

City of Excelsior
Hennepin County, Minnesota

MINUTES
EXCELSIOR CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION

APRIL 6, 2015

1. CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

Mayor Gaylord called the meeting to order at 6:07 p.m.

Present: Councilmembers Caron, Miller, and Mayor Gaylord

Absent: Councilmember Beattie and Fulkerson

Also Present: Park and Recreation Commissioners Honzl, Kielkucki, Mullenbach, Punch (arrived at 6:15 p.m.), Wahlstedt, and Chair Wolfe

City Manager Luger, Public Works Superintendent Wisdorf and City Clerk Johnson

2. AGENDA APPROVAL

Miller moved, Caron seconded, to approve the agenda. Motion carried 3/0.

3. JOINT WORK SESSION WITH THE PARK AND RECREATION COMMISSION

Luger welcomed new Commissioner Kielkucki and explained the process of the Joint Work Session.

Luger discussed the Park and Recreation Commission's 2015 goals and asked whether the Commission has any changes to the goals listed in the packet:

- 1) Improve Residential and Commercial Docks
 - Research the feasibility of extending the residential/commercial/transient docks
 - Analyze rates
 - Explore a fixed fee for a 24 foot residential slip
 - Look into increasing the residential dock rates annually closer to market rates
 - Evaluate the impact of eliminating the senior rate
- 2) Research Enhancing Excelsior-Studer Park (mini golf, batting cages, etc.)
- 3) Explore Integrating the Trail within the City and Provide 'Nice Rides'
- 4) Look into Extending Trolley to Service Town Through Town
- 5) Assess the Feasibility of Creating a Skating Rink and Warming House

Wolfe said he thinks the goals look the same as they have for the past several years. He stated that the Commission submitted approval to the City Council regarding Goal #3, Explore Integrating the Trail within the City and Provide 'Nice Rides.' Wolfe also said that the Commission provided a proposal for the Council on Goal #1, Improve

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Residential and Commercial Docks, that included a flat fee and maintained the senior rate. Wolfe said this goal is an annual topic and he said he assumes it will continue to be one of the Commission's goals.

Wolfe said that the Commission's main focus is the Concerts in the Park. He said the Commission would also like to be involved in the replacement of the gazebo by TCF Bank and would like to use the cemetery funds for it, if that's possible. Honzl said the gazebo area is more of an entryway to the City now or the "head" of main street. Wolfe said the Commission would like to get involved and spearhead this project, assuming funding is available. He said the Commission has discussed having a design contest, in order to get ideas from the public. Wolfe said he would like to see something iconic. He said if the gazebo were replaced with something more interesting, it would draw people to it. Wolfe said, with construction going on nearby, that there will be more focus in this area. Wolfe asked if the Council is interested in keeping the gazebo or replacing it with something else. Miller agreed that it doesn't get used. Caron agreed that this area should have a presence or iconic feeling that speaks to Excelsior. She said the gazebo is a dated concept for a park area. Caron also said that the current plantings are beautiful but are traditional and feel low. She thinks the plantings could be enhanced to be more impactful. Caron said she would like to see the City work with a professional on this project. She said that money should be spent in this area to have a stronger presence and long-term use.

Wolfe said that he suggested the idea of a design contest to replace the gazebo to the Rotary Club and they seemed interested. Wolfe said that someone approached a local artist and that there were some good ideas. Wolfe said he would like to solicit to residents for ideas, also. He said that the City could establish the criteria to reflect Excelsior and the history of the city, etc. Caron said that the criteria should state that the City may or may not go in the direction of the winner. She said that the City needs to be sure it's a good long-term solution. Wolfe said the Commission would like to see something that visitors will go out of their way to see.

Mayor Gaylord asked about combining the gazebo area with the redevelopment of the TCF building area. Luger asked if this is right-of-way property; Wisdorf said yes. Mayor Gaylord said that TCF is rumored to be for sale and that whoever purchases the property could be a contributing partner.

