

CITY OF ANOKA  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION  
MEETING MINUTES  
JULY 8, 2021

Call to Order: Chairperson Finn called the EDC meeting to order at 7:07 a.m. at Anoka City Hall, 2015 First Avenue North in the City of Anoka.

Roll Call: EDC Members present were: Mathew Finn, Jeff Lee, Curt Rekstad, and Julie Smith. EDC members absent were: Allen Acklund, Brendon Eason, and Quinn Garrick. Staff present: Community Development Director Doug Borglund and Police Captain Andy Youngquist.

Approval of Minutes: Chairperson Finn noted that no action can be taken on the minutes today.

OLD BUSINESS:

None.

NEW BUSINESS:

Police Department Downtown Security/Community Crime: Mr. Borglund welcomed Captain Youngquist.

Commissioner Lee commented that violent crime is on the uptick on other communities, such as Minneapolis, which comes along with a tax on the police force. He asked if there is an increase in crime and whether morale has been impacted.

Captain Youngquist reviewed the year-to-date activity and trends related to calls for service, part 1 and part 2 crimes, DWI arrests, and homelessness/panhandling calls. He commented that Anoka is a very active community in terms of calls for service, to the point where they have requested additional staff from the City Manager in order to keep up with the necessary responses. He reviewed the common themes behind the calls for services including mental health, drug related offenses and overdoses, general civil disobedience of traffic laws, vehicle pursuit, and loitering and homelessness.

Chairperson Finn asked if the City has a plan for when the rent moratorium falls off.

Mr. Borglund stated that the County has funds available to those renting and information has been shared with landlords. He noted that there will probably be an uptick in folks that will lose their housing if they do not pursue that avenue.

Captain Youngquist provided information on City security patrol and park patrol duties. He also displayed a community crime map.

Chairperson Finn asked if something would be helpful to the police department related to the downtown entertainment district.

Captain Youngquist commented that the department works closely with the business owners in the entertainment district. He noted that there are one or two officers monitoring the bar traffic during those peak hours. He stated that they have also developed a relationship with the business owners for them to call before a situation snowballs in attempt to prevent those escalated situations. He confirmed that there were less calls for service after bar close was rolled back to 1 a.m. He stated that while it was initially not well received by bar owners, the decrease in calls for service has been good for everyone. He commented on the increase in mental health calls for service and the challenges those calls bring.

Chairperson Finn asked if there were additional dollars available for mental health services, would that help to free up time for officers to respond to other calls.

Captain Youngquist stated that there are other programs attempting to look at different approaches. He believed that if there were federal dollars available, that should go to the County to provide different services. He noted that once a situation reaches the point where someone needs to call 911, that is often beyond what a mental health provider could deescalate.

Commissioner Lee commented that he heard that Minneapolis had 600 officers prior to the George Floyd incident and were down to around 400. He asked if Anoka has seen the same decrease in the number of officers and whether the officers were experiencing downward morale or whether they feel the love from the community.

Captain Youngquist commented that the department appreciates the support it receives. He stated that there are a lot of good citizens that continue to show their support but yet there is a very negative tone towards police nationally that can cause stress and psychological impacts to officers. He stated that luckily Anoka is not seeing that trend, but people interested in law enforcement has decreased significantly. He stated that 60 to 70 percent of the department is sworn officers with the remainder of the department being non-sworn individuals and that pool is looked at for hiring of sworn positions. He stated that attribute of hiring internally and promoting helps to create a strong bond in the department.

Commissioner Lee stated that perhaps there is more the community can do to show appreciation to its officers.

Captain Youngquist commented that the department has attempted to create more events to create positive interaction and engagement with the community and youth.

Commissioner Lee stated that he enjoyed the ride alongs he has participated in. He stated that his takeaway was that the police do not often have the same positive view of the city

as they see the absolute worst that not everyone else sees. He acknowledged that it would be difficult to constantly see the worst activities.

Captain Youngquist agreed that the police see the worst days that people have. He noted that they make an effort to have positive engagement too, such as joining a youth basketball game at the park and other community events.

