



CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES
Richfield, Minnesota

**Joint City Council, Planning
Commission, and HRA Work
Session**

April 26, 2022

CALL TO ORDER

The work session was called to order by Mayor Pro Tempore Supple at 6:00 p.m. in the Bartholomew Room.

Council Members Present: Mary Supple, Mayor Pro Tempore; Simon Trautmann; Sean Hayford Oleary; and Ben Whalen

Council Members Absent: Maria Regan Gonzalez, Mayor

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

Planning Commission Members Absent: Kathryn Quam

HRA Members Present: Mary Supple, Chair

HRA Members Absent: Maria Regan Gonzalez; Erin Vrieze Daniels; Lee Ohnesorge; and Gordon Hanson

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

Others Present: Elwyn Tinklenberg, Project Management Consultant, American Legion Post 435; Diane Miller, Controller, American Legion Post 435; Nic Meyer, Project Landscape Architect, Westwood Engineering; Dennis Pelowski, Counselor at Law; Andy Keller, Vice Commander of American Legion Post 435

ITEM #1	INTRODUCTORY PRESENTATION OF REDEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL FOR THE AMERICAN LEGION SITE AT 6501 PORTLAND AVENUE
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Mayor Pro Tempore Supple stated that Mayor Regan Gonzalez was not able to be present out of an abundance of caution and turned over the meeting to staff. Community Development Director Poehlman outlined some feedback guidelines for the discussion and introduced Elwyn Tinklenberg. Elwyn Tinklenberg expressed gratitude for the opportunity to discuss these proposed plans with the members present and shared the preliminary plans that included apartments, a restaurant, community space (ballroom) with underground parking spaces. Tinklenberg stated that continuity is important within this project so that it is connected with the park, the neighborhood, and with the history and heritage of the Legion Post. The Legion wants to continue to serve the community and be a force within the community.

Chair Rudolph asked about veteran's preference for affordability apartments. Elwyn Tinklenberg stated that it has been a part of the discussion and the goal is to provide housing, especially to veterans, and possible short term stays for families that come to visit the VA hospital. Counselor Dennis Pelowski stated that they have talked with the County Commissioner and US Representatives who would be supportive of a veteran's preference and it is possible that the units could be subsidized.

Council Member Whalen expressed excitement for this project and appreciated many of the concepts from the proposed plans that would benefit the community especially the variety of unit sizes and asked if the affordability would be across the different unit sizes. Elwyn Tinklenberg stated that the units would all be treated the same way regardless of size and would be dependent upon who would reside in the unit. Council Member Whalen raised concerns about the abundance of parking; there could be more units instead of more parking. Director Poehlman stated that the plans are conceptual and the number of parking spaces could come down as the details change including handicap parking stalls as the current plans do not show any.

Elwyn Tinklenberg stated that the transit opportunities of this site make this a unique project and they want to incorporate those opportunities into the plan.

Council Member Hayford Oleary was glad to see this progress and raised a few concerns such as a view from the legion of the memorial (the inward facing of the legion), the possibility of the legion post closing, a main entrance to the building along Portland Ave that could possibly be moved to the northwest corner of the building so all could access and not just residents, and full trail widths for the sidewalks along Portland Ave to match the rest of the park. He also echoed the parking concerns from Council Member Whalen. Elwyn Tinklenberg appreciated the concerns brought forth by Council Member Hayford Oleary.

Commissioner Kennealy thanked them for the design and asked if the neighboring homes and businesses would be affected by this plan like the other plans that were illustrated. Director Poehlman stated that the other plans were created by a consultant and they are not a part of this plan.

Commissioner Surma asked for an explanation of public vs private pedestrian areas. Elwyn Tinklenberg showed the public pedestrian right of ways in the proposed plan and explained that they want to be a part of the park making it an amenity for the residents and public alike.

Council Member Trautmann echoed the comments and concerns that were previously stated and noted the curated approach to the neighbors of the site. He also asked about the ADA compliancy of the units. Elwyn Tinklenberg stated that there are currently four ADA compliant apartments which may change over time.

Chair Rudolph shared that sometimes during events at the ice arena that parking lots will be filled and to be mindful of that with the parking allotment at this site.

Commissioner Stursa echoed the excitement and comments regarding parking and asked about a shade study being completed as to not affect the pool. Director Poehlman stated that it is a requirement of code for a shade study to be completed. Diane Miller expressed appreciation for the great comments and explained that in order to shadow cast upon the pool it would have to come from the south. Elwyn Tinklenberg stated that regardless a shadow study will be conducted.

Mayor Pro Tempore Supple brought forth a message from a resident regarding more accessible parking spots. Architect Nic Meyer stated that the proposed project operations would be taken into consideration and the needs of the events that would be held there. Director Poehlman stated that there are calculations that they would complete to make sure that there are enough accessible parking spots. Elwyn Tinklenberg stated they are also making adjustments for EV charging stations outdoors. Mayor Pro Tempore Supple expressed excitement for the project especially for three bedroom apartments for families.

Council Member Whalen asked about the thoughts from legion members. Counselor Pelowski stated that the history of the building is important to some members but there has been support from members to offer more housing to veterans and the concept has brought members together. Vice Commander Keller stated that the goal of the legion would be to be more of a veteran community aspect versus just a bar. Counselor Pelowski also stated that the restaurant would be independently run so the legion can focus on the community aspect to provide more services to veterans. Elwyn Tinklenberg stated that when the project is completed the property would be owned by the legion, not an investor.

Mayor Pro Tempore thanked the developers for the proposal and thanked the legion for all that they have done for the community over the years. She asked staff if there was anything else that needed to be addressed.


Director Poehlman asked if anyone had any questions or concerns regarding pedestrian connectivity to the surrounding areas. Council Member Hayford O'Leary stated that it would be nice to have another exit from the ice arena to Portland Ave but it is not necessary as he saw no major problems with the connectivity and liked the north-south pedestrian connection that extends to the memorial. Counselor Pelowski stated that the proximity to the park, pool, and ice arena will make this a very sought after location to live. Commissioner Kennealy stated that it looks great from a pedestrian view. Council Member Trautmann appreciated that there is greenspace between the ice arena and the site.

Chair Rudolph commented that as a veteran he is very proud of the effort to create a space for veterans to share their time together.

ADJOURNMENT

The work session was adjourned by unanimous consent at 6:52 p.m.


Date Approved: May 10, 2022



Kari Sinning
City Clerk



Mary Supple
Mayor Pro Tempore



Katie Rodriguez
City Manager