

Joint Development Authority Work Session
Monday, May 1, 2023
Arden Hills City Council Chambers

Minutes

5:30 pm

Present:

Joint Development Authority: Chair Jon Wicklund, Commissioner Nicole Frethem, Commissioner Victoria Reinhardt, Commissioner Tom Fabel, Commissioner Tena Monson

Also present: Dave Perrault (Arden Hills); Jessica Jagoe (Arden Hills); Kari Collins (Ramsey County), Rachel Tierney (Kennedy & Graven)

Roll call taken.

Commissioner Reinhardt asked if the JDA would be holding a Special meeting after the work session meeting. She expressed concern with the fact items would be delayed another 30 days if action was not taken.

Chair Wicklund reported staff would be directed to bring items back to the June 5 JDA meeting.

Commissioner Fabel stated he was concerned about the timeline as well, but noted it appears there was nothing being discussed that would require formal action. Director Collins explained staff would be bringing a draft Resolution for the JDA to consider in June regarding the Energy Committee.

Public Input

Donna Weiman, 1406 Arden View Drive, stated she was pleased the JDA would be discussing its communication plan. She encouraged the JDA to include Arden Hills residents in discussions regarding density, TIF financing, the coverage of deeply affordable units and other key factors. She asked that the JDA listen to residents now, rather than coming back later with plans and scenarios for them to consider.

Lyle Salmela, 1480 Arden Vista Court, commented on ideas he had regarding the energy task force. He suggested the group's main focus be to work with Xcel Energy to implement the microgrid based resiliency program that has been approved by the PUC. He recommended subcommittees focus on legal and regulatory, and another group work on education or communication. He provided further information on the benefits of a microgrid and discussed the ERIF.

Commissioner Fabel thanked Mr. Salmela for speaking with him this past weekend.

JDA Communications Planning

Sara Swenson, Goff Public, presented the JDA with information on communications planning. The coordinated joint communication efforts between the City of Arden Hills and Ramsey County were further discussed. She explained all communications would come from the JDA versus coming from Arden Hills or Ramsey County. She noted both groups would have approval over communications. She reported communications would include press releases, websites, newsletters and social media. She commented on the types of issues regarding this project that would make the news. She provided further information on how proactive and reactive media relations would be addressed. She recommended processes, notifications and a media protocol be created by the JDA.

Commissioner Reinhardt thanked Ms. Swenson for preparing a well thought out plan. She believed it made sense for the JDA to be sending out unified statements from one voice that represented both the City and the County.

Commissioner Monson agreed. She asked what was meant by all statements. Ms. Swenson stated this meant all JDA statements.

Commissioner Monson explained she supporting things coming through the JDA, but she anticipated the City may do things on their side. Ms. Swenson recommended knowledge sharing be done if this were to occur.

Commissioner Frethem concurred it would be a benefit to have a coordinated communication effort.

Commissioner Fabel agreed the JDA should be speaking with one voice.

Commissioner Monson questioned if the County has implemented this type of strategy with any of its other developments. Director Collins explained there were no other developments quite like this.

Commissioner Frethem reported this was a much larger project than any other joint powers agreements the County had pursued.

Chair Wicklund suggested a standing item be added to all future agendas that addressed Communications in order to allow JDA members to speak about items that needed to be communicated.

Commissioner Frethem supported this recommendation.

Commissioner Reinhardt stated the communication efforts would not require only certain people to talk, but rather would allow the JDA to have a philosophy in place regarding communication and that there is an alignment in messaging for the City and County.

Commissioner Frethem recommended the City's website point to the Rice Creek Commons page and vice versa. Director Perrault reported this action was taken last week. Ms. Swenson reported the main website for the development going forward would be RiceCreekCommons.com.

Chair Wicklund explained he has heard from the public that they would like transparency when it comes to public input and community engagement. He suggested the JDA consider holding an open house on the property.

Commissioner Frethem indicated she did this last fall and stated it was not safe to have people walking around on the property, but van guided tours could be conducted. She noted a virtual tour of the site had been created as well. Director Collins reported this event was extremely well attended and noted vans could be used again.

Commissioner Reinhardt recommended the virtual tour of the site be placed on the Rice Creek Commons website. Director Collins stated she could add this to the website.

