

## HOUSING AND LAND USE COMMITTEE MEETING

Wednesday, October 26, 2022 | 6:30pm

**Committee:** Alexa Golemo (Staff), Mike Moore (Chair), Heather Huffman, Wendy Merrell, Dave Pasiuk, Cathy Plessner, Kathy McGuire, Dawn Huffman, Regina Purins, Tim Schmidt, Gene Johnson, Ross Gunderson, Kensey Lipstreuer, Tom Dietsch, Zuzu Pakula

**Guests:** Amy McDonough (Chief of Staff in the Office of the President, University of Saint Thomas), Phil Esten (University of Saint Thomas Director of Athletics), Corey Chapman (University of Saint Thomas Senior Associate Director of Athletics), Maureen Michalski (Vice President, Real Estate Development, Ryan Companies)

### MINUTES

#### **I. Welcome & Introductions**

Mike Moore read the standard introduction to the Housing and Land Use committee.

#### **II. Addition/Deletion of agenda items**

No additions or deletions were made.

#### **III. Approval of minutes for June 22, 2022 Regular Meeting**

Motion to approve minutes from June 22 regular meeting passed 10-0, 1 abstention (Cathy P., Wendy M.)

#### **IV. Approval of minutes for September 14, 2022, Special Meeting**

Motion to approve minutes from September 14 special meeting passed 9-0, 3 abstentions (Cathy P. And Wendy M.)

#### **V. Approval of minutes for September 28, 2022 Special Meeting**

Motion to approve minutes from September 28 special meeting passed 9-0, 2 abstentions (Tom D., Wendy M.)

**VI. Highland Bridge Updates & University of Saint Thomas Ballfields**, Maureen Michalski, Vice President, Real Estate Development, Ryan Companies; Amy McDonough, Chief of Staff, Phil Esten, Director of Athletics, Corey Chapman, Senior Associate Director of Athletics, University of Saint Thomas

Amy McDonough gave a brief update of the proposal to build baseball and softball facilities at the Canadian Pacific (CP) rail yard in Highland, and the future plans to build a multi-purpose arena on the South campus. This would be an eventual home for hockey and a multi-purpose arena where UST would hold events like graduations, convocations, and Christmas concerts. UST is in the very early stages and currently looking at RFP for a design proposal. These are not immediate builds and UST is seeking donors for this proposal. Amy offered to take questions and indicated that more details would be available when they have a design plan.

Maureen Michalski gave a brief update of the proposed baseball and softball fields, associated practice facilities, and parking facility that will be constructed on the CP rail property at the Ford site. The property is presently owned by Canadian Pacific. The hockey arena is no longer being proposed for this location and the affordable housing and office space from the original plan will be maintained. Existing parkland dedication of 1.5 acres will be increased by an additional 1.16 acres. Vehicular traffic will enter the ball fields from Cretin and Montreal Avenues. The transit route from the original Ford Master Plan shall remain. The project is in the very early planning stages, and key approvals need to be obtained. Ryan Companies and UST have met on several occasions with the Highland District Council, and future meetings will be scheduled.

Mike: Are the little league fields are on the diagram?

Maureen Michalski: Yes, they are just north of Montreal Avenue.

Regina: Has anyone considered exactly what those wetlands will look like?

Maureen Michalski: This is an integral part of our planning. We work in tandem with Capital Region Watershed. Our civil engineers are engaged in this process.

Wendy expressed concern about UST purchasing more property in Saint Paul that will be tax exempt. She expressed frustration with high property taxes in Saint Paul. She desires more housing to contribute to the tax base.

Maureen Michalski explained that most of the land in the CP rail yard is within an FAA overlay, prohibiting the building of occupiable buildings. Also, the property has limited access due to parkland and grade differences. She called attention to the housing, retail and commercial space at Highland Bridge which will eventually contribute to the tax base. Maureen explained that the CP rail site is non-active, so they only pay \$5000 in assessments annually. They are virtually tax exempt at this time. The UST proposal maintains the current tax benefitting developments from the previous Ryan development plan. It is a net neutral in terms of the tax increment district that was established as part of the Ford redevelopment. The area that is currently tax exempt would remain tax exempt but would be improved with the development of the ball fields. Were it not for the UST development proposal, that site would not be developed.

Amy McDonough: We understand the sensitivity of the tax exempt point, so it is a benefit that we are sticking to the CP rail site which is essentially tax exempt. Saint Thomas is tax exempt, non-profit because of our education status, but we do pay assessments to the city. We budget \$80,000 to \$120,000 annually for those assessments. We are landlocked in our Saint Paul campus, and we are restricted by a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) which doesn't allow us to expand our campus boundaries. Compared to other universities across the country, we have small square footage per student, and we are limited as to where we can build.

