

JOINT SESSION WITH ANOKA COUNTY
ANOKA COUNTY GOVERNMENT CENTER
JULY 14, 2022
5:30 p.m.

1. PRESENT

City of Anoka: Mayor Phil Rice, Councilmember Elizabeth Barnett, Councilmember Eric Skogquist; Councilmember Jeff Weaver; Councilmember Brian Wesp; City Manager Greg Lee; Police Chief Eric Peterson; Community Development Director Doug Borglund.

Anoka County: Chair Scott Schulte; Commissioner Matt Look, County Administrator Rhonda Sivarajah; Anoka County Director of Facilities Management and Construction Andrew J. Dykstra; Anoka County Sheriff's Office Commander Wayne Heath; and Finance and Central Services Division Manager Cory Kampf.

Others: Coon Rapids Councilmember Brad Johnson; Joel Dunning, Wold Architects; Brett Baldry, ICS.

2. DISCUSSION ITEMS

2.1 Discussion; Proposed Expansion of Anoka County Jail Facility.

Site Location.

Joel Dunning, Wold Architects, summarized the proposed expansion plans of the Anoka County jail facility in detail that included six proposed site locations and the corresponding positive, negative, and neutral impacts of each. He reviewed the downtown Anoka County campus site that had shifted and changed with current parking needs and been pulled further away from the north boundary. He said the site benefits included no land purchase, was co-located with other County facilities, contained appropriate site access with current roadways but the need to vacate Van Buren Street for the facility would be required. He said the site had proximity to the courthouse, fiber network was already in place, and the impervious area would not be improved.

Mr. Dunning next reviewed the Public Works site which would require a land purchase, did not meet buildable acreage, was 1.4 miles from the courthouse, was immediately adjacent to the State hospital campus to the north but had lots of residential surrounding it. He said the site had water/sanitary sewer in place but had no fiber present and was zoned R-1 and currently a prohibited use.

Mr. Dunning detailed the Anoka High School site which was not owned by the County and did not have adequate acreage. He said the site was 2.4 miles away from the courthouse and adjacent to residential use and the high school and would likely face a lot of opposition. He said there was no fiber network and was a

prohibited use according to zoning with no site access and within a MPCA brownfield so likely would be difficult meeting landscaping requirements.

Mr. Dunning outlined the State hospital campus that would require no land purchase as the County currently owns the site but would require demolition of all buildings and the auditorium on site except for current veterans housing building. He said the site was a short distance to the courthouse, was a compatible use and further away from other uses, had fiber onsite, was a permitted use per zoning, had adequate access but tight landscape considerations.

Mr. Dunning reviewed the Alter Recycling site which would require land purchase, had adequate acreage, was 1.5 miles to the courthouse, had no other compatible uses, some adjacency to residential, utilities were present but no fiber, and was not allowed within the current zoning. He said the Highway 47 project would improve access but decrease the site and may alter the site size and there were concerns about likely remediation as well and relocation costs for Alter Recycling.

Mr. Dunning shared about the industrial site on Bunker Lake Boulevard which would require land purchase, had adequate acreage, was 3.5 miles to the courthouse, the adjacent uses were not compatible, no fiber was present but utilities were and was currently prohibited by zoning.

Mr. Dunning noted the Rum River Campus could be made suitable but would require demolition and face possible opposition as it was not in a compatible neighborhood.

Councilmember Skogquist asked more about the zoning considerations and its definitions and noted the current jail was already near schools and residential areas and that things have changed since its construction in 1858. He shared about a recent incident of a person released from jail without any resources and how this occurs regularly and said the use has outgrown its location and any new site should be outside the downtown area. He said we need to be creative and work on alternatives.

Community Development Director Doug Borglund noted the current zoning of B-3 and EM-1 allows for public buildings but those owned and operated by the City, not the County, and that a jail would not be a permitted use in these areas.

