

**CITY OF EXCELSIOR
Hennepin County, Minnesota**

MINUTES

**City Council Work Session
Monday, November 7, 2011**

6:00 p.m.

1. Call to Order/Roll Call

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

Council members present: Caron, Fulkerson, Olson, and Acting Mayor Miller.
Councilmembers absent: Mayor Ruehl.

Also Present: City Manager Luger, Public Works Superintendent Wisdorf, and City Clerk Johnson.

2. Agenda Approval

Caron moved, Olson seconded, to approve the agenda as presented. Motion carried 4/0.

3. Sandall Marketing Proposal – Reinventing the Event Experience

Luger said that Councilmember Olson asked Laura Sandall from Sandall Marketing to put together a proposal that would help Excelsior create a better quality of life for its residents and lower taxes by generating revenue from visitors.

Olson said he believes that Excelsior is a brand that could be marketed in a way that people would pay for that experience. The idea is to take what other cities are doing who have a coveted name and create a better experience for the residents and generate revenue for the City. If the City was a private business it could make at least a half million dollars per year or more. He suggested Laura Sandall because she used to be Target's former top event person. The proposal is to look at the entire City not just The Commons.

Olson said that thousands of people will come to the City of Excelsior for Hockey Day Minnesota and the City isn't making any money from this event. If the City can make money from these events, it can reduce taxes.

Fulkerson asked if the study would look at the events that the City has done for years. Olson said yes, the study would look at each event and the space used by the event. The scope would be too narrow if they just looked at current events. The hope would be to find out what types of events people are interested in having in Excelsior and then look to see what is possible. Once the City has a plan it can be taken to the public to see what they think about it.

3. Sandall Marketing Proposal – Reinventing the Event Experience – (Continued)

Olson said that the City might need to get a developer, the City Planner, a finance person, and hopefully a number of volunteers who could serve on a committee and look at the Master Park Plan and other information. The City might also want to create a space on the City's website to get the residents and business community involved. If the City makes the investment in the study, the City might be able to get the money it needs to take care of the City's infrastructure. Once the City has a revenue model, the revenue would come back to the City from corporations, groups, parks, etc.

Fulkerson said she agrees that the City should do something, but she's not sure if this is the time to do it. The Council just approved an \$8,000 study for the bandshell, and she's not sure the people will support this.

Acting Mayor Miller asked the Council what it thought about the concept and whether it is important to do the study now. He said that this is an interesting idea. There is also the potential that the City would have more events.

Fulkerson said likes the concept and it would be great if it created a revenue generator.

Caron said she has a lot of questions. At some point, everyone needs to agree that the City is what it is and move on, or we take a look at The Commons and maybe the downtown area and consider options for generating revenue. The Council has had this discussion for some time, but nothing has been done because there hasn't been anyone interested or a Councilmember focused on this.

Miller said the Council is always looking at ways to help the bottom line and there has always been a push to increase revenues. Before he was on the Council, he wondered why the City wasn't doing more. Now that he's on the Council he's realized that event organizers are just scraping by to put on the events and the only revenues the City receives is the permit fees. There was a proposal to raise money for park improvement from the Legacy Foundation, but nothing ever materialized. There was also the proposal to build a facility at the Port, which was turned down. He would like to find a balance. Not all of the amenities in the park are utilized and the City does not do a good job of maintaining what it has. The City could be missing out on simple advertising opportunities; there may be larger corporations who would like to advertise during events like Hockey Day Minnesota. It's been difficult to move anything forward. There has never been a study like this done, and maybe this is how to test the waters. This study could dovetail with the bandshell study.

Fulkerson asked if the study would just look at events. Olson said he wants to look at all assets in Excelsior; the study will be completed in phases.

3. Sandall Marketing Proposal – Reinventing the Event Experience – (Continued)

Olson said let's not automatically think that there will be more events, it may be better versus more. There may only be five events, but the events are planned in a manner that businesses are standing in line to be involved.

Caron asked what is the next step? Olson said Sandall has submitted a proposal for the City to consider. There will be professional involvement, but it also has some public involvement. There is a lot of the work that will need to be done that will fall on others. He would like the City Council to approve the \$20,000 to move forward with the study.

Caron asked if it's realistic to do the study over the holidays. Olson said probably not; it may be better to do it in January and implement it over the summer.

Miller said that the deliverables in the proposal are fairly loose. Caron asked if it would be possible to get something in writing that is more concrete. Olson said the outcome would be a presentation with solid ideas. The ideas wouldn't be carried through to finish, but there would be some numbers.

Miller said the timeline seems very aggressive with less than a month to complete each phase. Caron said the timeline also doesn't factor in time for the other individuals who would be involved.

Diane Bolles, 229 George Street, said she would be interested in knowing how much the City paid for previous studies and how that information was used. Some of the studies that come to mind are the Dream 2000, Legacy Foundation, pavilion idea, etc.

Olson said he looks at this as an investment versus a study.

Caron this is a very different approach than what the City has looked at previously. Miller said he agrees; the City needs to move forward and hopefully something will come out of this study.

Fulkerson said she thinks this is a great idea and something that is needed, but is concerned with spending the \$20,000 at this time. She goes along with the concept, but the City also needs to get the citizens involved. Olson said this needs to be an investment not a cost. He is sure that there will be opportunities to get people involved.

Olson agreed to contact Sandall and have her update the timeline, provide a contract, and give the City a not-to-exceed amount for any added expenses.

4. Pocket Park Proposal

Luger said that Chuck Babcock is selling his property located at 369 George Street and has offered to donate a portion of his backyard to the City for use as a pocket park, which is a small park. The access to the proposed pocket park is not straight forward though since Mr. Babcock only owns one-third of the parcel adjacent to his property.

Caron said she was contacted by Mr. Babcock and asked if she thought the Council would consider this donation of land for a pocket park or greenway, so she had asked to have this item placed on a Work Session agenda for discussion.

Miller asked how the City would access this strip of land. Caron said it's a land locked parcel; the City would need to discuss whether it would be a park or a greenway.

Fulkerson said that the City doesn't need another small park to maintain. Olson said it is surrounded by pine trees so it would not need to be maintained. Fulkerson said another consideration is that the strip of land would come off the tax rolls.

Chuck Babcock, 369 George Street, said that his wife Mary and he would like to give this section of land to the City. In the future the City will need green areas and in a historical City like Excelsior there aren't areas to do this. This would be a quiet greenway area. The site has some negative effects as far as the easement, but he thinks that can be worked out.

Miller said it's an interesting concept. It's difficult to consider when there is no access, but how could the City lose if it doesn't have to be maintained and it's green space. Babcock said he would like the donation to be conditioned on it continuing to be green space and not sold.

Caron said she likes the idea and was impressed that someone wanted to donate land to the City for green space. It's a very natural setting.

Miller said the City will need to gather information on the tax base, easements, legalities, and financial implications before making a decision.

Fulkerson said she hates to spend more staff time on this when we are already short staff. Caron said she's happy to assist staff with this so the Council can get back to the property owner in a reasonable amount of time.

Babcock said time is of the essence; the property is for sale and if people see this strip of land they will want to keep it. Miller said the City appreciates his generous offer. Miller said the Council meets again in two weeks and maybe they will be able to have a final decision on the property at that time.

5. Other

None.

6. Adjournment

Fulkerson moved, Caron seconded, to adjourn at 6:58 p.m. Motion carried 4/0.

Respectfully submitted,

Cheri Johnson
City Clerk