

**HOUSING AND REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
CITY OF RAMSEY
ANOKA COUNTY
STATE OF MINNESOTA**

The Housing and Redevelopment Authority conducted a Work Session meeting on Tuesday, May 1, 2012, at the Ramsey Municipal Center, 7550 Sunwood Drive NW, Ramsey, Minnesota.

Members Present: Chairperson Colin McGlone
 Councilmember Randy Backous (arrived at 8:36 p.m.)
 Commissioner David Elvig
 Commissioner Bob Ramsey
 Commissioner Sarah Strommen
 Commissioner Jason Tossey

Members Absent: Councilmember Jeffrey Wise

Also Present: HRA Executive Director Kurtis Ulrich
 Public Works Director Brian Olson
 City Engineer Tim Himmer
 Fire Chief Dean Kapler
 Police Chief James Way
 Human Resources Representative Colleen Lasher
 Senior Planner Tim Gladhill
 Management Analyst Patrick Brama
 Development Manager Darren Lazan

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson McGlone called the Work Session meeting of the Housing and Redevelopment Authority to order at 8:34 p.m.

Commissioner Backous arrived at 8:36 p.m.

2. TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

2.01: Presentation Regarding Potential Athletic Facility in The COR

Development Manager Lazan reviewed the staff report and asked the HRA to provide its thoughts on this concept.

Bradford Dobbins, Better Basketball Boot Camp, described his vision to build an athletic facility in The COR. He stated he trains basketball at Andover, Rogers, Minneapolis, Spring Lake Park, and Woodbury, and gets a lot of feedback from his people that there is not enough gym space for volleyball. For the past eight years, he has been focusing on how to make something happen, not just the building, but to unify different communities so everyone is involved. Mr. Dobbins stated

he sees a good fit with what Ramsey is doing in The COR and its mission statement, believing that an athletic facility will enhance that vision. Mr. Dobbins proposed Phase 1 to include six volleyball courts and four basketball courts with Phase 2 involving the YMCA and Ramsey Athletic Association.

Councilmember McGlone asked about handball courts.

Mr. Dobbins stated he wants to promote a community effort. He stated Phase 2 would involve his international connections with amateur and pro teams and provide cross-training opportunities. He estimated that this type of facility, 141,000 sq. ft., would cost \$22 million. Mr. Dobbins stated everything would be state-of-the-art and with the attitude he would bring, it would make things happen. Mr. Dobbins stated he is more than confident this can be accomplished in Ramsey's new downtown. He stated his main concern is the negative of what happens after five years and he wants to assure long-term synergy will occur with Phase 2.

Councilmember Backous stated he can vouch for the fact that gym space is needed for sports like basketball and soccer, especially with schools closing around Ramsey's district. He felt gym space was under rated by the general public as to economic benefit but he has noticed at the Plymouth dome and other gym centers that during tournaments, the parking lot contains vehicle license plates from surrounding states. Councilmember Backous stated he was not sure how the City would be involved, but thinks this type of facility would draw people to Ramsey.

Mr. Dobbins stated Ramsey is trying to create something new so he wants to start off right and be involved with a good group of people. He stated he trains because of the kids, not for the money. Mr. Dobbins noted the Andover facility was constructed for the YMCA and hockey, but not for basketball and now volleyball is pushing him out by paying for three years in advance. Mr. Dobbins stated he has connections in place now to make this happen and wants to discuss a partnership with the City.

Councilmember Backous noted parents of kids who train year round spend a lot of money and are a captive audience so he believes they will also shop in the area. He suggested the key was to make the facility as flexible and all encompassing as possible to include all sports and opportunities.

Mr. Dobbins stated he is dedicated to basketball and volleyball but others can be put into place that are dedicated to other sport disciplines.

Councilmember Strommen stated she agrees there is a need and asked how the public would access this facility.

Mr. Dobbins stated the name will be "The Facility" and the public will go through his basketball program or basketball/volleyball associations with offices in The Facility. He felt the need and demand for gym time is huge so he wants all of that established prior to construction.

Councilmember Elvig stated he echoes the comments of Councilmember Backous and was awed with the amount of traffic such a facility will generate. He stated he thinks the Legacy will draw

as well and provide opportunity to parlay that facility for larger tournament events. Councilmember Elvig stated he does not understand this proposal enough as to how it will fit into The COR and asked if it will be a domed facility or hard surfaced, if there will be trails or a covered walkway, and if construction will be one solid building. He pointed out there will also be a monstrous need for parking.

Development Manager Lazan explained how the site plan sketch was derived. He displayed a diagram depicting the footprint of this proposal and noted there is a placeholder for a YMCA. He stated the Development Team is not yet ready to address the issue of City participation but wanted input from the HRA on whether it supported this type of facility. On the parking issue, they will look at this site as well as the theater site to amass more parking. He asked for feedback on the facility, structure, YMCA, and community center components.