Phil Esten: The original planning allows for institutional use at the Highland Bridge site. This area was always targeted as recreational space in original city planning. Lastly, from a needs standpoint is our compliance of the Title 9 law, insuring adequate opportunities for both men and women to compete.

Tom: Did you say that the primary traffic access to the ball fields will be from Cretin Avenue?

Maureen Michalski: That is correct that vehicular access will be from the Cretin and Montreal intersection. Access points from Mississippi River Boulevard are not feasible because it is parkland, and grade differences do not allow for access from other locations.

Tom: Have you done a traffic modeling study to take into account the traffic restrictions at the Lund's site? There is traffic congestion at the Cretin Avenue entrance of the Lund's store. How many people do you anticipate at these games? From what locations? At what times of day?

Maureen Michalski: The original AUAR study included potential traffic uses at the CP rail site for traffic and environmental modeling purposes. For modeling purposes, we included 100,000 sq. ft. of office traffic, twice each day, and 55 housing units. This is a rather intense, daily use. We will be updating our traffic plan, but we don't expect that the UST athletic facilities will generate the same level of activity as the model. We will be talking with the city public works team. Attendance for these events is typically about half the number of seats. Some bigger events will use the full capacity of seating.

Phil Esten: We typically calculate about 1/3 the number of attendances to be the number of cars coming to the event. In addition to that, we anticipate providing shuttle service to and from the events for our students and campus community. It is not often that we see a maximum capacity event. Typically here are 25 baseball games per year, 25 home softball games per year.

Tom: I hope you anticipate that there is likely to be a bottleneck at Lund's.

Kathy: First, Please clarify the parkland dedication points. How much parkland are you required to dedicate in total for the entire Ford project? Secondly, please explain why UST was able to offer \$60 million dollars to purchase the Town & Country property but building this arena in Highland is too expensive. If you had purchased the Town & Country property, would you have been allowed to develop that land under your current restrictions? Lastly, have you looked at the cumulative impact of traffic? Just a reminder that people live here. This is our neighborhood. This is pushing the boundaries.

Amy McDonough: There are efficiencies to building on campus. We already own the land, we have existing parking structures, we can use it for multi-purpose. I hear you on being careful about impact on the neighborhood with parking and traffic. This is a priority for us and we will be transparent about that. This proposal will reduce traffic because students can walk to the event. You are correct about the Town & Country proposal in that we would have had to pursue changes to our city agreements. The board asked us to pursue that as an opportunity because we are landlocked. We have been looking for locations in Saint Paul for a long time. It is important for us to maintain our presence in Saint Paul.

Phil Esten: We pivoted from the Highland Bridge location due to cost considerations. We were looking for several different opportunities that could accommodate either a hockey arena with parking, or baseball/softball/hockey together, or hockey with multi-use. We couldn't find space that was suitable. A change we made that is a benefit to the neighborhood is the two-year residency requirement. On campus events give students something to do. The Division I experience is not homogeneous. We are a mid-major level, so we see smaller crowds, but the experience is equally positive for our athletes. We want to keep as much on campus as we can.

Maureen Michalski: Parkland dedication formula has been fulfilled by Ryan Companies. The additional parkland dedication is 1.16 additional acres. I don't have the total amount at hand.

Regina: Since the defunct rail lines are still open to question on the east side of Cleveland, does Ryan Companies have intentions to purchase that property?

Maureen Michalski: Ryan Companies has no intention in acquiring that land.

Cathy: UST employs many people, they serve many people, and the events bring in commerce. This has to be balanced with considerations of impact. We shouldn't just consider the negative impact, we need to recognize all that UST brings to the community.

Gene: Comments about taxes brought to mind that concessions will be served. Do you anticipate seeking beer and alcohol licenses as part of this proposal?

Phil Esten: We do pay taxes on ticket revenue as well. We do not serve alcohol to the general population. Currently, alcohol is served in controlled spaces to a limited number of people with all safety measures and proper training taken into consideration. Public safety controls that space. We may anticipate something like this for the new space.

Julie Kaupa: Are there any environmental advantages in the plan? The close proximity to the river is critical. What are the plans for landscaping and trees?

Phil Esten: UST pursues LEED Silver certification on all facilities and these new facilities as well. As we have done on our current facilities, we would install artificial turf surfaces which are more environmentally friendly and more advantageous from an operational perspective.

