

City of Excelsior  
Hennepin County, Minnesota

MINUTES  
EXCELSIOR WORK SESSION MINUTES

October 2, 2017

1. CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

Mayor Gaylord called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m.

Present: Councilmembers Beattie, Carlson, Caron, Miller (arrived at 6:07 p.m.), and Mayor Gaylord (arrived at 6:18 p.m.)

Absent: None

Excelsior-Lake Minnetonka Chamber of Commerce:

Executive Director Laura Hotvet, Marketing Director Jocelyn Youngstedt, Board Member Jennifer Morris, Board Member Bill Wolfson, Board Member Stephanie Degado

Also, Present: City Manager Luger, City Attorney Staunton, Public Works Superintendent Amundsen, Planning Director Smith, and City Clerk Orlofsky

2. AGENDA APPROVAL

Carlson moved, Beattie seconded, to approve the agenda. Motion carried 3/0.

3. JOINT MEETING WITH THE CHAMBER

Caron stated that the City Council would like to see Excelsior more predominantly listed in materials for legacy events such as the Fourth of July and Art on the Lake.

Wolfson explained that it is helpful to hear Excelsior's concerns and explained that the Chamber is trying to accommodate their sponsors as well. Wolfson mentioned that they are called the Excelsior-Lake Minnetonka Chamber of Commerce, so it may not be an issue to use Excelsior somewhere in the event materials.

Hotvet explained that the Chamber is considering establishing a special taxing district, to help support the local businesses and the community. The City of Wayzata is currently exploring a special tax district and collaborating with the Chamber to introduce it to the community. Hotvet would like to ask the City to help partner on this venture with the Chamber.

3. JOINT MEETING WITH THE CHAMBER- CONTINUED

Caron thought the City Council should review the information from the City of Wayzata to see if the special taxing district was something that might work for Excelsior.

Wolfson explained that a common complaint the Chamber hears from the local businesses is the need for more consistent foot traffic in town to help the retail stores. With this special taxing district, the Chamber would be able to provide more events which would provide more foot traffic.

Morris felt that the Chamber is doing well with what they have, however; volunteering in the office each day, she consistently hears the complaint that Excelsior has no lodging.

Carlson agreed there is a gap when it comes to hotel lodging in Excelsior.

Gaylord asked if they the Chamber of Commerce was ok with the City charging for road closures during events to cover the parking fees.

Hotvet explained that the Chamber could not afford to add those costs into their events. They are already struggling to pay the event fees in Excelsior.

Beattie explained that a successful example of this working was the Chainbreaker event. They were able to keep the roads open for their race, they made it work. The City Council would like to see more organizations keep the road open. The Council would like to see less of a burden on the residents who live along Lake and West Lake Street.

Gaylord added that events such as Fourth of July and Apple Day could be exempt from this idea.

Caron mentioned the other piece of this decision, was that the City Council is considering adding more parking meters. If the Council decides to add more meters, yet continues to close the roads for events, the City will lose that parking meter revenue. The Council would like to understand how to navigate forward with the Chamber to make it work for both parties involved.

Carlson suggested that the City Council and Chamber should decide what the legacy events are in Excelsior and to work with the Chamber on those. All other events would be held to the standard of no road closure.

Hotvet stressed the importance of partnerships and believes the City and Chamber can make a great team and help guide each other through the events.

Gaylord asked if the Chamber feels the parking meters are a barrier.

3. JOINT MEETING WITH THE CHAMBER- CONTINUED

Hotvet added that the businesses on Water Street do not want parking meters on Water Street. She said that it will affect the commerce and that it will send a negative message to visitors.

Caron explained that the City Council has heard complaints about the parking meters as well and it is a tough topic to discuss.

Miller explained that part of the problem is that Excelsior is in the top third for tax rates in the County, and those high rates drive high rent rates for retail owners. The City Council is using the parking meter revenue to try and keep the tax rates down.

Hotvet would like to see the City have a better partnership with the Chamber going forward.

Luger explained that the City does currently collaborate with the Chamber on several things, such as making allowances for parking meter revenue, and use of Public Works Staff for set up of events, as well as financial contributions.

Hotvet explained that she would like to sit down with the City's Event Coordinator and go through these events in depth and see what changes might work for both parties.

Wolfson explained that the Chamber's funding source is the most challenging issue they face, and he encouraged the City Council to go online and view their budget.

Carlson understands the parking situation is difficult and he is hopeful that the new valet parking partnership between the businesses and the City will prove to be a benefit.

MINNEHAHA LOCATION

Hotvet explained that the Minnehaha Board has had several meetings with the City of Wayzata and they have expressed interest in finding a home in Wayzata for the Minnehaha. Hotvet asked the Council to keep an open mind when they discuss locations for the Minnehaha. The Chamber does not want to see the Minnehaha move to Wayzata.