Caron asked if the City has a park dedication fee for developments. Luger said that there is, if the area is converted to residential. Caron thinks there should be a park dedication fee for new developments and also significant redevelopments. Miller asked how much area this encompasses; Wisdorf said from the sidewalk to the school property.

Caron asked if this area is in the right-of-way and whether or not the City is limited in what they do with this project. She said the landscape slopes down toward the road, exposing the area to the intersection. She asked if a berm could be added to create more of a feeling where a visitor would want to be there, without looking

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directly at the road. Wisdorf said it may not be an issue on a City right-of-way but that the County right-of-way may take more work to get it done. He agreed that the area could be re-landscaped and that something could be done with plantings or a berm.

Caron asked how much is available in the Cemetery Fund; Wisdorf said there is about \$55,000 in the Cemetery Fund from charitable gambling. Caron said she would be interested in repurposing cemetery funds to this project; Miller agreed. Mayor Gaylord asked if it would need to be the entire amount of the fund; Wisdorf said no, that there are four things for which pull-tab revenues may be used and this would be one of them. Caron asked how much is estimated to go into the fund this year; Wisdorf said approximately \$7,000-\$8,000. Mayor Gaylord asked if this amount could be increased; Luger said no, it must go by State Statutes. Wisdorf said gambling funds were also used for the monument signs.

Mayor Gaylord said he would consider the gazebo replacement to be the Commissions number one goal.

Regarding Goal #5, Assess the Feasibility of Creating a Skating Rink and Warming House, Mullenbach said that the Commission previously provided a cost analysis for the Council. Mullenbach said one issue is that the City does not have a warming house. Wolfe commented that this goal has been a circular discussion.

Mayor Gaylord asked how many skaters the City could potentially bring in and would like to see a cost analysis for a skating rink.

Mullenbach said the Commission couldn't find anyone to maintain a rink on the lake. Miller said there are companies that do that. Miller also said that there used to be a rink at Studer Park but it didn't get a lot of traffic. He said that, one year for Arctic Fever, there was a rink on the lake by the docks. Miller said for the first year of Arctic Fever, a rink was put by the beach for the weekend and it got a lot of use. Miller also suggested bringing in a food truck for the event.

Wolfe said that Excelsior Brewing Company attempted a curling ice area by their building but that the weather didn't cooperate in order to keep the ice up. Wolfe suggested a rink on Water Street between Second and Third Streets. Kielkucki said this same concept has been done on Nicollet Avenue in Minneapolis, so she believes it could be accomplished. Honzl said this would bring people into town more than a rink on the baseball field. Caron said it's a big undertaking. Wolfe said it's a risk-reward type of thing that could potentially be a huge reward. Miller said the school district lot doesn't get used. Luger said this lot does get used in the winter and that it would be a liability for the school district.

Wolfe said that one negative of using the ballfield is that it may not draw people into town. He said that people may just skate and go home. To enhance Excelsior's businesses, Wolfe said the City may not want to put the rink downtown. Mayor Gaylord and Caron agreed. Luger said it got mixed reviews by the Downtown Business Association.

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Wolfe asked the Council about the trepidation of closing down Water Street for the Farmer's Market. He said he thinks a rink on Water Street could be a great thing.

