much more remote, fenced in and secluded adjacent to the sheriff's facility.

Councilmember Skogquist shared an example of inmates being let out without a ride and the impacts to the community.

Councilmember Barnett said outside of any closed session data do we have any other transparency into their discussions and if a data practices request would bring anything forward.

Mr. Baumgartner said he is not sure what the County records and suggested reaching out to the remaining Commissioners for their input.

Mr. Lee said their strategy seems to be meeting not in a public format but with a less than full Council.

Councilmember Wesp spoke about the need for a strategy.

Councilmember Weaver suggested moving forward with the zoning amendment for the southern two-thirds of the site for the June Planning Commission.

Mr. Palmer said we should also include the other uses in this area and make those conforming as well so we can clean up all non-conformities and not just focus on the jail.

Councilmember Weaver agreed the other uses should be reviewed such as the workhouse, probation area, and Stepping Stones not exceeding 62 beds.

Mr. Palmer said that action would only leave non-conforming properties that could not change or expand.

Mr. Baumgartner suggested not changing anything that we could use at some point as operating a use that is not allowed.

Councilmember Barnett said she wanted to see a direct email with deadlines for the County to respond with their next steps.

Mayor Rice agreed, adding the need to include any documentation they have regarding this project.

Mr. Baumgartner suggested holding a public meeting to further share this information.

Councilmember Skogquist cautioned against pushing too far.

Councilmember Wesp disagreed, stating we need to do it sooner than later.

Councilmember Barnett suggested including the story in the local newspaper or other public engagement.

Mayor Rice suggested reviewing the County's minutes to see if the topic has been discussed at a public meeting since the beginning.

Councilmember Wesp said the topic had been discussed as there was a detailed layout and that the County has purchased some property.

Mayor Rice asked what the cost per household in Anoka County would be for a \$350 million jail.

Councilmember Wesp left the meeting at 6:13 p.m.

Borgie Bonthuis, Anoka, shared that she and other she has spoken to, were not aware of any public meetings regarding this topic then agreed that information should be shared for the Sunday *Star Tribune* because if approved the City will lose another building from the tax rolls.

Mayor Rice suggested Mr. Lee share that City Council wants to speak about this topic in a public meeting.

Councilmember Barnett said it needs to be clear who to contact when this informational piece is shared with residents so it does not hit backfire on everyone's elections.

Mr. Lee said he will summarize a meeting invite to Commissioners for a public meeting for more information and transparency.

4. OTHER BUSINESS

Councilmember Weaver asked when the topic of Highway 47 and Pleasant Avenue and the crossing would be scheduled then shared concerns with the method of property being considered for acquisition.

Mr. Lee said there is a public meeting scheduled for May 25 and then again in June adding while he was unsure of next steps, he reiterated the outcome needs to be what is best for the public.

Councilmember Weaver spoke about detours on Main Street at the Fremont and Shaw access and the need for temporary stop signs in some areas as well as responding to resident concerns regarding the Highway 10 project.

Mr. Lee said he has heard some concerns in the Slab Town area too but noted traffic volumes are decreasing and speeds are consistent.

Councilmember Skogquist agreed there have been many complaints from the Slab Town area with large traffic backups.

Mayor Rice noted police ticketing makes a good display to others not driving safely.

5. ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Councilmember Barnett to adjourn the Worksession at 6:18 p.m. Motion was seconded and carried. Meeting adjourned.

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

Approval Attestation:

Amy T. Oehlers, City Clerk