2010 East River Road Corridor Study: Mr. Borglund commented that there was a corridor study completed in 2010 and he provided the executive summary within the Commission packet. He noted that there could be a joint meeting scheduled with the City Council in order to gain their input. He advised that the County would need to be engaged and a study would be needed to identify challenges, priorities, and funding.

Chairperson Finn asked what the City would have to work with on the Anoka side. He noted that one side of the road is primarily housing and there is not much vacant space.

Mr. Borglund commented that within the retail corridor there are areas that could be redeveloped. He noted that it would be similar to the Greens of Anoka redevelopment where it would involve transportation and other types of improvements. He noted that perhaps they only work with the Anoka portion and Coon Rapids is not interested. He confirmed that the County would have to be involved because it is a County roadway and County right-of-way.

Chairperson Finn commented that it would be nice to think of something that could be done from Mercy to the intersection of 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue to bring that area back into the fold of the community. He noted that a majority of the focus has been on downtown, the business park, and Greens of Anoka while other areas are often overlooked. He stated that perhaps a start would be to engage those residents and see if they are even interested.

Mr. Borglund stated that perhaps they begin by looking at redevelopment opportunities, transportation improvements, and streetscape.

Commissioner Lee commented that this would not be a situation where the City goes to in purchase properties for redevelopment, but a beautification of the that streetscape could help to draw in more redevelopment activity.

Chairperson Finn noted that Coon Rapids has done work to improve its section of the corridor and you can instantly feel when you have crossed the city line. He stated that although streetscape could improve the aesthetic but that does not do much if the remainder continues to look the way it does.

Mr. Borglund stated that the hospital is the main draw that can create opportunity for spin off uses. He asked what the group would hope to see in order to have a clear picture of what would be asked of the Council in a joint meeting.

Chairperson Finn stated that perhaps each member can bring some ideas to the next meeting that could be discussed at the next meeting. He believed that everyone is thinking the same thing in terms of the area needed a facelift.

Commissioner Smith agreed that the area could benefit from a facelift.

Mr. Borglund noted that there many of those properties have septic because of the grades that exist in that area and therefore there are some sewer and water challenges. He stated that he could craft a resolution that could be reviewed and approved by the EDC and a joint worksession could be scheduled for September with the City Council.

Chairperson Finn noted improvements that could be made to transportation and busing.

Mr. Borglund provided additional input on different properties in that area, acknowledging that Anoka has many properties that are not on the tax roll, including schools and churches.

Chairperson Finn noted that perhaps it would be easier to convince a business, such as First Student, to relocate rather than convincing residents to relocate in order to support redevelopment.

Mr. Borglund noted that he will craft a draft resolution for the EDC to review at the August meeting.

#### COMMUNICATIONS AND REPORTS:

##### Marketing and Communications Updates:

- Parking Advisory Board: Commissioner Smith noted that the group did meet but she was unable to attend.

Mr. Borglund stated that perhaps a presentation could be provided to the Commission related to electric charging stations.

- Commissioners Meeting: Chairperson Finn stated that one of the main discussion points was related to keeping bathrooms clean at the parks. He noted that the commissions are busy and moving forward with their own projects. He advised of a new concept being discussed related to paver bricks that would be available for people to place in their yards.
- Discover Anoka: No comments.
- Chamber of Commerce: No comments.
- ABLA: No comments.

#### MISCELLANEOUS:

Discuss August Meeting Agenda: Mr. Borglund noted that a staff person from Anoka Electric can provide a presentation related to the electronic charging station plans. He

stated that the commission will also discuss the East River Road corridor and potential joint meeting with the Council.

Staff Update: Mr. Borglund stated that the American Club was approved with its final HUD financing and anticipates closing with the City in late August and groundbreaking in September. He noted that progress is also being made on the parkway.

Commissioner Lee referenced the 7<sup>th</sup> and Main area and noted that he would like to continue to have updates. He expressed concern that the area could become a site for a Dollar Tree or similar type of retailer.

Mr. Borglund replied that the City has already refused that type of use.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned upon a motion by Commissioner Lee, a second by Commissioner Smith, and a unanimous vote of those present at 8:37 a.m.

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