

CITY OF ANOKA
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
JUNE 10, 2021

Call to Order: Chairperson Finn called the EDC meeting to order at 7:03 a.m. at Anoka City Hall, 2015 First Avenue North in the City of Anoka.

Roll Call: EDC Members present were: Allen Acklund, Brandon Eason (arrived at 7:07 a.m.), Mathew Finn, Quinn Garrick, Jeff Lee, Curt Rekstad, and Julie Smith. EDC members absent were: None. Staff present: Community Development Director Doug Borglund and Public Services Administrator Lisa LaCasse

Approval of Minutes: MOTION BY COMMISSIONER REKSTAD, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER GARRICK, TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MARCH 11, 2021 MEETING AND APRIL 8, 2021 EDC MEETING, AS PRESENTED. MOTION CARRIED.

Other: Samantha Markman introduced herself as the new Economic Development Director for Anoka County. She stated that she is excited to take on this new role and connect with each of the communities. She stated that her position takes a regional role to economic development for the county as a whole and noted that each communities has its own priorities, strategies and needs. She stated that they are planning events for the fall and will extend invitations.

Chairperson Finn asked if there is anything the group should be aware of that is upcoming.

Commissioner Eason arrived.

Ms. Markman noted that the American Rescue Plan dollars are coming down the pipeline and the County Board has been busy workshopping as to how those funds could be used, as the funds will have a broader use than the CARES Act funds. She stated that while they will most likely not provide business assistance grants with these funds, they may look to provide technical support to businesses. She stated that the County is also looking at broadband, especially for the more rural communities in the county.

Chairperson Finn asked if those programs would be setup in a manner similar to the Open to Business program or whether they would look at issues of transportation and housing.

Ms. Markman stated that they do contract with Open to Business and also continue to work with the Anoka County Workforce Center to provide those additional services.

Chairperson Finn stated that perhaps the group should invite Ms. Markman back in August after additional information is known related to the federal funds.

OLD BUSINESS:

Downtown Outdoor Seating Update: Mr. Borglund stated that the City continues to be flexible related to outdoor seating and those business that have taken advantage will continue to maintain the outdoor seating through November 1st. He stated that in 2022 the City would revert back to the regular outdoor seating policy. He explained that during this period the additional sewer charges that would have been incurred from the Metropolitan Council have been waived because of the executive orders and temporary nature of the additional seating, but if the additional outdoor seating continued to be allowed, the additional Metropolitan Council charges would need to be paid. He explained that the charges are a one-time fee paid based on that additional capacity and provided additional background information on those charges. He commented that the customers are enjoying the additional outdoor seating. He recognized that there would most likely be additional conversations related to outdoor seating after the season ends.

Commissioner Eason asked if there is information related to the economic development benefit that is provided through that additional outdoor seating.

Mr. Borglund commented that the business owners have been very appreciative of the assistance that has been provided in order to help the businesses keep their doors open. He recognized the efforts of Ms. LaCasse for the additional efforts that have been put into the outdoor seating such as painting of the barriers and the addition of the planters. He stated overall the City was able to help the businesses through the most challenging part of the pandemic, including supplying firewood in the winter months. He commented that relationships and trust were also built between the City and its businesses.

Chairperson Finn stated that sometimes it goes unacknowledged as to what the City does to help support its businesses. He asked if there would be additional ways that the City could assist businesses through the funds that will be received from the American Rescue Plan.

Mr. Borglund stated that perhaps some of that funding could be used to help businesses pay the additional Metropolitan Council charges that would need to be paid to allow additional outdoor seating. He stated that the City also has a loan program for those types of charges for businesses.

NEW BUSINESS:

Farmer Market: Ms. LaCasse introduced herself to the group. She stated that last fall she and Ms. Bowman were asked to work with the farmers market group. She noted that a market was not held in 2020 because of COVID and difficulty finding eligible sellers. She stated that they reached out to the Anoka County Growers Association to make sure they were still considering Anoka for a market, determine how that could be grown, and ensure there would be customers. She noted that in 2019 the market was being held at Lyric Arts, but prior to that the group had been in the City Hall area. She provided background information on the discussions staff had with the group related to location and ultimately the area near the grain bins was chosen in coordination with the nights the live music events

occurs at the adjacent park. She stated that the market will be setup on Tuesdays from 3 to 6 p.m. She stated that they hope the new location would attract new vendors and customers.

