



City of Cedar Rapids
DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES
City Hall Council Chambers
Wednesday, July 24, 2013
3:00 p.m.

The meeting was brought to order at 3:01 p.m.

Present: Council members Vernon (Chair), Shey and Olson. Staff members present: Joe O'Hern, Community Development Interim Director; Vern Zakostelecky, Development Services Planner; Jennifer Pratt, Community Development Planner; LaSheila Yates, Housing Programs Manager; Seth Gunnerson, Community Development Planner; and Alicia Abernathy, Community Development Administrative Assistant.

Council member Vernon stated the Development Committee of the City of Cedar Rapids meets monthly and the purpose of the committee is to review development and economic issues that involve the community. Items are brought forward to the agenda from City staff, Council members and sometimes citizens.

Council member Vernon called for a motion to approve the minutes from June 26, 2013. Council member Shey made a motion to approve the minutes from June 26, 2013. The motion passed unanimously with none opposed.

Council member Olson joined the meeting at 3:05 p.m.

Informational Items and Updates

Joe O'Hern, Community Development Interim Director, stated the 1st Avenue parking garage is underway and will be completed in the fall. There has been discussion and consideration of placing retail in the parking garage. FEMA funding was used in the construction of the parking garage and the agreement with FEMA should be completed before taking any other steps.

Mr. O'Hern stated 301 & 305 2nd Avenue SW are parcels in Kingston Village and the City's Flood Committee recommended no demolition of the structure. Instead, the parcels will go through the standard disposition process but with a different approach. Proposals with use of the structure and proposals for demolition of the structure and use of the parcels will be accepted.

Council member Vernon asked if there will be a process for leasing space in the parking ramp when the parking ramp is complete. Mr. O'Hern stated staff will create a process and bring it to the Development Committee for discussion. Council member Olson stated the City should not be in the retail development business competing with private property owners. The City could do a land lease, have a private developer finish the space, and pay taxes. Council member Vernon stated it's a good idea and retail on the first floor should be everywhere downtown.

1. Science Center Progress Update

Mario Affatigato, Science Center Board Vice President, pointed out meetings have been held with Mayor Ron Corbett, City Manager Jeff Pomeranz and other City staff to discuss the Science Center plans. Mr. Affatigato provided background on the Science Center stating the Science Center is currently located in Lindale Mall as the downtown location was impacted by the 2008 flood. Lindale Mall is not a permanent location and the Science Center will be moving to a larger location soon. Mr. Affatigato provided details of future aspects of the Science Center including new programs and partnerships with other institution.

Norah Hammond, Science Center Executive Director, stated the Science Center board has been working to complete a new strategic plan that will include a new name, new brand, new logo, and new location for the Science Center. Ms. Hammond stated one of the goals of the Science Center board is to be collaborative with the community.

Don Ward, Science Center Board Member, stated one of the goals of the board is to bridge the gap between children and adults. New programs are being developed to intrigue teenagers and adults and show career avenues that involve science.

Council member Vernon asked what the Science Center board is asking of the City. Ms. Hammond stated the board would like advice and support from the City. The board is trying to determine how everything will go together and also figure out what the City could do to support the Science Center. Council member Vernon asked if the board is working with the school district. Ms. Hammond stated the board currently is working with the school district and it is a priority to increase the work done with them.

2. PUD Implementation Update

Vern Zakostecky, Development Services Planner, provided an update on the PUD process discussing what is working with the process and what needs to be improved. Mr. Zakostecky discussed three PUDs that are currently underway and provided details for each. Mr. Zakostecky stated one of the elements of the PUD that developers are in favor of is the ability to receive variances on aspects of the development without going through a separate process.

Council member Vernon asked if heights of buildings are addressed in PUDs. Mr. Zakostecky stated staff looks at what makes sense for heights of buildings based on surrounding property heights to ensure consistency in neighborhoods.

3. North Gateway Sign

Jennifer Pratt, Community Development Planner, provided an update on the south gateway sign stating when the sign was installed in spring 2013 there were site issues. The issues were landscaping and sign visibility. Staff is working with Iowa DOT to get the fence in front of the sign decreased in size. Staff is also working to ensure the landscaping around the sign is visible.

Ms. Pratt stated there is a parcel of City owned property off I-380 and north of Highway 100 for placement of the north gateway sign. The typography of the site is suitable and there should be no site issues. Staff has recognized the sign will be placed further off the road so the sign will be larger and the landscaping will be different in order to ensure a larger visual impact. Staff is looking to have the design fabrication and installation of the sign complete in fall 2013.

4. Section 8 Funding Update

LaSheila Yates, Housing Programs Manager, stated HUD had projected approximately \$498,000 in budgetary shortfall for the Section 8 program. The shortfall would result in approximately 211 families losing rent assistance. Staff has taken several cost-saving measures to mitigate the budget shortfall. Ms. Yates identified the various measures taken to save costs. Three options for Development Committee consideration were identified.

Council member Olson asked what the average rent is, what the utility allowance is and what the number of families on vouchers was. Ms. Yates stated the average rent is approximately \$385, utility allowance is approximately \$100 and there are 1,187 families on vouchers. Council member Olson asked when the funding cut would take place. Ms. Yates stated if the waiver is submitted to HUD it will be effective November 1st. Council member Vernon asked how many people are currently on the waiting list. Ms. Yates stated the waiting list is currently closed and there are approximately 2,500 families on the waiting list.

Council member Olson made a motion to send the resolution to the full City Council. Council member Shey seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously with none opposed.

5. Sign Progress Update

Seth Gunnerson, Community Development Planner, stated the billboard ordinance was adopted in June and the digital sign ordinance was adopted July 23rd to end the moratorium on signs. There are still a number of issues with the sign code that staff will address in the next few months. Phase I options will be presented at the August Development Committee meeting and will include sign development standards, a permit for displaying video and overlay district review. Phase II options will be presented at the September meeting and will include size and height requirements and improvements to the code to allow flexibility for directional signage. Other issues will continue to be monitored by staff and updates will be provided as necessary.

Council member Olson suggested all sign companies are involved in discussions. Council member Vernon stated discussions need to take place on how the signs will be policed to ensure companies are following the ordinance.

6. Design Review Overlay Update

Mr. Gunnerson stated if an overlay district is established for Kingston Village there will be three overlay districts and it may be appropriate to combine the review teams into one committee. Staff will monitor the case load of each committee and return to the Development Committee should issues arise with having multiple overlay districts.

Mr. Gunnerson stated a stakeholder meeting will be held July 29, 2013 to review overlay district standards and discuss the review process. Staff will return to the August Development Committee meeting with recommendations.

Council member Olson stated as more districts are established there should be standardization and asked if requirements would be the same for all districts. Mr. Gunnerson stated the current overlay districts in the ordinance have approximately 90% of the same language. Therefore, staff will probably recommend a set of standards are applied to all overlay districts with some unique standards for each district.

Mr. Gunnerson stated a request was made by the Czech Village-New Bohemia Design Review Technical Advisory Committee to review signage. Currently, the committee only reviews signage as part of a site plan or building permit. Mr. Gunnerson identified aspects of the current ordinance, the current review process and options for Development Committee consideration.

Council member Olson made a motion to move forward with option one. Council member Shey seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously with none opposed.

Council member Vernon called for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Council member Shey made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Council member Olson seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously with none opposed.

Meeting adjourned at 4:37 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Alicia Abernathey, Administrative Assistant II
Community Development