



WHEATON CITY COUNCIL PLANNING SESSION MINUTES

MAYOR PHILIP J. SUESS

COUNCILMAN MICHAEL BARBIER | COUNCILWOMAN ERICA BRAY-PARKER | COUNCILWOMAN SUZANNE FITCH
COUNCILWOMAN LYNN ROBBINS | COUNCILMAN JOHN RUTLEDGE | COUNCILMAN CHRISTOPHER ZARUBA

WHEATON CITY HALL, COUNCIL CHAMBERS, 303 W WESLEY STREET, WHEATON, ILLINOIS 60187

Monday, April 27, 2020

1. Call to Order

The Wheaton City Council Planning Session was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Mayor Suess. The following were:

Physically Present: Mayor Suess

Electronically Present: Councilman Barbier
Councilwoman Bray-Parker
Councilwoman Fitch
Councilwoman Robbins
Councilman Rutledge
Councilman Zaruba

Absent: None

City Staff Physically Present: Michael Dzugan, City Manager
Susan Bishel, Public Information Officer

City Staff Electronically Present: John Duguay, Assistant City Manager
Robert Lehnhardt, Director of Finance

2. Approval of March 9, 2020 Minutes

The Council approved the March 9, 2020 City Council Planning Session minutes.

3. Public Comment

There were no public comments.

4. Downtown Streetscape Phase 4 - 50 Percent Schematic Design Update

City Manager Dzugan stated that members of the Downtown Streetscape Team would be presenting concepts for the 50% schematic design checkpoint of the Downtown Streetscape Phase 4.

Assistant City Manager Duguay stated the design team is seeking direction and feedback from the Council before the 100% Schematic Design presentation scheduled for May 11, 2020. He stated that it was important for the Council to decide upon a preferred design concept for Lots 3 and 4 tonight to allow for future planning considerations related to permit parking and the French Market in 2021.

Manisha Kaul of Design Workshop reviewed the 50% schematic design concepts for Phase 4: Streetscape and Lots 3 and 4. She stated that concepts were similar to what had been previously approved by the City Council, but with more details included.

Ms. Kaul reviewed proposed streetscape concepts for Wheaton Avenue and Liberty Drive along with transition streetscapes for Karlskoga Avenue, Wesley Street, Willow Avenue, and several alleys.

Ms. Kaul reviewed three proposed design concepts for Lots 3 and 4, identified as the Railyard, Wheaton Plaza, and Natural Wheaton concepts. She mentioned the design team created several goals based on the previous approved concept which included maximizing usable space on both lots, facilitating access to the Prairie Path, easing pedestrian movement, developing a gateway that provides visual interest for the downtown area, increasing accessibility between both lots and the Prairie Path, relocating a portion of the Prairie Path off of railroad property, and locating an area for a multi-purpose use canopy structure on Lot 3.

Scott Allman of Ethos Workshop Architects reviewed three proposed design concepts for the canopy structure. Mr. Allman stated that each concept shared common features including base pier structures utilizing a similar masonry scheme from the overall project, exposed trusses, and open roofing structures.

To answer a Council question, Assistant City Manager Duguay stated through the City's agreement with Bensidoun, the company would be providing \$800,000 for the design and construction of the multi-purpose use canopy structure, and the City anticipates that the final agreement would be ready to present to the Council at the next meeting.

In response to Council questions, Mr. Allman confirmed that features of design concepts could be interchangeable among the concepts.

However, Mr. Allman stated that concepts broadly correlated with one another, and as the design team progresses further into development, the final design would be one cohesive unit.

Ms. Kaul also reviewed designs for gateway signage concepts that included large lettering, vertical markers, and whimsical sculpture options.

Mayor Suess opened conversation for comments on the design concepts.

Several Council members expressed a preference for Option 3, Natural Wheaton, citing its tie to environmental themes and natural design features. The Council expressed support for the unique branding incorporated into the designs.

Other Council members expressed a preference for Option 1, as it reflects design elements from the railroad theme in other parts of the Streetscape Project. A few Council members preferred elements of Option 2, especially the aerial branding of the "W" and the modern look.

Among the requested additions were more recycling receptacles and a refillable water bottle station; perhaps as part of the bike repair kiosk. Some Council members requested the team look into the possibility of incorporating solar-powered elements.

Some of the concerns expressed by the Council included ensuring the design did not become too much like a playground and that it appealed to various ages; high maintenance costs associated with some of the proposed features; and the potential for vandalism. The majority of the Council stated they did not want to include a water feature.

Mayor Suess requested direction from Assistant City Manager Duguay regarding if there was a benefit to working from Option #1 and #3 then adding features as design developed further. Assistant City Manager Duguay stated that direction could be given to design team regarding features, but it would be preferred if the Council settled on one final concept.

City Manager Dzugan suggested focusing on the areas in common that are not desired by the majority of the Council such as a water feature or a “playground”. Summarizing Council comments, he stated the feedback was to have a more sophisticated or intriguing space with some “play space” for youth.

Mayor Suess requested the design team to come back with revisions based on Council feedback including elements of concepts #1 and #3.

5. COVID-19 Financial Response Strategy

Director of Finance Lehnhardt reviewed the details from the memorandum. Lehnhardt provided analysis of the various negative economic impacts and financial challenges the pandemic has presented. He stated there has yet to be any direct aid for local government and there is a three-month lag in reporting major revenues.

Director of Finance Lehnhardt reviewed three separate models for financial recovery and anticipated an overall 11% reduction from the 2020 approved budget. He stated that the City’s fund reserve balances are healthy and exceed the policy target reserve amount.

Director of Finance Lehnhardt reviewed three strategic timed approaches for capital projects, including immediate action, pending action, and postponing expenditures to the 2021 budget. He discussed projects that were recommended for the immediate action and pending action categories. He also recommended reductions in certain operating expenditures, proceeding with certain capital projects that had been previously approved, and proceeding with the majority of vehicle replacements originally budgeted for.

Director of Finance Lehnhardt stated that going forward, staff will continue to monitor revenues and identify additional expenditure reductions, monitor cash flow, and continue to seek opportunities for local assistance. He stated that the City is financially well-positioned.

To answer a Council question, Director of Finance Lehnhardt stated that he was unsure if the City receives any portion of late fees for property taxes.

Several Council members stated that reserve funds should be utilized at this time and felt they have been built for emergency situations such as the current pandemic. Other Council members preferred lower fixed-cost models with staffing adjustments and expressed concern over capital cuts and future infrastructure planning.

To answer Council questions, City Manager Dzugan provided an explanation of salary increases for union and non-union staff members. He stated that the proposed reduction in salary increases is for the 2% annual Cost of Living Adjustment increase, and there would still be merit-based increases in the proposed plan. He stated the Council would need to adopt an ordinance at the next City Council meeting. City Manager Dzugan stated that while the Public Works and Fire union bargaining agreements remain in place, the City was currently negotiating with both Police unions since their agreements expire on April 30, 2020.

6. City Council/City Staff Comments

There were no comments.

7. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 9:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Daniel Peck