

City of West St. Paul
Economic Development Work Session Minutes
January 23, 2017
5:00 P.M.

1. Open Work Session

Commissioner Jenny Halverson opened the work session at 5:00 p.m.

2. Roll Call

Present: Commissioners Jenny Halverson, Ed Iago, Jay Bellows, Dave Napier, Anthony Fernandez, Bob Pace and Dick Vitelli.

Others: Executive Director/Community Development Director Jim Hartshorn, City Attorney Korine Land, Acting City Manager Sherrie Le, Finance Director/Treasurer Joan Carlson and City Clerk/Secretary Chantal Doriott.

3. Agenda Items

3.A. YMCA Future Development Discussion

Executive Director Hartshorn gave an overview. At the last OCWS, the Council directed staff to invite Pat Connolly, Director of Real Estate Development for the YMCA, Anita Lancello, Senior Vice President of Real Estate Development and a YMCA Board member to the next EDA Work Session. The purpose of the meeting is to discuss their future plans for the YMCA. Mr. Connolly mentioned that he would like to re-ignite the conversation around the agreement they had in place with the City back in November 2014.

Use of the city golf course and discussion of a collaborative project including the YMCA and a big box has been going on for 2 years. Mr. Connolly was asked if there was a way to separate these two projects so the big box can move forward.

YMCA representative Pat Connolly thanked the EDA for having them to the meeting. He mentioned that they have been working on a project since 2014. The YMCA has accumulated a lot of real estate over time. They will have a plan in approximately six months. What they do with membership facilities will be considered by the Board. There are 22 branch offices – we will reinvest in 12 branches in maintenance and/or expansion. There are 8 or 9 locations that will remain as-is. There are four branches that are very sensitive with West St. Paul being one of them. We have thousands of households that come to us to be healthy. But when intriguing offers come we can't just take the money and run. We have decades of history being here and people relying upon us.

there isn't a commitment, the big box will lose interest. If it doesn't happen quickly everyone could lose.

Com. Halverson is comfortable with the MOU commitment with the YMCA and working on something specific and exploring other options. Mr. Connolly said the big box is not the only party who has expressed interest to us. The YMCA doesn't need specifics with details but it needs to show the community that we are not abandoning them.

Com. Iago said we are really committed to moving forward with development on Robert Street. You are important to us. We don't want to lose commercial development. And time is of the essence from all parties. He wants to work together and move quickly. We are ready to move, it's been over two years. We are committed to looking at the options.

Com. Vitelli is not in favor of moving forward with MOU unless the YMCA has a commitment from the big box. We had dealt with dragging feet for over two years. You need to make the commitment and lock up the deal. He is concerned about us having no economic development and an empty YMCA building.

Com. Iago said he appreciates Com. Vitelli's point. We can work together down this road and he is in favor a MOU.

Com. Napier said the key is to show your membership and the West St. Paul community you have a MOU with the city and you are committed to working with the city. Com. Napier doesn't agree with Com. Vitelli. Com. Vitelli said he is not arguing that he doesn't want the YMCA but the YMCA needs to make the big commitment.

Commissioners made additional comments. They are not interested in the MOU going on for another four years.

A representative from the big box said the timing is important and the sooner the better. They sat here two years ago and he is sympathetic in what the YMCA is going through, however, we need to move. There is always something you come up against. Working with the YMCA is different than a store with vacant property. This is a fortune 500 driven company, a not for profit. It seems they have made a decision not to leave West St. Paul 100% and they would like to stay here and have a presence.

Mr. Connolly said ideally in communities where we maintain membership base, we close our doors here and open temporary doors for a certain time. Yes there would have to be something for our members to latch onto before we move out. Mr. Connolly offered additional comment. There is so much the YMCA does that the community doesn't know about.

Com. Pace asked if it was possible that the YMCA commit to the city to sell or let us know if you want to stay in our city. Is there anyone that can commit to us quickly? Com. Halverson said everyone agrees we need to move forward – you commit to sell at the same time we commit to work with you.

Discussion to hold a small committee, possibly ward driven, with the YMCA and schedule meetings by the next City Council meeting was not met positively.

Com. Halverson said the MOU would include agreement to sell, work with the city, and get a stakeholder group organized. Have MOU available for next meeting.

Attorney Land said to add this item to the regular EDA agenda. Com. Vitell would like to have our interim city manager involved with the attorney.

4. Adjourn

The EDA work session adjourned at 6:02 p.m.

Chantal Doriott

Chantal Doriott
City Clerk/Secretary
City of West St. Paul