Todd Mohagen, architect, stated the most important question they have is needing direction from the City if they would support this proposal, if this is the correct location, and if it fits the City's long-term needs. He explained it would be a phased facility, they do not yet know who all the players will be, and Phase 1 will include basketball/volleyball.

Mayor Ramsey stated that as much as he talked about not wanting to fund a community center, it is clear it is a need. He noted that during the Business Expo, 3 out of 4 people asked, "Where is the community center?"

Mr. Dobbins asked why the City would not be interested in funding it since it would be for the community.

Mayor Ramsey stated roads are more important than a community center and there are only so many dollars to go around.

Mr. Dobbins stated during the Work Session meeting, the Council discussed roads versus trails, and that if more people are involved then the roads will be there. He asked if the same would not be true with this facility. Mr. Dobbins stated he is visualizing he would implement his network on a grand scale, to have a historical type of building, because eventually he will become a citizen of Ramsey.

Mayor Ramsey stated he could put more emphasis in doing something like this but the key is when looking for road dollars, the more entities sharing in the process, the less cost for the City and the higher the benefit. He stated he is willing to look at this and the YMCA.

Mr. Dobbins stated he met with Anoka County and they offered \$300,000 to acquire land so he will be meeting with them again and wants to get more people involved. He assured the HRA that he can make this happen.

Councilmember Elvig stated there is not another community that would be more supportive of this type of facility and private/public partnerships than Ramsey. He stated he wants to continue to build on that reputation and sees a need and benefit for this facility but thinks this is not the most appropriate location. He stated this building needs to look good and meet the vision of The

COR, thinking it will take more than \$22 million to accomplish. Councilmember Elvig noted a phased approach will require the HRA to look at Mr. Dobbin's business plan since the property would have to be held for the future phases. He stated he sees this proposal as a challenging project but noted Ramsey has taken on other challenging projects. He stated it would have to be a strong private/public relationship and he is willing to look at this proposal.

Rick Nolan, partner with Bradford Dobbins, stated this will be unique to the City and Minnesota. The phases planned will have international teams, coaches, and trainers to provide cross training, which has not been done in this area.

Development Manager Lazan stated it appears there is HRA consensus to further explore this proposal. He noted the HRA has indicated in the past it would only consider a community center if through a partnership. Development Manager Lazan noted many parents have to drive their children across the metro area for athletic training and Mr. Dobbins' proposal would result in providing specialty training in Ramsey so its residents do not have to drive across the metro area to gain that training.

Mr. Dobbins stated he trains the kids to tap into themselves and coaches the mental part. He believed that once people recognize what he is capable of doing, people will be attracted. Mr. Dobbins stated he feels he is the best to get the job done.

Development Manager Lazan stated he and Mr. Dobbins have already met with Anoka County and will have a follow up meeting. He asked whether there is concern with Anoka County coming into Ramsey to partner with a facility.

The consensus of the HRA was that it would welcome and support a partnership with Anoka County.

Development Manager Lazan stated the Development Team will explore other sites and provide better architecture for the HRA's review.

Mr. Dobbins thanked the HRA for entertaining his presentation.

The consensus of the HRA was to support further discussions on an athletic facility in The COR.

2.02: Review Comprehensive Plan Amendment for The COR

Senior Planner Gladhill reviewed the staff report and asked if the HRA supports proceeding with the amendment for 2,500 housing units or 2,300 housing units and slight adjustments to the development plan.

Chairperson McGlone noted that changing density in The COR results in going vertical and raises traffic concerns. He asked if it has been contemplated that many COR residents may be train riders and create less impact on roadways.

Development Manager Lazan advised of the discrepancy that exists between the area calculations/unit counts and engineering calculations on trip generation. The trip counts were calculated when residential units were at 2,500 and 2,800. However, staff realized there was a disconnect with the Comprehensive Plan housing unit count following one path and the engineering calculations a different path. When staff tried to pull them together, it resulted in 1,500 housing units as being the maximum that the existing transportation system and improvements, over time, can accommodate. Development Manager Lazan noted the Metropolitan Council put a lot of money into this project and wants to know where it is going. He explained density can be created to meet more of the Metropolitan Council's goals; however, it will result in a further gap in the engineering side in what traffic can be accommodated. Development Manager Lazan stated an in-depth traffic analysis was not conducted when the HRA started the AUAR so increasing beyond the maximum will necessitate diving into numbers at each access point and where density falls.

Commissioner Tossey raised the option of meeting the Metropolitan Council's goals half way, by eliminating or limiting the scope of Lake Ramsey and increasing housing on the north side. He stated concern that townhouses may not be feasible in the area north of Bunker, Section 22, due to the topography.

Development Manager Lazan explained the density can be increased in The COR without reducing Lake Ramsey but trips in and out need to be addressed. He stated staff will get aggressive on the internal trips we capture to solve some of the traffic trips.