Caron asked if the Commission has any other items they'd like to discuss. Mullenbach said he would like to discuss the Concerts in the Park. Honzl said he discussed the concerts with the Chamber of Commerce. He said the Chamber would like to take over the event but they would also take the proceeds. Honzl said it sounds like the Chamber was open-minded to it and asked if the City would want to hand it over. Honzl asked if the City is looking at getting an event planner. Wolfe said the Commission is confident that this program could eventually be a money-maker, but he said that the organization doesn't exist to really make it work. Wolfe said that Mike Filippi should get most of the credit for all of his hard work on the concerts. Wolfe said the only way to make the concerts successful is to get an organization going that is similar to Art on the Lake or the Fourth of July. He said this needs to be headed up by a paid person, not a volunteer. Miller said if the Chamber took over the concert series, the City could get a portion of it. Kielkucki said the Chamber would support the City's ideas but may not take on the program completely. She said the Rotary Club may want to take it on, also. Kielkucki said she thinks there needs to be more discussion on the promotions piece of it. She said that, in some of her discussions with Rotary members, they said the St. Cloud Rotary is turning a big profit from their concert series. Kielkucki said she personally would like to give it one more year to take it on. If done properly, she said the program could be successful.

Mayor Gaylord asked how much the St. Cloud concerts bring in; Kielkucki said \$125,000. Kielkucki said that the St. Cloud Rotary is willing to share their model and are also willing to help out, rather than giving it to the Chamber. Caron agreed. Kielkucki said that businesses who have decreased their donations to the Concerts in the Park said that they are dissatisfied with the program.

Wolfe said that the City needs to establish an organization to take up some of the slack on the concerts so that Mr. Filippi isn't taking on so much. Wolfe said it's important to have a strong leader at the top and said he thinks that's why the Art on the Lake event is so successful.

Kielkucki said the Commission has met a few times to discuss the Concerts in the Park and found that one of the major issues is that the program is not promoted very well. She said that she could start work on marketing and promotions immediately. Kielkucki said she understands that Mr. Filippi has done a great job but said, if the right people are brought in, the program could be more successful. Kielkucki said the businesses may want to work with someone face-to-face. Wolfe asked if a staff person at the City needs to be involved. He said he doesn't think it can be done on a volunteer basis because the volunteer could easily walk away.

Mayor Gaylord said this brings the discussion back to the idea of an event planner. Mayor Gaylord asked Luger if there have been any further discussions with

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Shorewood regarding this position. Luger said there wasn't funding for it in the 2015 budget but said it will be included in the 2016 preliminary budget. Caron said this should be one of the budget topics, whether it's an event person or something else. Luger said staff doesn't have time to support the concerts. She said Tumberg is at all of the concerts to sell tickets. Luger said the City is lucky that Mr. Filippi has been handling the concerts, but the fear is that he could leave. She agreed his strength is with the bands.

Miller asked if the City has priced businesses who could handle the concerts on a part-time contract. Caron said the City may need to spend a little to find out options. She said the City may need an event person on a project-basis or hire an event company. Miller said he supports the idea if the Commission wants to put this down as one of their goals.

Mayor Gaylord asked if Tumberg could assist more. Luger said there is more need for sponsorships and she doesn't feel comfortable having the City ask for sponsorships. Wolfe said the Commission is actually just looking for someone to call the meetings and organize everything. Mayor Gaylord asked if the Commission just needs a point person or facilitator. Kielkucki said she would be able to be the facilitator. She said that she has handled events in the past and that she can look at St. Cloud's business model. Going forward with the program, Kielkucki said the Commission would like to see it continue to grow and make money for the City. She said it's certainly very successful in other cities. She said she could take this on rather quickly, if given the go-ahead.

Wofle agreed that the program has been successful on a small scale, but he said the Commission really wants to see this grow.

Punch said it's important that the sponsors get a return on their investment. Mayor Gaylord asked how this is measured. Punch said by doing head counts and tracking beverage sales.

Luger said the Concerts in the Park will be added to the Commission's goals. She asked if goals #4 and #6 should be eliminated.

Mayor Gaylord said goals #2, 4, 5 and 6 were his ideas. Regarding goal #2, Honzl said there needs to be things done at Excelsior-Studer Park. Mullenbach said he could look into grant funding. Mayor Gaylord said he brought these items up because he doesn't believe the City is using resources effectively. He said it would be ideal if the bathhouse at The Commons could be enclosed and make it a paid entrance for non-residents, free for residents. Mayor Gaylord said the revenue could be put back into The Commons. He said this is similar to other cities and should be explored. He said he would like to keep something like this on the goals list.

