

City of Excelsior
Hennepin County, Minnesota

MINUTES
EXCELSIOR CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION

Monday, May 19, 2014

1. CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

Mayor Gaylord called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m.

Present: Councilmembers Beattie, Caron, Fulkerson, Miller, and Mayor Gaylord

Absent: None

Also Present: City Manager Luger, and City Clerk Johnson

2. AGENDA APPROVAL

Caron moved, Beattie seconded, to approve the agenda. Motion carried 4/1-Fulkerson opposed.

3. MUSEUM OF LAKE MINNETONKA

Luger stated that the Museum of Lake Minnetonka is looking for a home for their Museum. Luger said past discussions involved putting the Museum in The Commons, and the Council said the Museum should be able to maintain itself financially. Luger said some ideas are to have the Museum on the lake, at the Public Works site, or incorporated into the redesign of City Hall.

Beattie asked if there is a specific proposal for the Minnehaha. Beattie said he is not sure if The Commons is a great location for the Museum, but said that Public Works and City Hall are interesting options. Fulkerson said that residents won't want to lose space in The Commons with a large building. Mayor Gaylord said the Council is interested in exploring the idea of hosting the Minnehaha and having Excelsior as it's home port, along with finding a way to make the Minnehaha a permanent structure in Excelsior. Miller said discussion in the past has included how to improve the buildings in The Commons but we have no revenue to use for these improvements. Miller said a logical location for the Minnehaha would be in The Commons. He said the City needs to look for ways to draw people to Excelsior, and this is another way to do that. Beattie said there needs to be some realistic financial projections. Beattie agreed with Fulkerson and said we need to be prepared for public discussion. Mayor Gaylord said it needs to benefit the City as a revenue source for maintenance of The Commons.

Gabriel Jabour, Representative for the Museum of Lake Minnetonka, addressed the Council. Mr. Jabour said the Museum came to find out if Excelsior has a vision of what The Commons would look like and if that includes the Museum. He said the Museum is looking for a waterfront home. Mr. Jabour said the Museum would be a great asset to the community. Mr. Jabour also said the vision of the Museum Board

3. MUSEUM OF LAKE MINNETONKA - *Continued*

is to have an entertainment center within the Museum. He said they are also looking at building a second boat at the new site. He said the new site must be waterfront-based because the Minnehaha cannot go under any power lines and cannot be legally transported on a public road. Mr. Jabour said the City needs to think beyond today and figure out where it will be in five to ten years.

Mayor Gaylord agreed that the City needs to provide the leadership on this project and said he recognizes the significance of the Minnehaha. Mayor Gaylord asked Mr. Jabour where the Minnehaha is currently housed. Jabour said it is currently in Shorewood.

Beattie asked about the lease-holder to cross the trail with the boat. Mr. Jabour said the lease is held by the Minnehaha non-profit entity and said it could be cancelled in 180 days. Mr. Jabour said the Minnehaha doesn't travel on the road to get into the water from where it is now.

Mayor Gaylord asked where the logical place to winter the Minnehaha would be, if it's docked somewhere along Excelsior Bay. Mr. Jabour said that ships from the early 1900's were wintered at the point of The Commons.

Caron asked if the Minnehaha could be raised up out of the water and stay there during the winter. Mr. Jabour said that leaving it there is dangerous for the boat.

Mayor Gaylord asked if there are parcels available. Mr. Jabour said there are parcels owned by Bayview but the depth of those parcels is not long enough. Miller asked if the parcel needs to be relatively flat or if there can be elevation. Mr. Jabour said it should be flat. Mr. Jabour said that they work on the boat during the winter, so it needs to be off the water.

Mr. Jabour said the structure should be a little wider than the boat. Mr. Jabour said there is currently one boat but the museum is interested in building a second boat. Beattie asked if their vision is to be able to accommodate two boats; Mr. Jabour said yes. Mr. Jabour said it would be best to have a "chase boat" if someone is left on Big Island, so they wouldn't have to turn the big boat back around. Mr. Jabour said the current structure is 30 feet wide by 90 feet long. He said the height of the current structure is roughly 30 feet high but said the chimney on the boat was designed to collapse.

Jeff Schott, Neil Weber, Jim Zimmerman, and Bob Bolles, addressed the Council, on behalf of the Minnehaha. Mr. Jabour said their vision is to have a historical society along with the boat. Mayor Gaylord asked if the structure would have off-season museum tours. Mr. Zimmerman said yes. Luger asked if the Board has any money set aside for the Museum. Mr. Jabour said no and that it's difficult to raise money. Mr. Jabour said he asked Mr. Wise if the Museum can afford to exist, based on their present cash flow, assuming no property taxes, and that Mr. Wise said yes. Based on cash flow, Mr. Jabour said the Museum would survive.

Miller said the most logical place for the Museum is somewhere in The Commons and somewhere relatively flat but asked what the process is to get to the decision point.

