

**City of West St. Paul
Open Council Work Session Minutes
August 8, 2016**

1. Call to Order and Roll Call

Mayor David Meisinger called the work session to order at 4:50 p.m.

Present: Mayor David Meisinger and Councilmembers Pat Armon, Ed Iago, John Bellows, Dave Napier, Jenny Halverson and Dick Vitelli.

Others: City Manager Matt Fulton, Assistant City Manager and HR Director Sherrie Le, Finance Director Joan Carlson, Community Development Director Jim Hartshorn, Public Works Director Ross Beckwith, City Attorney Korine Land, Police Chief Manila Shaver and City Clerk Chantal Doriott.

2. Approve Agenda

Council approved the agenda as presented.

4. Agenda Item(s)

4.A. Closed Session to Discuss Robert Street Easement Acquisitions

Motion was made by Clpn. Halverson and seconded by Clpn. Vitelli to close the meeting pursuant to Minn. Statute 13D.05 Subd. 3(b). Meetings may be closed if the closure is expressly authorized by statute or permitted by the attorney-client privilege. All members present voted aye. Motion carried.

Attorney Peter Mikhail gave an overview of negotiations for Parcels 128, 106A and 106B, 73 (St. Paul), and 100 which are part of the Robert Street project. Parcel 100 will continue negotiations. Parcels 128, 106A, 106B and 73 will be added to the Council agenda for consideration.

Motion was made by Clpn. Bellows and seconded by Clpn. Halverson to open the work session at 5:27 p.m. All members present voted aye. Motion carried.

4.B. River to River Trail Crossing Study Discussion

City Manager Matt Fulton gave an overview saying Dakota County was present to give an update on the trail study, answer questions and receive information. Curt Chatfield introduced Steve Milke, John Mertens, SEH and Toby from SHE. Mr. Chatfield continued with a PowerPoint on the River to River Greenway – Regional presentation. The presentation included detailed information on context, master plan, at-grade Concept I at Wentworth, driveway crossings, underpass crossings, utilities, option costs range from \$227,000 to \$3.2 million and do

not include acquisition costs. On August 16 this will be presented to the Dakota County Board. They continue to explore funding options and hope to have a final feasibility study report late this fall.

Comments:

- Clpn. Bellows is disappointed and asked county reps if they are aware that Town Center 1 is a proposal on our EDA agenda this evening. He is disappointed Council was told the tunnel would be looked into and done sooner. We can't wait and need to make a decision now. His biggest problem is it's an attempt to bring a park area into a commercial area and this is not a good effect, not a good fit.
- We have something on the agenda this evening (a proposed development for this area) and the county is aware, and now if you take this land from this development for the trail it could jeopardize this large project. This is a risk we can't take said Clpn. Iago.
- Clpn. Vitelli is supportive of the tunnel and in closing Crawford.
- Clpn. Halverson is supportive as long as the city can remain cost neutral. We have secured \$2 million in state funds. It is easy to see the need and she supports the proposed. It's important for safety and economic development.
- Clpn. Bellows said closing Crawford will cost us an easement. Is there sufficient space for safety vehicles? There is no interaction with Robert Street. He is disappointed anyone is looking to put a trail and park-like experience in the most commercial area of Robert Street. A tunnel in this spot is disturbing. You are asking us to give up a huge part of land and tax base, jobs and developability, etc. This is a disconnect.
- Clpn. Napier would like to have an open house to see what the residents think. Based on a 60 ft. width and based on the county analysis. He supports moving to the next phase. It could be a legacy project for Senator Metzger and a way to connect the two sides of Robert Street. He hopes to hear it ties into the Cuningham plan.
- Clpn. Armon asked what is the impact on the Robert Street project and digging up the street. They are aware of Robert St. being out of commission and there could be ways to minimize the impact. There are ways to keep traffic moving but it is extra cost.
- Taxes – there's a potential \$4,000 to \$7,000 tax base lost to West St. Paul with this project.
- Clpn. Halverson asked to think about all the studies that have told us we need walkability of the neighborhoods and other investments. She would like this to get to the community input stage. She wants to look at the bigger picture and added that the state is looking to invest a significant amount of money in this project.
- Clpn. Iago said bringing it to the public is taking more time. We need to make a decision tonight. Let's vote on this tonight.
- It's not just the Town Center I project – comments about jobs were discussed and the fact that there is no access at all to Robert Street. This is not for West St. Paul but rather Dakota County.
- Clpn. Halverson said there could be trails from the county trail to Robert Street. She is not in favor of skipping over community input. We need to be more careful and deliberate in planning in West St. Paul.
- Mayor Meisinger said we spent five years reviewing Robert Street and now we rebuilt for redevelopment and there was never talk about a bridge or tunnel. He is not supporting this project.

- Clpn. Iago made additional comments.
- Clpn. Bellows asked Attorney Land – if we ask the EDA to act on Town Center I we need to know what’s going on with the tunnel as PEBB can’t proceed without the land. Attorney Land said this is a preliminary development agreement. Clpn. Bellows said PEBB needs the entire property for their project. Attorney Land said the development agreement can or can’t include consideration of a tunnel. PEBB has said they can’t do their project with a tunnel.
- Clpn. Vitelli said the River-to-River project has always been at this location and we acquired Block Buster to assist with this project. This tunnel is a Metzen legacy and would be an enhancement. We should not turn our backs on this. We have plenty of time to consider this and let the citizens come and comment.
- Clpn. Bellows said the River-to-River is a county project and he is not sure it would be a legacy project to Senator Metzen.
- This is why people are sick of government – the indecision and poor use of funds. There was a petition brought forward to the Council in which people were not in favor of the tunnel or bridge. This was discussed three times! There has never been anyone publicly approach the Council saying they were in favor of this project. The resident who brought the petition to council added again that the people didn’t want this project, you have heard it three different times, and he has never heard anyone speak in favor of a crossing on Robert St. It is a waste of time to consider and he will have five people against it for every one person in favor.
- Manager Fulton said one reason this update is good is because we are reviewing the Cuningham Plan. This is a half-way done study. There is no real public input and we owe it to the county to complete the study. We need to consider how this fits in with the Cuningham plan. There is no action necessary at this time. The preliminary agreement is on the EDA tonight for consideration. That predevelopment agreement expires at the end of the year. This is a significant part of the community’s future.
- Clpn. Bellows said this keeps getting shoved at us (tunnel). He would like to know if there will be a vote tonight on proceeding. It is inconsistent in what we are talking to PEBB about.
- Clpn. Iago said let’s put this on the agenda to see if we want to continue.
- Clpn. Vitelli said let’s look at what’s going on and maybe we need to consider the future of West St. Paul is much more important that a vote on a trail. Let’s think of the future of the city.
- Clpn. Halverson said if we vote on this we give the community no opportunity to review this and it’s not fair.
- This is a matter of people having differences in how to proceed said Clpn. Bellows. We have been looking at this for well over a year. We keep pushing this down the road and he is not sure why the county has had it for so long (and it’s not complete). We need to make a decision sometime and if not now, when.

4.C. Renaissance Plan Update and Discussion

There was not enough time in the work session for this agenda item to be discussed or considered. This will be brought back to a future work session.

3. Review the Regular Meeting Consent Agenda

Council will consider payment of Robert Street property acquisition easements as noted above.

5. Adjourn

Motion was made by Clpn. Bellows and seconded by Clpn. Vitelli to adjourn the work session at 6:24 p.m.



David Meisinger
Mayor
City of West St. Paul