Luger explained that she spoke with the City Manager from Wayzata who said that they have had meetings with the Minnehaha Board and that the City does not have any intentions to build a storage facility for the Minnehaha in their park. The residents expressed concerns about it blocking views of the lake.

Gaylord stated that the Minnehaha Committee met to discuss the needs for the Minnehaha, which are a place to launch, a place to dock and storage.

3. JOINT MEETING WITH THE CHAMBER- CONTINUED

When he met with a member of the Minnehaha Board, it was clear that they were only interested in locating the Minnehaha in The Commons. Gaylord added that the Committee provided the group with five different locations to consider and they have only discussed one location, The Commons.

Caron explained that Community for The Commons has reports from two surveys stating that 86% of the residents did not want to see the storage for the Minnehaha or a museum in The Commons. The public expressed that they want to protect the open views on the lake and that they like the open feel.

With such a strong response from the public, Community for The Commons has not included storage for the Minnehaha in the Master Park Plan. They have included a dock for the Minnehaha, and a ticket booth down at The Port.

Caron believed that Studer Park was an option to be considered for storage of the Minnehaha. She thought that was a more appropriate site for storage.

Gaylord expressed that he was disappointed that the Minnehaha had no interest in any of the other four locations.

Beattie added that he would like the Minnehaha Board to review the five options and then come back to the City Council with their recommendation.

4. RFP FOR 810 EXCELSIOR BLVD

Miller explained that the cost for new infrastructure will only get higher as time goes on. The City's Tax rates are the highest in the South Lake area and the City needs funding to get projects started. Miller would like to see the Council move forward with the Request for Proposals (RFP) for the 810 Excelsior Boulevard site.

Gaylord explained that the moratorium has ended and there is nothing stopping the City from moving forward with the RFP process. He would like to see the City move forward as well.

Carlson would like to see the City Council issue a new RFP with the updated information.

Beattie would like the City to include a survey and a wetland delineation in the new RFP.

Caron agrees with moving ahead with the RFP, but would like the City to be clear about what it is the City is requesting.

Carlson added that he believed the City was vague on purpose because the City was not sure what would come back.

4. RFP FOR 810 EXCELSIOR BLVD- CONTINUED

Caron suggested the Council reject all the proposals and then issue a new RFP.

Gaylord asked if there was any acceptance on any of the current RFP's.

Carlson thought some of the RFP's submitted were interesting; however, he feels it would only be fair to reject the current RFP's and start over with the new information.

Miller would like staff to include the type of density the Council is looking for.

Caron would like to include Single Family Residential in the RFP.

Beattie would like to include Medium Density or less in the RFP.

Luger explained that staff will retool the RFP and bring it back to the Council for review.

Smith added that he will reach out to Adele's and see if the owner wants to participate in the process.

Wolfson suggested that the City vacate the street, while they are putting the RFP together.

Todd Frostad, Developer, asked the Council why they would want to go back through the process if they have a development that is close to what meets the density they are looking for. He suggested that the City work with that developer and tweak the design.

Beattie would like to terminate the original RFP and issue a new one. He believes that is in the City's best interest.

Caron added that the City Council did not promise anything and that there was no commitment to any developer in the current RFP.

Carlson said that the City owes it to the community to issue a new RFP.

Miller feels that a lot of variables have changed. The market has changed and the Council owes it to the residents to go back out for proposals.

Staunton will provide the Council with options regarding the current RFP process.

5. RFP FOR CITY HALL

Miller expressed his concerns with the poor conditions of the current City Hall. He explained that the high toxicity levels for our employees, coupled with the the ADA compliance issues are unacceptable. Two years ago the City Council spent a lot of money on a design to remodel City Hall and he thinks the Council needs to move forward.

5. RFP FOR CITY HALL – CONTINUED

He asked the Council to move forward with this project. Miller suggested that it might be wise to let a partner come in and purchase the building, and to have them design a City Hall that would meet the City's needs.

Beattie agrees that we need to begin the process. The financial demands of the City are so significant right now that they would like to see a developer come in and try to create ways to help fund City Hall.

Gaylord asked staff what their availability was to complete the task of putting an RFP together.

Smith explained that it would be best to complete the 810 Excelsior RFP before issuing another.

Luger added that the City Hall RFP will be detailed with a partnership component, and staff needs to research how to structure such an RFP.

Caron would like to look back at what is on the City Council's docket and have them prioritize the items.

Miller added that the City needs some progress on the topic, otherwise the City could face a potential lawsuit.

Staff will provide a list of the items the City Council wants to discuss for them to prioritize at a future work session.

The Council agreed to move forward with the 810 Excelsior Boulevard RFP now.

6. ADJOURNMENT

Beattie moved, Miller seconded, to adjourn at 7:28 p.m. Motion carried 5/0.

Respectfully submitted,

Ann Orlofsky  
City Clerk