Commissioner Reinhardt commented on community engagement and questioned if a third party would be brought in to assist the JDA with this. She discussed how a consultant (Goff) was brought in to help Ramsey County address the Purple Line.

Commissioner Frethem anticipated it would be challenging for the JDA to manage community engagement on their own and a consultant would be able to assist with gathering feedback.

Commissioner Reinhardt stated members of the public spoke tonight about the importance of community engagement. She explained the benefit of having a third party involved in community engagement would be to lay out a plan, provide facts to the public while gathering quality information from the public. She believed community engagement was a specialized skill, especially on controversial matters.

Chair Wicklund stated he understood the County has experience working with third party consultants for community engagement. He asked for a high level overview on what a more technical community engagement plan would be for the JDA.

Director Collins explained there were two different areas of community engagement that would have to be considered by the JDA. She indicated there was communications associated with the project status and this would be an appropriate roll for Goff to undertake. She suggested community engagement events be structured around specific themes and that if a third party consultant was brought in, that they be an expert on the specific theme.

Ms. Swenson commented on how it would be important for the JDA to be clear on its goals for public engagement.

Commissioner Frethem noted the JDA has not yet approved a budget. She recommended a budget be considered along with a community engagement process. She suggested the JDA be considerate about the goals noting a lot of work has been done on this project already over the past decade. It was her hope the JDA could build on this, while hearing and identifying the priorities from the public for this project.

Commissioner Reinhardt commented on what a great job Commissioner Frethem does with her community engagement events and suggested she be a point person for future JDA events.

Chair Wicklund suggested a JDA member from the City spearhead this because there might be different goals.

Commissioner Fabel stated there was a lot of enthusiasm from the Arden Hills residents to get this project moving forward. He noted the difficulty was there was only one scenario for the public to consider for this project. He indicated the JDA could lay this scenario out for the public to consider. He was of the opinion the JDA needed to consider more scenarios for the project given how the environment has changed over the past five years.

Commissioner Frethem recommended the JDA start with identifying values for the project and discussed how these values would drive the development scenarios.

Chair Wicklund asked if it would make sense for the JDA Advisory Committee to meet with Ms. Swenson to talk about status type events and to clarify goals from Arden Hills and Ramsey County in order to move this project forward. Director Collins stated this was a nice segue into the Roadmap conversation that the JDA would be holding at this meeting.

Commissioner Frethem questioned how media requests should be addressed. Ms. Swenson suggested this be a part of the process conversations. She explained the JDA would have to determine how staff would handle requests. Director Collins discussed how Ramsey County has managed proactive media comments in the past, noting Ms. Swenson would triage the statements.

Commissioner Monson stated she could support this so long as all members of the JDA were looped in the process.

Commissioner Fabel indicated this sounds like a nice idea, but he questioned how JDA members should handle a call from the press.

Commissioner Reinhardt explained when she receives a call, she contacts the communication staff person along with the Chair of the Board and questions how to handle the matter. She reported with JDA matters, Ms. Swenson would then be able to triage the situation. She indicated she would not come out against the Board or the JDA once they have taken action.

Chair Wicklund requested staff summarize how media requests will be managed by the JDA. Director Collins stated a spokesperson would not be elected but rather that the JDA would have a media contact (Sara Swenson) for proactive press releases in order to provide a coordinated message from the JDA. She recommended JDA members let phone calls go to voicemail and that emails be forwarded onto Ms. Swenson in order to allow her to respond on behalf of the JDA in a unified manner.

Commissioner Frethem asked if there could be a social media or newsletter presence for the JDA. Ms. Swenson reported a GovDelivery system could be created for residents interested in receiving information on this project.

Chair Wicklund supported the JDA having a distribution list created.

Director Perrault stated the communication plan would be considered by the JDA in June. He asked if the JDA was comfortable with the JDA Advisory Committee being the reviewing body for communications, until the communications plan is formalized.

Commissioner Monson explained she was fine with the JDA Advisory Committee vetting the proposals for now, but suggested there also be flexibility considered. Director Collins suggested once the solicitations close, that staff make a recommendation to a selection or advisory committee.

