

PROCEEDINGS OF THE ST. CLOUD PLANNING COMMISSION

A meeting of the St. Cloud Planning Commission was held on May 11, 2010. Members present were Anderson, Chirhart, Devine, Goerger, Holtberg, and Radaich. Council representative Pederson was also present. Andzenge was absent. In the absence of Chair Andzenge, Vice-Chair DeVine chaired the meeting.

Open Forum: No one was present to speak at the open public forum.

Consent Agenda: Holtberg moved to approve the consent agenda as follows:

Acceptance of staff reports for May 11, 2010, as part of the official record.

Approval of minutes from the April 13, 2010, Planning Commission meeting.

The motion was seconded by Goerger and carried unanimously.

Recommendation on a Request from the Planning and Zoning Department for Approval of the Proposed 2011 - 2016 Capital Improvements Program: Matt Glaesman, Planning Director, stated that action on the 2011-2016 Capital Improvements Program was tabled at last month's meeting in order to receive additional information on the Beaver Island Trail extension from the Civic Center to Hester Park. One of the questions pertained to the alignment of the trail. The trail adjacent to the Civic Center would extend under the railroad and Veterans Bridge and connect through private property to 5th Ave. No. The trail section adjacent to 5th Ave. No. and leading to Hester Park would be a grade separated trail along the east side of 5th Ave. No. Another question related to the northern terminus of the project and how it would fit into the broader trail system through the area. Glaesman displayed the APO's 2035 Transportation Plan which shows non-motorized corridors. There currently is a gap in the trail system from the downtown to the new Sauk Rapids Bridge. The intent is for the

Beaver Island Trail extension to reach over half the way up to the northern corridor to which the City hopes to connect in the future. The Planning Commission also questioned the proposed sales tax expenditure for the project. Glaesman acknowledged that the amount is significant; however, proximity to the waterfront and the need to purchase private property or easements across that property makes it an expensive piece in making the north/south connection. He pointed out that this extension has been a part of prior planning documents and has been listed as a City Council goal. Glaesman stated that Commissioner Anderson had noted that the sales tax expenditure totals in Table G1 of the Financial Analysis were not consistent with the proposed expenditures suggested by the project summaries. Glaesman explained the reason is due to the Beaver Island Trail project as the City is still hoping to get another federal allocation of \$1 million or more in addition to the \$400,000 already received. Glaesman stated that the table has been changed to account for that \$1 million. He noted that a positive balance in sales tax revenues is not realized until 2014. Chirhart asked the source of the \$100,000 that has already been expended for easements. Scott Zlotnik, Park & Recreation Director, explained that originally a \$300,000 local option sales tax allocation was approved for acquisition of right-of-way and for professional services. Chirhart asked if the \$100,000 for the easements came from the CIP funds that were available. Zlotnik stated that it came from the \$3 million allocation. Chirhart noted that Stearns County hosted an open house about using legacy fund monies for connecting the Lake Wobegon bike trail to downtown St. Cloud. He inquired if the City has considered using legacy fund monies for the Beaver Island trail extension. Zlotnik answered that the City and Stearns County co-hosted that open house. He explained that this year the City has applied for three separate state grants - one for \$400,000 for the legacy regional trail grant, one for \$150,000 for a federal recreational trail grant, and also a local program regional trail grant for \$250,000. Even though the City may not receive all these grants, he believes the City will probably have a good chance of receiving legacy funds to defer sales tax costs for this project. Chirhart asked if the City would be using \$2.5 million in sales tax monies in order to access the \$400,000 of federal money since the \$1 million isn't available at this time. Zlotnik answered that is the case. Chirhart