Maureen Michalski: Partial clean up has been done, and this project will take it further. Native plantings and sustainable landscape will be included along with the artificial turf.

Mike: How long will the clean up take at the CP parcel?

Maureen Michalski: It will likely take only a few months.

Heather expressed concern about the reconstruction of west Grand Avenue which will add traffic congestion and safety concerns on other streets in the area, She also expressed concern regarding significant loss of trees in our urban forest and that the small trees planted for replacement will never grow to what we have now. She asked how many trees will be cut down as part of this project? Heather also expressed concerns about struggling local businesses and expressed doubt about the contribution this will create for local business. She asked if UST would be using existing employees for their new facilities?

Phil Esten: From an economic development perspective, many studies demonstrate the benefits of economic development in a community when new visitors frequent the community.

Heather: I am a micro-economist specializing in local entrepreneurship. The benefit is seasonal. It is also a fact that the return on investment for new stadiums takes many, many years if at all.

Amy McDonough: In our meetings, residents have expressed concerns about the trees. Sometimes trees are impacted during environmental clean up.

Maureen Michalski: We have not determined what trees or how many trees will be impacted by the environmental clean up. Until we know the details, we cannot determine the landscape plan.

Heather: I am sure you can get a cursory estimate just by looking at the land space.

Maureen Michalski: It is mostly a periphery of trees.

Wendy: Heather, I think you have taken up your time. I think every committee member should have a two-minute time limit.

Heather: Our City identifies climate change as the most important issue of our time.

Mike: I am going to squelch this conversation at this time. We have scheduled regular meetings with Ryan Companies and UST. I expect that they will be back before this committee in the next 6 to 12 months, and some of these questions can be answered more specifically at that time. I also want to ask if there are any community members who wish to speak. I don't see any hands. I want to thank Maureen, Amy, and Phil for your participation this evening.

**VII. Ordinance 22-46, Amending Chapter 310 of the Legislative Code**, Dan Niziolek, Deputy Director, Department of Safety and Inspections, City of Saint Paul

Amending Chapter 310 of the Legislative Code to eliminate petition requirements, reference and establish uniform license procedures for Class N, R, and T licenses, shorten the notification process, eliminate the license renewal public hearing provision, and update gender specific language and other outdated terms.

Class N licenses have the most potential impact on a neighborhood; alcohol related, auto uses, health centers, etc . They currently have a petition requirement, and a 45-day notification process which allows people time to raise objections. Based on our research, these requirements have an unnecessary and inequitable impact on business. From our standpoint, the veto authority really lies with the city council, elected officials, rather than single residents. Furthermore, The 45-day notification period penalizes the applicants trying to start a business. Potentially, there could be an additional 30 day waiting period if there is an objection. Our research found that the 45 day delay was not really impacting the outcome. Also, there was a misconception that the 45 day period allowed time for DSI to add conditions to a Class N licenses, but in fact, conditions can be applied any time during the life cycle of the Class N license.

DSI Recommendation is to eliminate the petition requirement and reduce notification from 45 days to 30 days, requiring the applicant to come to district council 15 days prior to application to DSI which takes another 15 days. We are also recommending updates and streamlining the language in the ordinance.

Cathy: It is so hard to notify people, and I appreciate that you are accommodating businesses.

Dan Niziolek: An education campaign is part of this process. We want people to notify us earlier rather than later if they are being impacted by a business.

Alexa: This set of proposed changes had the first reading today at City Council, and the public hearing will be next week. HLU can make a recommendation at this time, if we choose to do so, and submit that in time for the hearing.

Regina: Community members might be left out of this process due to the shorter notification.

Dan Niziolek: Our goal is to have a one-month cycle. People would have a chance to come to one of your meetings. Also, if they live within 350 feet of the establishment they would receive a notification and have an opportunity for a hearing.

Cathy: I make a motion that the Macalester Groveland HLU Committee supports these proposed changes. Tom seconds the motion.

Mike: At this time, I would like to invite community members who wish to speak, ask questions, or share concerns to raise your hand. I see no hands raised and no request for further discussion.

Motion passes 8-3

Regina: Concerned that people voting “no” did not raise their hand to comment on why they were voting no.

## **VIII. Updates and Announcements**

Alexa: Print newsletter will be out the second week of November in time for Give to the Max Day on Thursday, November 17th. If you are able to donate to support MGCC, we really appreciate it. All information can be found on the website.

Change of date for next HLU meeting to Wednesday, November 30 at 6:30pm., via ZOOM.

## **Adjourn**