Chair Wicklund indicated he would like to be informed if any communications were sent out. He thanked Ms. Swenson for her time.

Energy Advisory Committee

Director Collins reported City and County staff are working on putting together an Energy Advisory Committee. They are proposing the Committee get together to start working on items, which will be brought back to the JDA for approval and formal recognition/establishment of the Committee.

Director Perrault explained he would like the JDA to identify key players for this committee in order to allow them to talk about the charge, scope and mission for this subcommittee.

Chair Wicklund suggested the JDA begin with addressing the scope of the committee.

Commissioner Monson stated the County had an MOU with Xcel in the past. She requested further information regarding this matter.

Commissioner Frethem stated the MOU was no longer in place. She explained the specific charge would be to recommend MOU terms with Xcel for the JDA Advisory Committee to approve. She questioned if this MOU should be between the JDA and Xcel or Xcel and the County. Director Collins stated she would speak with the attorney regarding this matter.

Commissioner Frethem recommended the environmental benchmarks and objectives be considered by the JDA for this development. She stated her only concern with this subcommittee would be it would not be the JDA's role to be prescriptive when it comes to specific needs. She supported high level recommendations be made along with goals for the site that were not too prescriptive.

Commissioner Reinhardt reported you can't talk about energy without talking about the environment. She understood there were environmental concerns that don't have to do with energy sources. She indicated it would be helpful to have an energy advisory committee because they could put together scenarios for the JDA to consider. She explained this development was larger than downtown St. Paul. She stated the energy opportunities that were available were sizeable and should be considered. She supported the energy subcommittee putting together a roadmap for energy use for the site with funding sources, providing options and not prescriptions.

Commissioner Fabel stated he believed the JDA was fortunate to have Commissioner Monson serving with this group, because she did this work for a living. He indicated he would be looking to Commissioner Monson for advice in this area.

Commissioner Monson indicated this was a good discussion for the JDA to have. She supported the JDA considering its goals to ensure a master agreement was reached. She believed an MOU goal with Xcel was appropriate. She discussed how unique this property was, because it was totally clean and there were no physical existing constraints. She stated it would be key for funding sources to be considered along with how and when to go for these funding sources. She reported she would like to see community engagement surrounding the energy on the site.

Chair Wicklund stated Commissioner Reinhardt and Commissioner Monson were interested in serving on an Energy Advisory Committee. He requested staff begin working on this matter with formal consideration to be made at the June JDA meeting.

Chair Wicklund recessed the JDA meeting at 6:48 p.m.

Chair Wicklund reconvened the JDA meeting at 6:52 p.m.

Roadmap

Directors Collins presented the Rice Creek Commons 2023 Roadmap and asked for feedback of when the JDA would like tasks to be completed and events (a public workshop, for example) to take place.

Commissioner Frethem stated in addition to the real estate market, broad housing demand and the need for housing affordability should be considered.

Commissioner Reinhardt agreed this was important. She indicated the master plan was basic and she understood some things have changed. She supported the JDA putting out different scenarios, including different options for housing. In addition, the jobs and transit within the development had to be considered. She explained the master plan had considered this, but she wanted to come up with more scenarios.

Chair Wicklund asked if Commissioner Reinhardt wanted an over view of the old MDA at the June meeting. Director Collins stated the TRC could be reviewed in June. She clarified an executed MDA was not in place. She supported the JDA coalescing around vision, mission and goals for the project so a term sheet could be created in order to build an MDA.

Commissioner Reinhardt asked if a new MDA could be built off of the old MDA. Director Collins clarified an MDA was not in place, but a regulatory code was in place.

Commissioner Fabel stated a master development plan was in place, which was a detailed document that addresses density and the zoning for the areas. He explained this document has become part of the zoning code for Arden Hills and any changes would require approval from the Arden Hills City Council. He supported the JDA reviewing this information as a baseline.

Commissioner Reinhardt agreed this would be valuable information. Director Perrault explained the zoning master plan was approved, which lays out density and guiding for different parcels. He stated this background information could be provided to the JDA at a future meeting.

