

MEMBERS PRESENT: Tracy Davis, Jim Herreid, Alice Thomas, Suzie Nakasian and Steve Rholl, Paul Miller

MEMBERS ABSENT: Greg Colby

ALSO PRESENT: Glen Castore, Robert Gill, Leif Knecht, Victor Summa, Stephanie Henricksen, Allene Moesler, Paul Jackson, Kathleen Doran-Norton, Cathy Larson, Beth Kallestad, Don Werner, Janalee Cooper, Kathleen Shea, Chris Kauffeld, Jim Holden, Erica Asada, Julie Klassen, Bonnie Praver, Mary Rossing, Jon Denison, Rhonda Pownell, Betsey Buckheit, Steve Engler, Northfield News, Community Development Director Brian O'Connell, City Planner Dan Olson, Housing Manager Michele Merxbauer, Recording Secretary Sandra Bremer and other interested citizens

1) Call to Order and Approval of Agenda

Acting Chair Davis called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

A motion was made by Thomas and seconded by Rholl to approve the agenda of November 24, 2009. All in favor. Motion carried.

2) Approval of Minutes

A motion was made by Thomas and seconded by Herreid to approve the minutes for the regular meeting of November 10, 2009. All in favor. Motion carried.

3) Unfinished Business Action Items: None

4) New Business Action Items:

a) Review and Report on Creation of TIF District for Jefferson Square Townhomes

Merxbauer gave a summary of her Staff report. She indicated that the improvements being proposed are being done to ensure that the development will last another 30 years. The TIF period is also set for 30 years.

Herreid questioned if this was something that should be done for the community.

Merxbauer noted that Northfield has a need for low and moderate income housing. There have not been any major issues with this complex over the years.

Thomas felt that the request was consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.

Merxbauer noted the City Council would hold a public hearing on this request on December 7, 2009.

A motion was made by Nakasian and seconded by Rholl to approve Resolution #2009-001 reporting to the City Council that development of a TIF District for Jefferson Square townhomes and the amendment to the Master Development District is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan. All in favor. Motion carried.

b) Public Hearing – Annexation of Properties in Bridgewater Township

Chair Davis called the meeting to order at 7:32 p.m. She noted the purpose of the public hearing was primarily to obtain input from the public and no decision would be made at this meeting. Olson gave a summary of his Staff report.

Kathleen Doran-Norton gave a summary of the report submitted from the Rice Creek (Spring Brook) Concerned Citizens Group Report and Recommendation.

Paul Jackson was concerned that the annexation of this property be done well and done right. The concerned citizens group recommended three messages: 1) Recognize the economic potential this area brings to the community; 2) Recognize anytime there is a cold water stream, it is sensitive to environmental change; and 3) Data is needed to know about this ecosystem and monitor the water system.

Cathy Larson, 13770 Cabot Avenue, described her background as a river scientist. She submitted her written statement into the public hearing. She has monitored the local stream for 11 years. She noted the community is very lucky to have two high quality streams in the area. Rice Creek is a little gem hidden among the back roads. It is one of the few streams with naturally producing stream trout. She encouraged considering the recommendations of the citizen group report.

Allene Moesler, 29411 Enders Way, Cannon Falls, spoke on behalf of the League of Women Voters. They have no position on the annexation itself; however, they are concerned about Rice Creek. She entered a written statement into the public hearing.

Glen Castore, Bridgewater Township Supervisor, 5873 E. 145th Street, entered a written statement into the public hearing expressing his concerns about the annexation being done without proper financial analysis to support it. He was not against the annexation; however, he felt the City needs to draw in higher paying jobs but with their eyes open.

Beth Kallestad, 220 Linden Street N., represented CRWP and presented a written statement of their concerns that was entered into the public hearing. They did not have a position on the annexation itself but did have concerns regarding what happens to the land and what happens to the streams.

Erica Asada, 9181 Edgebrook Way, noted her initial reaction was strongly against the annexation. However, there is an EDA working with this. She is very concerned about the area where her children will grow up in. She is surrounded by streams and open areas. The streams need to become a focus. She is not for or against this annexation but asked that the City look at the area very closely.

Leif Knecht, 14805 Dixon Path, Chair of the Bridgewater Township Board, submitted a written statement he entered into the public hearing. He noted that this change is planned to take place over the next 30-60 years and will not happen quickly. This will give everyone time to do the planning that is needed. It is essential that the two governmental bodies work hand in hand to plan for this area. There are two colleges and the school district that spend a lot of money to educate the children; but, what if there are no jobs for these children to work at when they graduate? The bike trail is a good example of what can happen when community-minded people get together for a common cause. A change in land use can be a change in the stream basins for the better.

Don Werner, 9144 Edgebrook Drive, noted he lived in town for 30 years and then purchased his current home. He feels his open space and wild life will be lost because of this annexation. His property values will be hit if this goes through. It is important to protect the integrity of the property owners in the area.

Stephanie Henricksen, 114 Linden Street S. and Bridgewater Township, encouraged the City to abide by the current annexation agreement. To have the Northwest area and this proposed area linked would be a big change. She would encourage all to look at the area and consider only a portion of this area to be annexed which would abide by the current agreement. This agreement was done ten years ago and was meant for 20 years. Why make changes to it now and make big changes that will impact many people? She asked for a compromise that would make sense for all.