Anoka County Sheriff's Office Commander Wayne Heath noted Carver and Scott Counties jail facilities are in downtown areas and remain, adding Washington and Dakota Counties had their jail facilities in downtown areas too but were all located in their respective County seats.

Councilmember Barnett said the comparison charts did not refer to residential impacts, security, and costs, and said this building will be incredibly expensive

versus another location and does this make the most sense for cost impacts to the taxpayers.

Finance and Central Services Division Manager Cory Kampf explained the biggest cost for a jail is in its operation which includes transportation, adding costs will continue to escalate due to fuel and personnel, noting while some court sessions are still virtual most are in person.

Councilmember Skogquist asked questions about layout and court use. Anoka County Director of Facilities Management and Construction Andrew Dykstra explained the plan included two courtrooms for first appearance hearings and if on a remote site to minimize transport they would have to program four courtrooms. He said they currently had 18 courtrooms, of which half to a third were used for criminal proceedings and the others for civil, family, and juvenile. He said the continued hearings could be kept at the jail and reduce transportation needs as there was potential liability and safety concerns during any transport.

Commander Heath stated proposal would only be on the assumption that the judge agreed to virtual hearings as to this point the bench has not looked at this option.

Mr. Dunning added all support personnel would then have to move for those cases and judges leave their chambers to hold court in another location which would require more office space.

Councilmember Skogquist asked for the County's perspective. Anoka County Commission Chair Schulte said his perspective does not really matter as the City has the ability to allow the use or not. He said the best location for the jail is to have it remain downtown and that the County can ensure public safety and create a parking facility that would meet all the needs for Anoka. He said the Rum River campus site also makes sense but would require demolition of historic buildings and veterans housing. He noted the County has spent money to address the City's concerns in good faith and that they had modified the parking ramp plans to fully meet the City's requests and will continue to compromise throughout this process.

County Administrator Rhona Sivarajah explained their work to shift the building away from the neighborhood for a larger buffer which is why some parking was added and the reason the building is smaller is because there is no need for extra courtroom space. She explained the site already is paved so no new ponding issues would occur as would if constructed on a new site.

Councilmember Skogquist said he appreciated going through this information but noted was there a required size throughout and the downtown footprint is much smaller than others and believed there are other sites available. He said he was not sure of fiber costs or road access and that we should work towards other

options as there are too many hurdles from the City's perspective for the downtown site. He added while Alter Recycling has been at this location for many years it is no longer a good use of the site.

Councilmember Barnett asked if the structure could be built up instead. Mr. Dunning explained Hennepin and Ramsey Counties built their jail facilities up and that they conducted a tour of their sites but noted operations account for 85% over the life of a facility and that more staff would be needed on each floor if built up and added a lot of inefficiency.

Councilmember Barnett asked how much could be saved with parking if the facility was built up then asked the Police Chief to share about recent security concerns to Anoka residents. Mr. Dykstra said they only need 200 stalls and that it would not make sense to go multi-level for that size.

Police Chief Eric Peterson explained about an incident on June 20 that involved inmates who escaped and stole a car at a nearby residence that resulted in pursuit as well as an incident involving an overdose and the impact these have on Anoka police to respond.

Chair Schulte said those incidents would be best addressed through an appropriate jail location then noted Anoka police have to patrol all of Anoka in any location.

Chief Peterson commented about the current calls for service and the goal to reduce those calls and the need for the County to assist the City in that work.

Councilmember Weaver said the carjacking incident took 11 minutes to occur and we shared that safety was a major concern and that released inmates need to be brought to where they live. Chair Schulte commented that there are far too many inmates released that should not be and that while he understands the concerns Coon Rapids has the same concerns at Mercy Hospital when patients are released and while we would like to fully mitigate this concern it will still happen and a jail still has to be built in Anoka unless State law is changed which will likely be difficult.

Commander Heath noted inmates have constitutional rights and that we cannot demand that they leave an area. He said they work to help arrange for rides upon release but that ends their ability to control any actions.