said that calculates to approximately 25% of available sales tax monies that would be allocated to parks until 2019 when the sales tax runs out. Goerger asked if the \$400,000 federal match can be used for another project if the Beaver Island Trail extension does not move forward. Zlotnik responded that the \$400,000 would have to be sent back. Goerger stated that in the next few weeks, the Urban Area Mississippi River Corridor group will convene to talk about the river area and therefore, asked if going forward with the Beaver Island Trail extension is premature. Glaesman was confident that the river corridor planning process will confirm the need for the Beaver Island Trail project. Chirhart moved to approve the 2011-2016 CIP with the exception of the Beaver Island Trail extension to Hester Park. Goerger seconded the motion and then stated that considering the current state of both the state and city budgets, it is difficult to spend such a high percentage of sales tax monies on this one project. He suggested that portion of the CIP should be re-evaluated. Anderson concurred with Goerger and Chirhart. Holtberg agreed that using 25% of total funds for this extension is excessive. He asked about the dollars that have already been expended for right-of-way acquisition. Glaesman explained that the right-of-way acquisition can proceed for future construction. Glaesman said that discussion tonight indicates there is general support for the project, but that the dollar amount seems to be the problem. He suggested that the project remain in the CIP as a 2011 expenditure but that the dollar amounts be adjusted to reflect the concern. Radaich said he agrees in principle. He pointed out that the City "anticipates" receiving \$1 million. He said he would prefer to set a specific amount that would be expended if the City receives the additional funding or that nothing be done until the money is in hand. Chirhart said the Commission needs to have the additional grant monies or federal monies in hand before they can decide on a percentage of sales tax monies they are willing to spend. Glaesman pointed out that in seeking these funds from outside sources, having the project included in the CIP often gains the project points as an indication of community support. Holtberg asked if the project can be moved to a later year. Glaesman answered that some of the funding opportunities would require construction to be underway in 2010. Goerger asked if the \$494,000 in federal money requires a match. Zlotnik stated that by City Council

resolution of support, the City has already committed to a funding overmatch. Goerger stated that if the funding numbers change, the numbers may need to be at a certain level so that the City doesn't lose the federal money. Zlotnik explained that if the City received the federal recreational trail grant, it could not be used to match other federal money. However, if the City received legacy funds, those could be used to match the federal dollars. Goerger asked when the federal money has to be spent in order not to lose it. Zlotnik stated that the \$400,000+ is budgeted in 2011. The \$1 million of federal stimulus funds would require construction to begin late 2010 or early 2011. Anderson asked if a number of jobs will be created by building this trail. Glaesman stated that a general estimate could be developed based upon formulas established by outside parties, but that estimate has not been determined. Glaesman stated that action on the CIP could be tabled for another month, and staff could come back with some funding scenarios that might be acceptable to the Commission. However, the commitments for additional state or federal dollars would not be available in the next 30 days. Chirhart stated that his issue is using 25% of sales tax monies that have been dedicated to parks and trail improvements on one mile of bike trail improvements. However, if the City is able to access federal dollars and legacy funds to reduce the commitment of sales tax dollars to the project, he would be willing to change his position. Chirhart said he is uncertain if the City Council was aware when they adopted the resolution that it would involve use of 25% of available sales tax monies that were dedicated to parks and trails. Chirhart said he is willing to amend his motion to continue discussion for at least another month to determine if funds other than sales tax monies are available. Council representative Pederson said he is not sure the City Council would have recognized such a large a percentage of sales tax dollars for this trail. The Beaver Island Trail is a very popular project. It was his understanding that sections of the trail were prioritized through community input sessions. Glaesman responded that he doesn't think specific trail projects were prioritized. However, the Beaver Island Trail extension was ranked high enough to receive almost \$500,000 in funding. Pederson said he would anticipate opposition from residents if this project were pulled out of the CIP. Goerger said he does not want to hamper the City's ability to bring forward other park projects that

may be a benefit to the entire community because of the funds expended on this project. He asked by what date the CIP must be approved. Glaesman answered that the Charter states that it must be presented to the City Administration at least 30 days prior to the beginning of the budget process. Due to the debate on the state's budget and its impact on local government aid, a start time for the budget process has not been set, but it will likely be soon. Goerger said he would not want to start a project that is not fully funded. Glaesman stated that the typical minimum match for federal transportation dollars is 80% federal and 20% local. When this project went to the City Council, they agreed to an overmatch where the percentages are flipped with the City participation being the higher percentage. Goerger asked if changing those percentages would jeopardize that funding. Glaesman stated that the CIP is a policy document which allows the Planning Commission offer guidance to the City Council in making decision. Goerger asked if the City would be eligible to keep the \$490,000 if those percentages were changed. Glaesman stated that the all of the two-year allocation of federal funds received by APO have been allocated to projects. The city must complete the project as described in the funding application to receive the \$490,000 federal funds, the remaining amount may come from any local source. Chirhart stated that he would be comfortable in expending sales tax monies if the City's share was 20% (\$500,000). Chirhart withdrew his original motion, and Goerger withdrew his second. Chirhart moved to approve the 2011-2016 CIP with the condition that no more than \$500,000 of local sales tax money is spent on the Beaver Island Trail extension between the Civic Center and Hester Park. Goerger seconded the new motion. Radaich stated that the Planning Commission could have voted against the project because of the large amount of sales tax dollars involved which would have given a strong message to the City Council. The motion carried unanimously.