Chairperson Finn asked if the event center has concern with the location.

Ms. LaCasse stated that business does have some concerns as there is an event schedule for one of the market days but noted that they are attempting to encourage parking in appropriate locations. She stated that if ten vendors want to come, perhaps this will not be the ideal location and the market would need to move in the future.

Chairperson Finn referenced a nearby greenspace and asked if that could be used.

Ms. LaCasse noted that parcel is listed for sale at this time. She stated that there was discussion with the vendors about the location north of the ramp, but the vendors were not interested in that location. She stated that initially the vendors were interested in the Bridge Square location, noting that the City does own that parking lot and therefore that could be an option in the future if this site does not work. She stated that there has also been a concept to modify the grain bin structures and provided examples. She acknowledged that the only bathroom facility available would be the portable bathrooms. She commented that it is a known issue throughout the park system.

Commissioner Smith asked if there has been thought to expanding the market to other types of goods.

Ms. LaCasse stated that this year they are focusing on vegetable/fruit, cottage food businesses, and some other food related products. She stated that they are attempting to take baby steps in rebuilding the market. She stated that they are optimistic that this site will help to reinvigorate the market.

Mr. Borglund provided additional clarification on the property ownership in that area along with different easements that exist.

Real Estate/Development Project Update: Mr. Borglund provided an update on the pursuit of a possible driving range location near the golf course.

Chairperson Finn asked if the City has considered selling placards or bricks to help fund the driving range.

Mr. Borglund did not believe that had been considered at this point as the focus on this time is on land acquisition. He provided an update related to the activity within the Highland Park area including the progress on the parkway and potential residential development. He also provided a general update on development projects throughout Anoka.

Summer Events: Chairperson Finn noted that a list of special events was included in the packet.

Ms. LaCasse stated that some of the events are City organized while others are outside entities. She stated that the City continues to receive additional event permit requests. She stated that Anoka Halloween is planning to hold all the traditional events, along with some new events in order to make year 101 what year 100 could not be.

Golf Cart and ATV Discussion: Mr. Borglund commented that there is momentum at the City Council level to amend the ordinance adopted in 2018 which allowed golf carts on City streets with a speed limit of 30 mph or less. He stated that UTVs are allowed for City operations. He stated that the discussion is whether to allow the general public to obtain a permit to use ATVs or UTVs similar to golf carts. He displayed a map identifying the roads on which golf carts are allowed and those are not allowed.

Mr. Borglund also provided details on the County's intention to expand its campus.

COMMUNICATIONS AND REPORTS:

Marketing and Communications Updates:

- Discover Anoka: Commissioner Rekstad noted that the group is preparing for the sidewalk sale and Riverfest. He stated that the business owners mentioned that they have noticed increased traffic after the restrictions were lifted.
- Chamber of Commerce: No update.
- ABLA: No update.

MISCELLANEOUS:

Discuss July Meeting Agenda: Commissioner Lee stated that it would be nice to hear an update related certain development parcels.

Mr. Borglund noted that the purchase agreement for 7th and Bunker is going to be extended with focus remaining on a grocery store anchor. He stated that they are waiting for the retail industry to heal from COVID and bounce back. He stated that there has been interest in the 7th and Main parcel but nothing that has been too exciting thus far. He confirmed that staff could provide an update at the next meeting.

Commissioner Lee stated that he would be curious to receive an update from the police department related to crime trends.

Mr. Borglund confirmed that an update could be provided on crime trends and specific to downtown security.

Staff Update: Mr. Borglund confirmed that there are still two vacant positions on the Commission.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned upon a motion by Commissioner Rekstad, a second by Commissioner Eason, and a unanimous vote of those present at 8:58 a.m.

Amanda Staple, *TimeSaver Off Site Secretarial, Inc.*