Councilmember Skogquist said the behavior affects businesses and residents and even if its in an institutional location, former inmates could be in an area where there is other law enforcement versus residential areas and preferred the State hospital campus site.

Ms. Sivarajah asked if there is a willingness to allow tear down of the buildings necessary to build on the State hospital campus as the size needed would include the auditorium which the City currently holds a lease on.

Mr. Dunning said the facility could possibly be designed around the auditorium for corrections space off site.

Parking Ramp.

Ms. Sivarajah spoke about the parking ramp concerns shared by the City Council and their work to identify what the true parking need was which included a survey of the County workforce, which was currently in a hybrid work environment.

Mr. Dykstra spoke about the concept shared by the Council to consider the structure subgrade and in response created Options A and B, each with one level subgrade. He outlined Option A is three above-grade levels for 660-700 spaces and Option has four above-grade levels for 860-900 spaces. He said both options are below the zoning height restrictions and could be expanded in the future. He spoke about maintenance issues with the current ramp and how the City's model would work for the County and their intent to include architectural features similar to the City ramp and how they would work with the City to best blend in and incorporate some of those features. He added everyone cares about the safety of the public and that they would be willing to come along to enhance the downtown area overall then stated the long-term costs needs to be considered for all residents of the County.

Chair Schulte shared that while the subgrade options result in a lower height ramp each stall costs 2.5 times more but that the County was willing to do so to meet the City's height requirement.

Next Steps.

Councilmember Skogquist thanked the Board for hearing the Council's concerns but said the number one concern is expansion downtown and that in the best interest of the residents of Anoka the City would not change the zoning or amend the conditional use permit.

Mayor Rice stated it is the collective opinion of the City that the facility does not belong in its current location and that while the Council understands the financial concerns, the Council represents the City and not all County residents. He shared how Anoka had to provide beds for those experiencing homelessness, which was for people throughout the County and understands that the jail has to be in the County seat but that strongly feels another location would be best that was not adjacent to residential areas, historic buildings, and the downtown business district.

Ms. Sivarajah said the difficulty is this is an expensive project and as construction costs continue to rise the cost of the project continues to rise. She noted the County owns property at the Rum River campus and if not located downtown the more we transport inmates the higher additional cost, if allowed by the bench. She said acquiring additional property when we only have limited property at this site now the County is asking for consideration of this site as we cannot acquire additional property.

Chair Schulte noted the Rum River campus is currently zoned for a jail, adding no other site is zoned appropriately.

Councilmember Skogquist spoke about the cost of demolition that has to be as much as acquiring land and if the County did not utilize the buildings maybe something else could be done as it would be unfortunate to see them demolished when there is property nearby.

Ms. Sivarajah spoke about utilizing the site for a different purpose but said when they have a correctional facility it becomes problematic because the workhouse is already there and there is no real compatible use.

Mr. Dykstra said there would be significant expense for the County to maintain that site and shared concerns with young families being nearby and the need to protect them. Councilmember Weaver said the Council had the same concern with nearby downtown residents and referenced the recent neighborhood carjacking and encouraged the architects to be creative and repurpose the buildings.

Mayor Rice asked if the buildings had to be torn down to construct a jail facility. Chair Schulte said because of the necessary corrections staff and other operations we just need to rebuild the detention facility but there was not enough room without removing buildings.

Councilmember Weaver suggested building up instead. Chair Schulte said going up doubles the cost and noted it was difficult to find enough staff as required for separate floors. He said building up would be inefficient and very expensive for Anoka taxpayers and that not all Commissioners were supportive now of spending \$150 million on a jail, adding while we do not need the proposed number of beds now, we will in the future.

Councilmember Skogquist asked about the number of housing currently in the facility. Commander Heath said there were 240 beds but based on required classifications they actually only fit closer to 200 bed.