Miller said the community gardens generate revenue and are popular. Mayor Gaylord said the revenue from the gardens is not very much, compared to how much the parking lot costs.

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Honzl said residents on Glencoe Road have stated that they would like to see prairie restoration done at Excelsior-Studer Park. He said that one of the gardeners' issues is that the soil is bad in the community gardens. He said, in order to make the Excelsior-Studer Park into something revenue-generating, it would take a lot of work and funds to create. Honzl said he thinks of the land there as a 'quality of life' piece and that the nearby neighborhoods take pride in the area. In terms of priorities, Honzl said that The Commons has much more possibilities to generate revenue.

Caron said that she loves the idea of Excelsior-Studer Park being more of a natural area, but said that her focus for this next Council term is for the City to create a plan for The Commons, along with an action plan to execute it. In regards to Mayor Gaylord's points about generating revenue, Caron said the City needs to figure it out and get it going. She said she thinks the Council needs to focus on a direction for The Commons so that the Commission can start to work on that plan.

Wolfe said the one thing about Excelsior-Studer Park is that there is serious pushback from the gardeners. If something is not done with the problem soil, Wolfe said that many gardeners are going to pull out. Wolfe said that the Commission has met with many gardeners and there are many that are very passionate about the community gardens. Wolfe asked what the Council's thoughts are about the gardens. Wolfe said the gardeners don't know how to repair the problems and that some of them are pursuing a professional to conduct an analysis of the soil. Wolfe said the question comes down to whether the City provides a quality place or not. If not, he said the gardens are going to be empty.

Mayor Gaylord asked Wolfe what his thoughts are if the City provided the quality materials but raised the fees for renting garden plots. Wolfe said that the gardeners may be okay with that. Punch said there are some gardeners who want a plot but don't do anything with it. Honzl said that the Commission has talked with gardeners and, if the City were to take the effort to make it work, the gardeners would be willing to pay more. Miller said it should be another one of the Commission's goals.

Miller said another goal should be to get a handle on the process for The Commons. Caron asked for the Commission's feedback on the flowchart that was provided for The Commons. Wolfe said there is a strong feeling in the Commission that a long range plan is needed. However, Wolfe said that the Nitpickers List also needs to be worked on and he said it wouldn't cost much to do. Wolfe said the City could create a much better park.

Mullenbach commented that Wisdorf is knocking out those items on the Nitpickers List. Wolfe said there are still some serious problems with erosion in The Commons.

Miller said the Council and Commission conduct a walk-through of The Commons every year and said that Wisdorf takes care of a large list of items that need to be done in The Commons. Luger said erosion takes a lot of money and, without a long-range plan, it's difficult to work on. Luger said she has seen that the Council is looking for the Commission's guidance on whether the City should follow the

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comprehensive plan or create a new plan. Luger said that the park plan is very generic with no funding listed. Caron said a plan needs to be created on how it will all work together. Caron said that the Council was looking for professional guidance for The Commons regarding development and how much should be done versus how much should be kept as a passive use. She said that there needs to be agreement on what to do and put the money behind it.

The Council and the Commission agreed that items to be removed from the goals list include:

- 1) Look into Extending Trolley to Service Town through Town;
- 2) Look into the Feasibility of Creating a Skating Rink and Warming House; and
- 3) Look into Reviving the Historic Water Slide as an Attraction.

The Council and Commission also agreed to add the following goals:

- Concerts in the Park
- Gazebo
- Enhance The Commons

In regards to the 'Enhance The Commons' goal, the Council directed the Commission to review and discuss the flowchart that was provided.

5. ADJOURNMENT

Caron moved, Miller seconded, to adjourn at 7:01 p.m. Motion carried 3/0.

Respectfully submitted,

Shirley Johnson
City Clerk