

**WORKSHOP MINUTES
OAKDALE CITY COUNCIL
SEPTEMBER 12, 2023**

The City Council held a workshop on Tuesday, September 12, 2023 at Oakdale City Hall, 1584 Hadley Avenue North, Oakdale, Minnesota. The meeting began at 5:36 PM.

Present: Mayor Kevin Zabel

Council Members: Noah Her
Jake Ingebrigtsen
Andy Morcomb
Susan Willenbring

City Staff Members: Christina Volkens, City Administrator
Sara Ludwig, City Clerk
Jesse Farrell, City Engineer
Andy Gitzlaff, Community Development Director
Max Lohse, Community Development Specialist
Luke McClanahan, City Planner
Nick Newton, Police Chief
Jim Romanik, Public Works Manager
Kyle Stasica, Accounting Manager
Kevin Zittel, Facilities Manager

Others Present: Kim O'Brien, Vice President of Strategic Initiatives with St. Paul Area Chamber & Administrative Manager with Oakdale Area Chamber of Commerce (OACC)
Matthew Conant, Vice President of Customer Experience, EcoWater Systems
Tim Olsen, Partner, Carlson Partners
Dan Salzer, Director of Development, Scannell Properties
David Serrano, Principal, RSP Architects

TOUCH A TRUCK – COUNCIL PARTICIPATION WITH COMMUNITY

ECOWATER HEADQUARTERS CONCEPT PLAN

City Planner Luke McClanahan provided a brief introduction of the location of the proposed development noting that three land use approvals would be needed. Mr. McClanahan reviewed the two site plan options which have the stormwater pond in different locations. Ultimately, engineering and stormwater regulations will determine the placement of the stormwater pond.

In reference to the requirement that the parking be fully behind or within the building, Mayor Zabel asked how that is defined by staff. Mr. McClanahan indicated there would be flexibility with the developer's parking proposal as long as it meets the intent.

Mr. McClanahan reviewed the Planned Unit Development (PUD) deviations, the existing land use framework, and the proposed land use framework, in relation to the Helmo Station (HS) PUD. Mayor Zabel asked for clarification on the changes to the PUD. Mr. McClanahan stated that the developer might replat certain lots to set the stage for future development. Community Development Director Andy Gitzlaff indicated that an agreement would be signed between the City and the developer related to the PUD changes.

In reference to the high-density designation on the proposed land use framework, Mayor Zabel asked if that is three or four stories. Mr. McClanahan indicated it would be upwards of four stories.

Mayor Zabel asked about a financial impact related to the reconfiguration of the park within the HS-PUD as the proposed orientation may lead to less special assessments for necessary road maintenance in the future. Council Member Ingebrigtsen stated the City should accommodate the proposed land use framework to the extent possible.

Mr. McClanahan noted that the City will likely hire a consultant to evaluate the sewer infrastructure for the area.

Dan Salzer, Director of Development, Scannell Properties provided a brief background on the property and what has transpired with development since acquiring the property in 2017. Mr. Salzer asked for Council feedback on reserving the northwest corner for high density residential.

David Serrano, Principal, RSP Architects explained the two major components of the building – a space for research and development and a space for offices. The concept plan photos were reviewed. Mr. Serrano addressed the parking saying the tucking of the parking relates to the building design.

Council Member Ingebrigtsen asked if there is street parking in the immediate area. Mayor Zabel said possibly in front of the medium density housing, but none on Helmo Ave N. Mr. Gitzlaff added that there is street parking on 3rd St N, but this is a detail to work through as the PUD concept moves into an actual plan.

In response to Council Member Ingebrigtsen's question about the number of deliveries received, Matthew Conant, Vice President of Customer Experience, EcoWater Systems said the number of deliveries is very low, however, there is a delivery bay that is almost hidden on the backside of the building.

Council Member Morcomb asked if EcoWater is moving its Woodbury offices to this location and if they serve industrial and commercial customers as well as residential. Mr. Conant confirmed both. Council Member Morcomb followed up to ask how big the units are and how much water is drawn to do the intended research and design. Mr. Conant said the water usage data can be sent to the Council, but that the work at this facility is related to efficiently

designing assembly lines for international EcoWater facilities. Related to the water usage discussion, Mr. Gitzlaff noted that based on the findings of the sewer study, if additional infrastructure is needed, costs will be proportioned out appropriately to the remaining development parcels.

The Council was supportive of the EcoWater concept plan.

In terms of the revised framework plan for the HS-PUD, Mayor Zabel suggested revising the entire PUD to address parking, utilities, park dedication, etc. Council Member Ingebrigtsen was in agreement.

Mayor Zabel added that he personally would not support high density residential in the upper quadrant on 4th Street N.

Council Member Morcomb pointed out that there will be a large amount of pedestrian and bike traffic driven to the park within that PUD so he would like to make sure it is safe and accessible for all residents.

Next steps include additional research by staff on the revision of the entire HS-PUD.

BUSINESS RETENTION, EXPANSION, AND ATTRACTION (BREA) PROGRAM – REPORT AND PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

Mayor Zabel complimented Kim O'Brien, Vice President of Strategic Initiatives with St. Paul Area Chamber and Administrative Manager with Oakdale Area Chamber of Commerce, for her work on the Business Retention, Expansion, and Attraction (BREA) Program report.