3. MUSEUM OF LAKE MINNETONKA - *Continued*

Beattie asked if the Museum has any drawings of where it could go. Mr. Jabour said they have a drawing of where it fits in Wayzata, from about ten years ago. However, Mr. Jabour said that, when he suggested doing a land-title search, the City of Wayzata found out they didn't own the property. Mr. Jabour said that the model they used for Wayzata does not fit the character of Excelsior. He said it should be something that we will be proud of 50 years from now.

Miller asked Mr. Jabour what his suggestions are in the process of where the Museum might go, what the possibilities are, and how to get to the next step. Mr. Jabour said it would require a committee made up of members of the Council, Planning Commission, and others. Beattie said this is a significant proposal and said that all the advisory commissions should look at this. Luger said The Commons is historically designated, so it would have to be approved by the Heritage Preservation Commission. Mayor Gaylord said the advisory commissions could generate a proposal, and the City could set up a multi-commission committee, with a couple of members from each commission. Beattie suggested that the members from each commission be the chair and a couple of the commissioners.

Mayor Gaylord said the committee needs to look at finding a home for the Minnehaha in Excelsior and the revenue that could benefit improvements in The Commons.

Beattie said he would like to hear from the commissions to find out if they think this is viable. Beattie said it's an intriguing idea and the impacts would be fairly significant. Beattie said if our vision is going to be a 50 to 60 foot wide building that's 90 feet long and 30 feet tall, it's a significant issue. Miller said he likes the idea of a separate committee to discuss the possibilities from which it would go to each of the commissions, so they have more concrete ideas to discuss. Miller suggested one or two members from each of the commissions, a couple of Councilmembers, along with some residents, to discuss the possibilities and create a model. Luger said one advantage of running it through the commissions is that the public will become aware of it, so there would be three opportunities for the public to voice their opinions on it. Miller said the committee can do this without involving staff. Beattie said that Councilmember Miller and Mayor Gaylord are strong proponents on this and that they could go to each of the commissions and develop the vision. Mayor Gaylord agreed.

Mr. Weber said it's important to consciously avoid talking about the building itself. He said it's better to talk about goals and for the City to present what their goals and visions are and how it fits in overall. Mr. Weber said the City needs to first determine what the City wants to get out of this and if it fits with the Museum. Mayor Gaylord said everyone recognizes that eventually there will be a large building. Mr. Jabour said it could be no higher than an average house and that only the chimney of the boat needs a little more room. Miller said he is willing to work with Mayor Gaylord and write up a list of goals. Mayor Gaylord and Miller agreed that this is worthwhile for the City.

Direction from the Council is that Miller and Mayor Gaylord will work on some goals and bring back to the Council. Caron said she is in support of this. Mayor Gaylord said it's a reasonable approach. Beattie said it should be brought back to a Council Work Session meeting.

4. VARIANCE TO ALLOW UP TO 200 FOOT DOCKS IN EXCELSIOR

Miller said the Council talked previously about potential expansion of the docks as one of the Council's goals. Miller said that 30 percent of the dock fees go to improve The Commons. Miller said that, recently, the Lake Minnetonka Conservation District (LMCD) approved a change to their ordinance to allow commercial marinas to expand out to 250 feet. Miller said the main dock, which is all transient and commercial, would meet the ordinance without any changes. He said their ordinance, however, does not allow residential docks to expand to 250 feet. Miller said he put together a resolution but stated that it may need to be scaled back. He doesn't feel we should approve the resolution today, but assign a Councilmember and staff to meet with the LMCD to see if there is any possibility for expansion. Mayor Gaylord asked why another governmental body could grant an expansion to a commercial marina but not to the City. Mayor Gaylord said even adding four more slips to each pier would be 20 slips and more revenue. Miller said we don't provide the services that commercial marinas do, but we do provide water access. Miller said he doesn't think we compete with the commercial marinas, so they shouldn't have any fear of us competing with them. Mayor Gaylord said we do compete for dollars.

Mr. Jabour said that all of the marinas became legally non-conforming when the LMCD allowed the expansion to 200 feet, but then changed their ordinance from 200 feet back to 100 feet, and the marinas had already expanded to 200 feet. Mr. Jabour said Excelsior is very unique and that the LMCD should allow for commercial harbors to give us flexibility. He said the City should be prepared to hear from anyone next to a 16 foot firelane and suddenly next to a 200 foot dock. Mr. Jabour thinks the permanent solution is for the City to be designated as a commercial harbor. Miller volunteered to work with staff and representatives from the LMCD to work up possibilities for this and bring it back to the Council. Mayor Gaylord said this is a good plan. Beattie said it should also come back to the LMCD. Fulkerson said the Council spoke with residents in the past and that we wouldn't expand, but now we're looking to go out to 200 feet. Miller said we would need to bring this to the public's attention.

5. COUNCIL MEETING PROCESS

Due to lack of time, the Council continued this item to a future Council Work Session meeting.

6. ADJOURNMENT

Beattie moved, Miller seconded, to adjourn at 6:57 p.m. Motion carried 5/0.

Respectfully submitted,

Shirley Johnson
City Clerk