Chair Schulte said the Anoka County jail currently house 250 inmates in Wright County and has spent \$1.9 million over the past two years, adding additional housing used to be done in Sherburne County but was discontinued during the

pandemic and was moved to Wright County, which incurred additional transportation costs.

Coon Rapids Councilmember Brad Johnson spoke on behalf of the Joint Law Enforcement Council and said it was important to be mindful about critical infrastructure at each site as well as protection by natural boundaries to lessen the cost then asked if other agencies were involved in the discussions and offered any resistance. Chair Schulte said they involved the bench, public defenders, and others in order to incorporate everyone as early as possible, adding pre-COVID some were not supportive and while some still want the changes he noted the inmates get to decide whether hearings are held in person or remotely.

Chair Schulte shared that the County is scheduled in the near future to obtain permits in the near future for demolition of the Jackson Street parking ramp and will spend the extra money to build the subgrade ramp and said the jail location conversations will have to continue to resolve meeting the public's needs as that was the most important aspect.

Councilmember Weaver confirmed the County was constructing a parking ramp whether the jail was built or. Chair Schulte confirmed that was the case as the ramp has failed and noted they would not be requesting any variances.

Mayor Rice said the cost estimates are in place and if the site is remote would the ramp have to be the same size then asked for the cost estimate for fiber optic to build at the State hospital site. Chair Schulte said it is more expensive to build because of additional buildings and the current ramp did not allow for any jail parking and would result in separate surface lots.

Councilmember Skogquist said if the jail was offsite what would happen with the current ramp and would the current jail go away because if that was the case there would be lots of space and encouraged the County to wait an additional six months to fully vet this process.

Borgie Bonthuis, resident, asked questions about how many residents know about this proposal and if the County was already building a new ramp then the City has no input on the matter. She shared frustrations with the current taxes and concerns about the costs. Chair Schulte noted the proposed project was in their newsletter that goes to every resident in the County

Ms. Sivarajah said the first meeting with the City about the project was held May 2021 where they discussed process and the best time to consider the project then spoke about the shadow study and how the City told the County to consider solar panels as part of the construction.

Ms. Bonthuis spoke about 200 pages of meeting minutes that had no City Council or staff present and how the proposed project should have been in the newspaper.

She shared concerns about the number of inmates who have escaped and said she was not worried about the Rum River campus location and asked that the County work with the City and not against then asked why the rush to replace the current ramp.

Mr. Dunning noted reasons why the County was willing to reduce the size of the ramp as the study proved that due to hybrid working there would be sufficient room at the reduced size of 1,200 stalls to 900 then shared a proposal to repurpose an 1983 building to a jail with indirect supervisors, segregation and housing. He referred to changes in the mental health specialty areas and cost estimates were as expensive as constructing a new jail facility due to higher operational costs.

Commissioner Matt Look spoke about need for truck door heights and a possible upper deck addition on the jail that would allow housing on one level and the costs for this proposal to be approximately \$250 million including the 911 center. He said even if decreased the size the money cannot be used for something else and that the County has kept the levy at 3% which is fairly flat and the impact for this project would be 12% and therefore was not supportive of the project. He spoke about the costs after property valuation increases and how the County was working to reduce debt which translates to reduced taxes and said he was not in favor unless there was no other option but he believed there were other options to be explored.

Chair Schulte disagreed, stating because ARPA funds would be used the levy increase would be 5% would only increase the overall levy by 2%.

Mr. Dunning noted there was a large discrepancy in the number of beds compared to the 96-stall visitor lot.

Ms. Sivarajah said the County will continue to examine other opportunities, review fiber and other costs, including the parking ramp. She thanked everyone for their patience as they worked through this project.

City Manager Greg Lee stated the City Council will be discussing this topic at a future worksession to further review next steps.

The meeting adjourned at 7:15 p.m.

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

Approval Attestation:

Amy T. Oehlers, City Clerk