Commissioner Strommen asked whether the traffic studies done on the original plan for 2,500 housing units was flawed so it needed to be redesigned to 1,500 housing units.

Development Manager Lazan explained when you take the 2,500-unit number and trip matrix, the math does not work. The number of trips calculated for 2,500 housing units was much lower than it should have been for that number of rooftops.

Commissioner Strommen noted the reality is that it was redesigned to meet the market of today, not when the Ramsey Town Center was designed. She stated she understands the Metropolitan Council wanting 2,500 housing units, but it is a different world today.

Mayor Ramsey stated the Metropolitan Council was told they would get 2,500 housing units so it invested in the community. But, the City re-visioned the project for a reason, because it did not meet market reality.

Development Manager Lazan stated the HRA can make the numbers work through internal capture and densification. He noted the reality is that the HRA took out what is arguably the least quality suburban density (sea of townhomes) and put energy into a transit village with 70 units/acre, a train station, and plazas, so it is frustrating to work through this issue when Ramsey is doing what Metropolitan Council wants for TOD grants.

Senior Planner Gladhill stated staff can present to the Metropolitan Council that Highway 10 improvements are needed to gain that density and the full picture needs to be looked at.

HRA Executive Director Ulrich recommended the City try to accommodate the housing units the best it can and noted a solution may be to move housing units west of Armstrong Boulevard, develop housing on the periphery, which would lower traffic impact in The COR and may be a better solution than pushing everything to the middle.

Mayor Ramsey stated he does not envision housing on the west side of Armstrong Boulevard but, instead, a large retailer. He preferred to come up with a solution of where housing would actually happen. Mayor Ramsey suggested the issue of densification be addressed later.

Senior Planner Gladhill clarified that staff is not recommending any solution but looking at options. He noted the City instituted mixed use zoning to create flexibility and the area west of Armstrong Boulevard may be an area to prove the point that it will accommodate more housing units.

Chairperson McGlone stated the map has to be fixed but development may not occur that way, which can be addressed in the future.

Development Manager Lazan clarified there are retail opportunities on Armstrong Boulevard and potential housing would be to the west. He noted the City's \$650,000 grant is being "held hostage" by the Metropolitan Council until its housing unit goals are met.

Senior Planner Gladhill recommended Ramsey be up front with the Metropolitan Council about its concern with traffic capacity with housing density at that level.

Chairperson McGlone asked where the housing units need to be to make it work with the Metropolitan Council.

Senior Planner Gladhill stated the Metropolitan Council will want a base of 2,500 housing units but staff may be able to convince them to lower it to about 2,200 housing units. Ramsey also needs to address the concern that while it is open to showing this forecast, the City remains concerned that transportation capacity is not there.

Public Works Director Olson asked what was forecast in TOD application.

Senior Planner Gladhill explained that application focused on housing along Center Street, about 1,000 housing units, but did not count all of the housing units, and was used for the recommendation to approve the grant.

Public Works Director Olson asked if the Metropolitan Council told the City it had to change the Land Use Plan to get the grant.

Senior Planner Gladhill stated the Metropolitan Council did not but some members have opposed any reduction in number of housing units.

Public Works Director Olson noted the application scored high enough to get the grant based on the current plan but the Metropolitan Council is now saying the HRA has to change the projections even higher than the scored application.

Senior Planner Gladhill agreed that is the case and explained that what caused the confusion was that the Comprehensive Plan amendment showed reduction in forecast community wide and the Metropolitan Council did not realize it included a reduction of housing units within The COR as well.

HRA Executive Director Ulrich suggested staff ask the Metropolitan Council what is the minimum number of housing units that is acceptable since The COR transportation system will not support the higher number. He cautioned the HRA against being locked into millions of dollars of transportation system improvements that it cannot fund.

Chairperson McGlone stated the Metropolitan Council wants 2,500 housing units, which the transportation system cannot support, and would probably not agree with 1,500 housing units. He suggested staff negotiate a compromise in the middle range.

Mayor Ramsey noted the HRA needs to be careful so it does not reach the “tipping point” and end up spending more to fix the transportation issue than the grant is worth.

The consensus of the HRA was to confirm the land use/site layout and authorize staff to negotiate a compromised number of housing units with the Metropolitan Council.

3. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR’S REPORT

None.

4. COMMISSIONER INPUT

None.

5. ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Commissioner Tossey, seconded by Commissioner Ramsey, to adjourn the Work Session meeting of the Housing and Redevelopment Authority.

Motion carried.

The Work Session of the Housing and Redevelopment Authority adjourned at 9:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kurtis G. Ulrich

HRA Executive Director

ATTEST:

Jo Ann M. Thieling
City Clerk

Drafted by Carla Wirth
TimeSaver Off Site Secretarial, Inc.