



City of Grand Island

Tuesday, January 22, 2019

Council Session

Item G-2

Approving Minutes of January 15, 2019 City Council Study Session

Staff Contact: RaNae Edwards

CITY OF GRAND ISLAND, NEBRASKA

MINUTES OF CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION

January 15, 2019

Pursuant to due call and notice thereof, a Study Session of the City Council of the City of Grand Island, Nebraska was conducted in the Council Chambers of City Hall, 100 East First Street, on January 15, 2019. Notice of the meeting was given in the *Grand Island Independent* on January 9, 2019.

Mayor Roger G. Steele called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. The following Councilmembers were present: Mike Paulick, Michelle Fitzke, Jeremy Jones, Mark Stelk, Jason Conley, Vaughn Minton, Clay Schutz, Mitch Nickerson, and Chuck Haase. Councilmember Julie Hehnke was absent. The following City Officials were present: City Administrator Marlan Ferguson, City Clerk RaNae Edwards, Finance Director Patrick Brown, City Attorney Jerry Janulewicz and Public Works Director John Collins.

INVOCATION was given by Mayor Steele followed by the PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE.

SPECIAL ITEMS:

Friends of the Grand Island Parks Presentation. James Truell on behalf of *Friends of Grand Island Parks* gave a PowerPoint presentation. This was a volunteer group formed after the 2017/2018 Budget cuts to the Parks and Recreation budget.

The Mission of *Friends of Grand Island Parks (FGIP)* was to provide support to the City of Grand Island in order to assist in developing, maintaining, and increasing the value and importance of city parks as a place of natural beauty, culture, recreation and education for this and future generations.

This was a nonprofit fund sponsored by the Grand Island Community Foundation. Mentioned were the 20 parks currently in the City of Grand Island. It was the vision of FGIP to assist in developing, maintaining, and increasing the value and importance of city parks to ensure these parks are part of daily life for this and future generations and in turn shape the character of the Grand Island area. Their goal was to make Grand Island the destination site to see gorgeous parks with amazing art.

Presented was their vision of Stolley Park by revitalizing the current 4 large gardens into 8 smaller “themed” gardens with additional paths made from pavers and crushed rock. Each garden would have artwork reflecting the garden’s theme. Reviewed were the eight garden themes: A-B-C Garden, Kaleidoscope Garden, Sensory Garden, Pollinator Garden, Vintage Garden, Healing Garden, Peace Garden, and Vintage Rose Garden. The west end of the garden would include a Celebration Circle with additional seating or tables and a stage that could be used for special events such as weddings, anniversary celebrations, marriage proposals, or weekend concerts/performance. FGIP planned on “growing” an endowed fund to support the G.I. parks, ensuring a sound future.

Mentioned were the FGIP volunteers of which 87 individuals volunteered more than 4,100 hours this past year. 28 of those volunteers were adults with disabilities.

The following goals for next spring were:

- Build a bigger volunteer base
- Continue to urge the city to find the funding for full time and part time seasonal garden help
- Work on their FGIP Strategic Plan
- Begin scheduling themed events in the parks during the spring and summer
- Begin a capital campaign for FGIP
- Begin work on accumulating funds for an endowment that would support FGIP
- Watch for the article in NE Life Magazine featuring F.G.I.P.
- Begin work on the Stolley project
- Work on Stolley infrastructure including lights, a water feature, restore pavers and pathways to be handicapped accessible and safe, install watering system for the garden, replace benches, and repair existing gazebos
- Begin work on the Celebration Circle, wall, rose garden and Celebration Stage
- Complete one or more themed gardens with sculptures

Comments were made by Council concerning the importance of parks like this and thanking those people who volunteered. Vikki Deuel, 2531 Jan Street commented on building an endowment fund and that this group was a non-profit 501(c) 3 organization. Requested was for the City to put \$15,000.00 back in the Parks budget to hire seasonal help. They were also looking at grants. Parks and Recreation Director Todd McCoy answered questions regarding the cost of maintaining the parks. He stated it was too soon to tell what that cost would be.