Janalee Cooper, 9206 Edgebrook Drive, noted she can look out her window and look a long way. She would bring to the attention of the Planning Commission, the City Council makes a DVD available to the public of their meetings and would encourage this be done for this meeting. She did not feel there had been a substantial amount of analysis done to support this project. She would like to have the ordinances brought to them finished before they open up an annexation agreement.

Bob Gill, 9425 Edgebrook Drive, noted this annexation area is an area that was put into the Urban Expansion Zone of the City many years ago. This designation put controls on the land that he could not develop his farm under. Sometime ago the EDA approached him and asked him to apply for annexation. This decision did not come easy for a farm that has been in the family for many years. If the City could get some industry, it could balance the City more. He noted that this area has been farmed and has had cattle on it which affects the quality of the water. The water quality just might get better after the zoning laws are set up to protect it. He felt it was an oversight for Section 3 to be put in the annexation agreement ten years ago. They have spent money to do a concept plan for the area. It is always subject to change. When the City wants something done, the owners are not always willing to sell. Now there are two owners willing to work with the City.

Victor Summa, 812 St. Olaf Avenue, asked the Planning Commission members to let the public know what they will be basing their recommendation on. Is the land being looked at as an industrial area, or preservation areas, or land conservation programs?

Davis noted that the Planning Commission is gathering information at this hearing and will comment on their recommendation later.

Summa felt Northfield is more willing to spend money to develop a property than Bridgewater Township would be. If everyone works together, the process could go forward.

Kathy Shea, 6070 320th Street W., noted that with her students they have planted acres of seed trees along the Heath Creek area. There is a need to have good plans for this area. She was very excited to hear about the potential bike trail plans and how it could connect with trails in the northern part of the City. She felt there was a great opportunity to do some planning and make the environmental conditions better. The stream buffers could be better and bigger and the forest could be developed. She would get the colleges and schools to use this area as an educational resource.

Chris Kauffeld, 901 2nd Street W., noted he has fished this creek and it is a beautiful piece of property. In a perfect world, Rice County's only trout stream would be protected and the current land owners would be paid well for their land. There has to be some way to get as close as they can to the perfect situation.

Jim Holden, 708 1st Street W., agreed this is a beautiful trout stream. He gave some history regarding the stream. The DNR has used the brood trout stock of this stream to reproduce in their hatchery.

Deane Lagerquist, 4896 90th Street E., shared the concerns about the natural lands. She was concerned that alternative use of this farm land will not harm the natural lands. If there is nothing in the formal concept plan, she would like to have more information before a decision is made on the annexation.

Julie Klassen, 14075 Cannon City Blvd., presented a written statement into the public hearing. She agreed with many of the statements about the protection of this area. She would hope there would be ways to protect this land and be creative to not bring in more asphalt. Protect this gem of a stream.

Victor Summa noted the citizens group invited the EDA to their last meeting. In order to be environmentally safe, land cannot have more than 10% of the 450 acres in impervious surface.

Knecht encouraged the Planning Commission to check on the conservation facts. If the land is mitigated there can be more impervious surface.

Henricksen presented an article from the Winona Post relating to annexation public meetings in that town.

Bonnie Praver spoke regarding their selling their land. They have no plan of selling their land at this time. They were approached and they are willing to be annexed into the City but they are not willing to sell their land for a long time.

A motion was made by Naskasian and seconded by Thomas to close the public hearing. All in favor. Motion carried.

Thomas asked Staff for a copy of the financial information that was presented to the EDA for them to review.

Davis noted that this item will be discussed on the December 8, 2009, Planning Commission meeting.

O'Connell noted if there was anything else that Staff could provide he asked that they let them know. He commented on the time table for action.

Thomas asked if the City could provide the written report from 2008 the CRWP.

Davis asked if there was a draft of the new protection ordinance and O'Connell noted that at this time there is not a draft.

Olson noted that the State of MN requires it be adopted by June of 2010.

Nakasian noted there have been a lot of comments about the process. She wondered if it was possible to obtain documents that are in process that would have a bearing on this request. She questioned if a task force could be put together to give advice on the local stream protection agreement with the Township so it would be in place before the City pursues anything else.

Gehler-Hess noted a task force would be a good idea because there are many parts that need to be brought together.

Olson noted that the EDA Steering Committee would like to have a joining of the two annexed areas for master planning purposes to achieve cost savings to the City.

O'Connell reviewed the need to do the master planning for both sites at the same time. It will save the City quite a bit of money if they can be done together. Annexation does not change the use of the land; it only changes the jurisdiction the land is located in.

Davis noted there will be fewer conflicts if the issues are addressed in the right way from the beginning. Is there some way to have something more concrete in hand when negotiating with the Townships for the annexation agreement? She questioned what was contained in the 2008 CRWP report.

Kallestad summarized what the report contained.

Olson noted these proposed ordinances would have to be approved by the State of MN because both creeks are under the control of the State of MN.

Gehler-Hess noted that for the stream protection ordinance the City will have to work with the State on it. The other portions will have to be done as well but the entire ordinance will not have to go to the State for approval.

5) Reports and Discussion Items:

Olson noted there is a Planning Commission work session scheduled for December 1, 2009, and they will be continuing review of Table 2.7-1 of the draft LDC.

6) Adjournment:

The meeting was adjourned at 9:52 p.m.

Submitted by:

Sandra Bremer
Recording Secretary