Ms. O'Brien reviewed the goals of the BREA visits, and how the businesses visited were grouped by category (i.e., COVID-impacted, Women-owned, BIPOC-owned, Legacy Employers, Top Employment Sectors, and Geographic Diversity). She provided a map of all business visit locations noting the opportunity to expand into other parts of the City. The discussions during these visits involved business details, facility information and investment plans, workforce issues, transportation and transit insights, community satisfaction and connectedness, and ended with a business resource packet handout and City follow-up. The key takeaways noted in the report include business details (i.e., industry, age, size, impacting factors, etc.), facilities (i.e., own vs. rent, expansion plans, etc.), workforce (i.e., hiring patterns, etc.), transportation, transit, housing, reasons the businesses like being in Oakdale (i.e., convenient and accessible, small-town feel, community-oriented, etc.), and opportunities to make Oakdale better for business (i.e., transit investments, continuation of community events, support for relationship-building with local schools, etc.). Ms. O'Brien noted four recommendations which are 1) grow relationships and partnership with local schools, 2) continue efforts to advance transit infrastructure and make thoughtful connections to businesses, 3) enhance communications with business community and actively promote the City's brand, and 4) continue strong partnership with Oakdale Area Chamber of Commerce. The recommendations

for the BREA Program include 1) to continue the program annually, 2) continue partnering with the Oakdale Area Chamber of Commerce and the St. Paul Area Chamber, and 3) reduce the number of visits annually from 18 to 12.

Mayor Zabel would like the program to continue.

Council Member Her applauded Ms. O'Brien for her work on the BREA Report. He would like to continue the program based off of the recommendations.

Council Member Ingebrigtsen noted that this program far exceeded his expectations, and he would like to see it continue.

Mayor Zabel suggested eliminating some of the questions to make the interview feel more conversational. Council Member Ingebrigtsen added that asking some of those interview questions might open up other conversations.

Council Member Morcomb noted that nothing in the report addressed concerns these businesses might have with the City. Mayor Zabel indicated there is likely qualitative data related to this as some conversations about this topic did come up during the visits.

Council Member Her asked about if there are any communication strategies at the staff level or from the Chamber that can be used by the City. Mr. Gitzlaff stated that gathering resources for businesses and providing it to them has been a big focus for staff. Additionally, the City created a development project map and a business resource page on its website. Mr. Gitzlaff added that the BREA Report will be shared with the Economic Development Commission to gather their feedback.

Mayor Zabel offered that the City could provide content for the weekly OACC newsletter. Ms. O'Brien indicated that would be possible, and suggested the possibility of text message updates for business owners who may not use email.

PROPOSED CITY COUNCIL POLICY CC-002: MAYOR PROCLAMATIONS

City Administrator Chris Volkens explained that this proposed policy stems from past conversations with Council in which there was direction to develop a structure for proclamations. She asked for Council feedback on Section 4.8 relating to voting on a proposed proclamation at the meeting.

Council Member Ingebrigtsen stated that proclamations should not be controversial and require unanimous Council support.

Mayor Zabel was not comfortable with having a vote on proposed proclamations.

Council Member Ingebrigtsen was supportive of leaving the current process as is.

Council Member Willenbring would like to be aware of any proposed proclamations prior to the Council meeting. Ms. Volkens suggested, in lieu of a formal policy, she would send an email to the Council with the upcoming proclamations. Mayor Zabel proposed that Ms. Volkens send a calendar meeting invite to Council that includes the upcoming proclamations. The Council was supportive of this suggestion.

ADMINISTRATOR UPDATE

Ms. Volkens reported on the success of the Employee Appreciation Picnic that took place in August.

Ms. Volkens announced that the City webstore will be opening soon for a 3-week period. She noted that there is a specific Police Department (PD) section in which only PD employees can order from. Lastly, some of the logo-apparel color combinations have been updated.

Ms. Volkens stated that the interior finishes for the new Public Works facility will be in her office soon. Council will have a week to come provide feedback.

Ms. Volkens noted that 44 legislators, including Senator Tou Xiong (who represents Oakdale), have spoken out in opposition to a special session regarding school resources officers. Council Member Her suggested sending a letter to the State representative and Senator to express concern and show support for obtaining clarification through this special session. Mayor Zabel suggested such a letter come from Ms. Volkens or Police Chief Nick Newton. Council Member Ingebrigtsen was supportive of a letter.

COUNCIL TOPICS

Council Member Morcomb asked for an update on the prescription drug collection box that was brought up in May. Ms. Volkens said that Chief Newton is preparing a memo for a future workshop in October. Chief Newton noted that City Hall will be the only non-County-owned building to have a prescription drug collection box. Mayor Zabel suggested using the County funds from the opioid settlement to cover any City costs associated with this initiative. Ms. Volkens indicated she will make this request.

Mayor Zabel announced the passing of Bob Tilsen, a long-time developer in the area, and Dave Johnson, who worked for Crossroads Properties, and was a tremendous advocate for the City.

ADJOURNMENT

The workshop was adjourned at 6:51 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Sara Ludwig, City Clerk