Commissioner Reinhardt supported this information being presented to the JDA. Director Collins recommended the City provide a regulatory walk through for the JDA at the June 5 meeting. Director Perrault suggested he present this information to the JDA Advisory Committee and that they make a recommendation on when this information should be brought to the JDA.

Commissioner Frethem stated she supported the JDA receiving a regulatory overview as well. She reported in order to move from goals to a term sheet, the JDA would have to think in terms of goals. She understood the financial aspects of this project would have to be taken into consideration. She suggested this discussion be moved up from October. She noted the County is not in the same place that it was in 2019.

Commissioner Monson asked if there was a draft term sheet for the JDA to review. She believed this would be a good foundation for the JDA to consider when moving through its goals, values and mission.

Chair Wicklund questioned when the JDA should address the terms sheet and financials.

Director Collins discussed how the term sheet would put goals in place and inquired if the JDA wanted to address things like density without having community engagement first.

Chair Wicklund stated he was hearing the JDA was interested in seeing the basic contents of a term sheet. Director Collins stated a basic template term sheet could be prepared for the JDA to review.

Commissioner Fabel reported community input should be gathered after the master development plan was drafted and again when scenarios for the project were created.

Chair Wicklund questioned when a basic template term sheet could be brought forward to the JDA. Attorney Tierney reported she could have this available for the JDA to discuss at their June 5 meeting.

Commissioner Fabel commented on how important it would be for the JDA to have a developer on board.

Commissioner Monson suggested the JDA have quarterly goals to help prioritize tasks. She explained she liked the fact the JDA held this work session meeting. She recommended a work session meeting be held every other month. She indicated the density and affordability discussions would likely be folded into other topics.

Commissioner Frethem recommended traffic, transit and all ability access be discussed at a future meeting. She anticipated information regarding these topics would be available once the updated AUAR was complete. Director Collins stated AUAR updates would be given as the project was being completed and noted this work would be conducted parallel with roadmap.

Commissioner Frethem commented jobs and job creation should also be addressed at a future meeting.

Commissioner Reinhardt stated the timing for the skeletal information (basic term sheet) would assist with laying out the roadmap.

Commissioner Fabel recommended all members of the JDA read the master development plan. He noted this document was previously approved by the City Council and Ramsey County. He reported in order to properly modify this document all members of the JDA should be familiar with this document.

Chair Wicklund asked if Commissioners were open to scheduling work session meetings in the months opposite (July, September and November) of the regular JDA meetings. Director Perrault proposed the JDA Advisory Committee work out those dates.

Commissioner Monson stated this may not be enough work session meetings.

Chair Wicklund questioned if this was an effective use of time and if additional work session meetings should be considered.

Commissioner Monson anticipated additional work session meetings would have to be scheduled.

Commissioner Reinhardt agreed.

Director Collins reported the County would be hiring a Redevelopment Manager who would take the lead for this project. She discussed how the JDA would have to be sensitive to staff time.

Commissioner Comments

Commissioner Fabel stated an RFP has been put out for the thumb parcel. He noted this parcel was currently zoned as campus commercial and provides for multiple single tenant buildings or campuses within a business park atmosphere. He reported this does not include a retail possibility, yet he was aware of one retailer that wanted to submit a bid. He indicated this would require a Comprehensive Plan Amendment from the City. He commented further on the process that would have to be followed in order to amend the Comprehensive Plan. He questioned if the consensus of the JDA was to direct City staff to amend the Comprehensive Plan. Director Perrault reported the JDA could request City staff to move forward with this amendment and the City Council could consider this further on May 8. He stated a comp plan change would also have to be considered by the County. Director Collins reviewed the uses that would be allowed on the thumb property. She appreciated how Commissioner Fabel wanted to be as expansive as possible, she also wanted to keep in mind the JDA was not trying to steer the proposals towards a specific land use. She recommended the City consider the full range of uses that should be allowed on the thumb property and not just commercial.

Commissioner Reinhardt supported this recommendation and stated she would be doing her homework on the thumb property.

Commissioner Frethem agreed the full range of uses for the thumb parcel should be considered.


Chair Wicklund reported the next JDA meeting would be held on June 5, 2023 at 5:30 p.m. at Arden Hills City Hall.

Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 7:31 pm.

Approved


Jon Wicklund, Chair


Date