



CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

Richfield, Minnesota

Concurrent City Council, HRA, and Planning Commission Work Session Virtual via WebEx

March 8, 2022

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Regan Gonzalez at 6:00 p.m. virtually via WebEx.

Council Members Present: Maria Regan Gonzalez, Mayor; Mary Supple; Simon Trautmann; Sean Hayford Oleary; and Ben Whalen

Council Members Absent: None

HRA Members Present: Mary Supple, Chair; Maria Regan Gonzalez; Lee Ohnesorge

HRA Members Absent: Erin Vrieze Daniels; and Sue Sandahl

Planning Commission Members Present: Kathryn Quam, Chair; Gordon Hanson; Eddie Holmwig-Johnson; James Rudolph; Brendan Kennealy; Brett Stursa; and Ben Surma

Planning Commission Members Absent: None.

Staff Present: Melissa Poehlman, Community Development Director; Julie Urban, Assistant Community Development Director; Chris Swanson, Management Analyst; Sack Thongvanh, Assistant City Manager; and Kari Sinning, City Clerk

Others Present: Kirsten Spreck, Director of Housing at Beacon Interfaith Housing Collaborative; Ricky Kamil, Congregational Organizer for Beacon Interfaith Housing Collaborative; Paul Mellblom, Architect at MSR Design; Ben Drew;

ITEM #1	PROPOSAL BY BEACON INTERFAITH HOUSING COLLABORATIVE TO DEVELOP UP TO 40 UNITS OF SUPPORTIVE HOUSING ON THE PORTLAND AVENUE ROUNDABOUT REMNANT PARCELS (6613-25 PORTLAND AVENUE).
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Mayor Regan Gonzalez introduced Community Development Director Poehlman who gave a brief overview of the property. Community Development Director Poehlman then introduced Assistant Community Development Director Urban who read aloud Work Session Staff Report No. 7. Assistant Community Development Director Urban introduced Kirsten Spreck, Director of Housing for Beacon Interfaith Housing Collaborative. Kirsten Spreck gave a presentation that described the housing that is proposed and the need for that type of housing.

Council Member Trautmann thanked Kirsten Spreck for the presentation and asked about which communities Beacon has been working with in the City and also the organizations that they have partnered with. Kirsten Spreck stated that they have been in contact with MICC and shared that Beacon is more focused on those young adults with neurodiversity that do not have the financial or family support. A Congregational Organizer for Beacon, Ricky Kamil, stated that Woodlake Lutheran Church is a part of the collaborative and that other area churches that want to see more deeply affordable housing for the neurodivergent community in Richfield.

Council Member Whalen stated that he is generally supportive of the project and asked about the difference between efficiency and studio apartments and the need for this type of housing for this community. Kirsten Spreck stated that efficiency and studio are one in the same and explained that this type of housing has helped youth and young adults experiencing homelessness or financial hardship to get stabilized and find employment or further their educations. An architect from MSR, Paul Mellblom, explained that the trauma that people face with homelessness and other traumas can affect how people want to live and they might feel more comfortable having a one room apartment than a multi-room apartment and shared that the efficiency apartments would be around 450 square feet.

Council Member Supple shared her experience touring the 66 West site and she questioned the density for this site. Kirsten Spreck explained the cost-benefit analysis for this proposal. Council Member Supple stated her support if this project is similar to the 66 West project as there is a great need for it in the community.

HRA Commissioner Ohnesorge thanked Beacon for bringing this project proposal and asked about accessible units and zero threshold showers. Kirsten Spreck stated that there would likely be accessible units on every floor. Paul Mellblom shared that per building code they are required to have an elevator be accessible to all residents and all stairwells and doorways would meet ADA compliancy and 2% of the units would have to have hearing and/or visual aids. Kirsten Spreck shared that Beacon is dedicated to providing housing to persons with disabilities.

Council Member Hayford Oleary shared his support in this site being high density residential as smaller unit density projects have not suited this site well and also shared his thoughts regarding fair parking reduction practices for projects that are along major transit lines. Council Member Hayford Oleary expressed optimism for the project to move forward for the community.

Council Member Trautmann appreciated the comments made by Council Member Hayford Oleary and questioned the services provided for those that are transitioning out of homelessness. He shared Richfield community organizations that would appreciate the opportunity to be a community presence. Kirsten Spreck stated that each building is intended to meet the needs of the residents and depending on the residents the services provided can differ.

Planning Commissioner Kennealy agreed with the comments made by the City Council Members and questioned the number of parking stalls compared to the 66 West site and the zoning this area to high density without affecting the rest of the neighborhood. Community Development Director Poehlman stated that the comprehensive plan would need to be reassessed as the project would move forward.

Planning Commissioner Rudolph expressed excitement for the project and shared a curiosity of the hurdles that the project would need to overcome as it moves forward with respect to the lot size. Kirsten Spreck stated that the project is in line with zoning for setbacks and height which would allow for outdoor amenities for the residents.

Planning Commissioner Chair Quam asked why there is an efficiency limitation in medium density housing to which Community Development Director Poehlman explained the history of the code and how it has affected Richfield's growth. Planning Commissioner Chair Quam also asked

about the availability of units for people with disabilities and what the proposed look of the building would be like. Kirsten Spreck stated that they have not finalized the number of units that would be available as it is dependent upon research of the need in the area and also stated that the look of the building is unknown at this time since this is a preliminary proposal however the Richfield community and staff would be involved in the exterior look of the building.

Planning Commissioner Holmwig-Johnson shared concern about the long term conditions of the building. Kirsten Spreck stated the accountability to provide quality housing in the long run and Beacon reinvests in their properties to keep them in good condition for the residents.

Council Member Whalen referred back to Commissioner Kennealy’s question of the number of parking stalls compared to the 66 West site. Kirsten Spreck stated that in the last few years they have created parking below grade to offer more of a safe environment and that the proposed 25 stalls is meant to be more proactive and can be discussed.

Planning Commissioner Hanson suggested that since the parking stalls at the other properties are not being used to their full advantage that the extra parking space could be used for a recreational space for the residents. Kirsten Spreck thanked Commissioner Hanson for that suggestion and stated that they will bring that idea back to the design team.

Mayor Regan Gonzalez expressed excitement and support for this project and appreciated the comments and questions from Council and Commissioners. She also thanked the presenters for the proposal.

Council Member Supple asked if there is an age restriction on the service. Kirsten Spreck explained that young adults between the age of 18 and 24 would be prioritized and stated that this is permanent supportive housing which does not put a time limit on a person’s residency.

Community Development Director Poehlman stated that the commercial property next door does have interest in the property however she will relay that the policymakers are generally supportive of this possibility.


Assistant Community Development Director Urban summarized the discussion and stated the next steps:

- General consensus of approval for the high density
- 25 parking stalls might be too much for this project
- Beacon is a thoughtful provider and trying to meet the needs of the people they are serving
- Financially, this project would need the help of the HRA and additional funding which would be discussed as the project moves forward.


ADJOURNMENT

The work session was adjourned by unanimous consent at 6:55 p.m.


Date Approved: March 22, 2022



 Kari Sinning
 City Clerk



 Maria Regan Gonzalez
 Mayor



 Katie Rodriguez
 City Manager