Recommendation Regarding Conceptual Design of the Heritage Park Skate Plaza: Matt Glaesman, Planning Director, stated that Scott Zlotnik, Park & Rec Director, has worked with a group consisting of skaters and surrounding property owners on the design details of the skate plaza at Heritage Park. An expert team from California has worked with Bonestroo and offered several

concepts for consideration of the design committee. After several committee meetings and public input meetings, Concept B was chosen as the preferred concept. Construction is to be done in 2010. Glaesman stated that the skate plaza would be located between 33rd Ave. and the parking lot. The eastern edge of the skate plaza would be 25' from the property line along 33rd Ave. Goerger moved to approve Concept B for the skate plaza, and Radaich seconded the motion. Goerger asked what type of criteria would be used to select the best concept. Glaesman stated that the Planning Commission's comments are sought on site design and access issues, rather than the skate features of the plaza itself. DeVine stated that she is still concerned about the location off of 33rd Ave. and the pedestrian crossing on 33rd. The motion carried unanimously.

Planning and Zoning Department Project Updates: Matt Glaesman distributed an updated version of the work program for Planning & Zoning. He stated that the Mississippi River Corridor Plan kickoff will be next week. That plan process is proposed to take six to eight months. The St. Cloud Area Sustainability Plan process has been in the works for about six months with the final document scheduled for completion in July. The last public input session for that plan will be held on May 27. Relative to the C-4 District parking and design guidelines, the Task Force is being established and will probably meet over the course of several months. The University Drive Corridor Plan process is 75% complete. Currently, the historic feature review is taking place. The Planning Office assisted the HRA in preparation of the Community Development Block Grant Consolidated Plan, and that has been completed and approved by the City Council. The 2010 Census Complete Count Committee wrap-up has been done. Goerger noted that the additional responsibilities of the Economic Development Department are acknowledged in the work program. Glaesman stated that the deadline for applications for the Economic Development Director position is in about 4 weeks. At last night's City Council meeting, the Council created the Economic Development Authority. Staff is working on the website, GIS tools, etc. for prospects coming to the community. DeVine asked if the River Corridor audio tour is a boat tour. Glaesman answered that it is a walking or driving audio tour on an I-touch, similar to the historic district audio tours. Anderson noted that the 2010/2011 studies/initiatives

includes a reforestation plan, and future studies/initiatives includes a tree preservation ordinance. He asked if these tie into the impact of the emerald ash borer. Glaesman responded that staff has been looking at tree diseases, and reforestation will be a part of that. Glaesman pointed out that discussion occurred at last week's APO TAC meeting about forming an area wide complete streets committee. Chirhart believes this is a good time for policies to be set in place prior to a future building boom. Radaich asked if the tree preservation ordinance would apply to both public and private property. Glaesman answered that the typical model is that both public and private property owners would be required to get a permit to remove specific trees. Holtberg asked for an update on CapX2020 and asked if there is any impending discussions on alternative energy systems. Glaesman stated that the CapX2020 decision will possibly be made by the Administrative Law Judge in May. City staff 's role will be participation in public input and open houses, but will not be serving on the committees. Relative to alternative energy systems, Glaesman stated that the State recently authorized PACE funding which allows local or regional governments to assess private property improvements for green technologies as a public assessment against the property. Essentially, that allows the private property owner to get a loan from the local unit of government to put in a private improvement. Therefore, he anticipates that the Solar Energy Ordinance on the 2010/2011 studies/initiatives list will probably move up quickly due to demand from the public.

Adjournment: There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 7 p.m.

Rick Holtberg, Secretary