Tax Increment Financing (TIF) Processes and Procedures in Grand Island. Regional Planning Director Chad Nabity explained what TIF was, the process of a TIF application, the impact of using it, how it had been used in Grand Island, and when it should be used.

TIF was a method authorized by the Nebraska Constitution that allowed cities to use an increase in real estate taxes to rehabilitate substandard and blighted areas. He stated substandard meant a predominance of improvements which were dilapidated, deteriorated, old, obsolete, overcrowded and which was detrimental to public health, safety, morals or welfare. Blighted meant generally an area in which there were: deteriorated structures, defective or inadequate street layout, faulty lot layout, insanitary or unsafe conditions, diversity or ownership, improper or obsolete platting, existence of conditions which endanger life or property by fire or other causes, or any combination which substantially impairs the sound growth of the community, retards the provision of housing or constitutes an economic or social liability and is detrimental to public health, safety, morals or welfare. Also mentioned was that it had to have one of these: average age of structures more than 40 years; unemployment 120% of state average; more than 1/2 of plotted land had been undeveloped and in city limits for 40 years; per capita income was lower than city average; or area had stable or decreasing population based on census.

Mr. Nabity stated before a TIF application was considered he would meet with CRA staff and others if needed to discuss the project. He would look to see if the area had been declared blighted and substandard and if the proposed project was consistent with the comprehensive plan. He would also look at how much of an increment would be created and if there were eligible expenditures.

Explained was the “but for test”. TIF could not be authorized unless the project was one which: a.) would not occur in the substandard and blighted area without TIF, and b.) was not financially feasible without TIF. Also explained were the Cost Benefit Analysis, TIF Bond, limitation of uses of TIF, and the purpose of the CRA.

Some of the benefits for using TIF could be:

- Preserve the Downtown Core
- Retain and Attract Retail Development
- Create Base Employment
- Support Infill Development
- Use Micro Blight and Small Projects to Remove and Remediate Problem Properties

Presented was the time frame for a TIF project.

Discussion was held regarding de-blighting an area by the City Council. Cities of the first class could not blight more than 35%. The City of Grand Island was currently at approximately 20%. Questions were brought forward as to the Council knowing what the project that would be using TIF was before an area was declared blighted and substandard. Mentioned was the possibility of creating a policy for TIF.

Council took a break at 8:54 p.m. and reconvened at 9:02 p.m.

Amos Anson, 4234 Arizona Avenue gave a PowerPoint presentation concerning the benefits of TIF projects. He showed a graph of those projects in downtown/Railside that did not use TIF. He spoke in support of TIF.

Ray O'Connor, 611 Fleetwood Road spoke in support of TIF and showed examples of successful projects in Kearney by using TIF. He mentioned the balance between the schools, employers, and housing for people moving into Grand Island with regards to TIF.

James Duff, 2623 West Waugh read several articles/studies regarding research he had done on TIF.

Councilmember Haase suggested that there be a committee created to draft a TIF policy to be brought back to Council at the Council Retreat in February. He suggested the following people be members of the committee: Councilmembers Vaughn Minton, Mike Paulick, Chuck Haase, Tom Gdowski, ex-officio members Regional Planning Director Chad Nabity, Finance Director Patrick Brown and Assistant City Administrator Brent Clerk.

Mayor Steele stated he would leave the decision of a sub-committee up to the Council President.

Cindy Johnson, Chamber of Commerce President and Dave Taylor, Grand Island Area Economic Development Corporation President spoke of the importance of housing in our community.

Council President Minton stated he agreed to have a sub-committee created to study a TIF policy.

Mayor Steele commented on sub-committees and encouraged the committee to keep an open mind.

ADJOURNMENT: The meeting was adjourned at 10:05 p.m.

RaNae Edwards
City Clerk