

COMMUNITY CENTER WORKING GROUP  
TUESDAY, MARCH 15, 2022

Maple Grove Community Center  
6:30 p.m.

- Meeting** The Meeting was started by Parks and Recreation Director, Chuck Stifter at 6:30 p.m.
- CCWG Members Present** CCWG Members were: Deb Stock; Pat Shephard; Ken Kumpula; Rachelle Johnson; Martha West; Tyan Wilson; Randy Marchessault; Lee Newman; Kristy Barnett; Phil Leith; John Ferm; Andy Mielke; Brett Angell; Al Madsen; Joyce Deane; Lise Spence-Parsons; and Chuck Skajewski.
- CCWG Members Absent** CCWG Members absent were: Steve Fischer, Colin Steen, Bob Joiner, Ted Lyons, and Jan Cariveau.
- Also Present** Also present at the meeting were: Heidi Nelson, City Administrator; Chuck Stifter; Angie Dehn, Community Center Manager; Aimee Peterson, Recreation Superintendent; Carol Morris, Communications Coordinator and Executive Assistant to the City Administrator; Justin Templin, City Attorney; Cara Anderson, Admin Secretary of the Parks & Recreation Department; and Nancy Blankford, project architect from HGA.
- Role of the Working Group** Director Stifter explained the purpose of the meeting and working group. He noted the Community Center expansion and renovation project serves more than the city, but also the surrounding regions.
- Introductions** Each attendee introduced themselves with their name and affiliation.
- City Attorney, Justin Templin presented on the responsibility of a group working on behalf of the city. Mr. Templin also explained what the MN law says about what the city can/cannot say and do about the referendum and project. The city can only provide facts and data about the proposed tax and proposed project to be funded.
- Mr. Templin explained the difference between a city employee representing him/herself versus a voice of the city or city endorsement. He gave examples of what city employees can and cannot say, reminding them to convey their message from and “I” perspective.

He noted the safest thing to do is direct people to the microsite and FAQ document. He provided situational examples a city employee may face, along with the appropriate response. In situations, city employees should ask themselves, “Am I speaking on behalf of the city or my own personal opinion?”

Mr. Newman asked a clarifying question of if in informal conversations, they can say what they feel but should hide involvement in the CCWG.

Mr. Templin responded to the question that they can say they are part of the CCWG but need to be clear on “this is my opinion” versus speaking for the group.

Director Stifter reshared the main point of stating it is your opinion when speaking with people.

Mr. Stifter provided data of the long-term plan to serve the growing community. He noted the building is 25 years old and serves not only Maple Grove residents but those from the surrounding regions as well. Additionally, he stated the City of Maple Grove has developed a plan to invest \$116 million in expansion and renovation.

He noted the 28% population increase since 1997, the structural and mechanical systems in need of repairs or updates, and growing demand for a range of activities as examples of our need to reinvest.

## **Summary of Community Engagement**

Ms. Blankfard, HGA architect, described the assessment of the building needs and community engagement regarding the needs of the Community Center.

She noted the various forms of engagement and gathering of comments, which include: scientific residential survey, open house, community meetings, pop ups at the center, Maple Grove Days, etc. She stressed that input was received from a wide demographic.

Ms. Blankfard explained the results of the research using two rankings. The results of the open house yielded an expanded senior center, new arts center, and expanded aquatics as the top three amenities (in that order). The community wide survey

showed fitness spaces, expanded aquatics, and senior center with the highest priority rating (again, in that order).

## **Summary of Planning**

Ms. Blankfard discussed master planning process which included a space inventory, determination of best fit and value for space, pros & cons, needs, and gaps. She described the cost assessment which determined how much it would cost to operate and the long-term costs.

She presented the master plan recommendations for both upper and lower levels. For the upper level, she highlighted a third sheet of ice, demolishing the middle portion to create an aquatics area, moving/creating a larger active area where LifeTime currently is located. For the lower level, she noted aquatics, locker rooms, and fitness areas.

Director Stifter described that the financial strategy was developed by city staff and leadership to support the master plan and community. He stated the total cost would be \$116 million. Of that, 90 million would come from the sales tax, 18, million from state bonding, and 8 million from other funding sources. He explained that the half cent sales tax allows visitors and residents to invest in the community center. This increase would cost each resident an estimated \$3.20 a month.

Ms. Johnson commented that some residents think if they vote to adopt the sales tax increase, the city will keep it in place once the \$90 million has been reached. Mr. Stifter confirmed the referendum is set to end once the \$90 million cap has been reached.

Mr. Stifter laid out the timeline if the referendum passes, with design work of the master plan beginning in 2023 and construction starting in 2024. The construction process would be about 2 years and it is hoped the community center would remain open during construction. If the referendum does not pass, the aging problems with the building would still need to be addressed. In this instance, the city would pursue a \$59 million project for repairs and upgrades. This option would mean a raise in property tax of \$134 per year on the average home.

Mr. Ferm commented that for a family of four, \$3.20 a month times 12 months would equal out to \$153.60. He noted the

sales tax increase might be more per household than the property tax increase. Mr. Stifter noted the comparison of what the city would be getting with the \$116 million project versus the \$59 million project. It was then asked if the \$3.20 per resident included children. The answer to this was discussed and City Administrator, Heidi Nelson, noted she would find out the answer.

Ms. Johnson commented that if passed, it will take 20 years to reach the 90 million and then inquired how long the property tax increase would be for if it did not pass. The response from the Ms. Nelson was it would be a 20-year bond.

Mr. Madsen asked if the \$116 million quote is based on today's dollar. Mr. Stifter noted the total cost does factor in inflation over time.

Ms. Blankfard explained the diagrams showing the renovations that will happen if the referendum is not passed. She noted the layout is nearly the same as it is now, there will not be a 3<sup>rd</sup> sheet of ice, and the \$59 million project is just for us to be able to keep what we have for 20 more years.

Mr. Kumpula noted the diagrams show as if there is no more LifeTime and asks if it is confirmed that LifeTime is moving out. Mr. Stifter stated negotiations are still in process. Mr. Kumpula asked if LifeTime owns the building and the property. Mr. Stifter confirms they do, noting that the pool is shared with them. He explained that while it is not yet a sure thing, the acquirement of LifeTime helps them to be able to set up the master plan.

Ms. Johnson asked if the \$116 million includes the purchase of LifeTime. Mr. Stifter responded that it is not and they have other sources for that. Ms. Johnson asks if it will be an additional tax payer cost for the purchase of LifeTime. The City Administrator responds it will not be, rather city capital.

Ms. Spence-Parsons asked Mr. Stifter if he had a feeling of how the vote will go. Mr. Stifter responded that they feel good about the strategy and plan that has been put together. Noting the high value of it. The City Administrator noted a community survey will go out in April, which will give an idea of how people feel about the project.

Mr. Stifter noted they have been in discussion with LifeTime a number of years. LifeTime has an interest in relocating within the city and is also in need of a refresh. Negotiations will continue.

Mr. Skajewski inquired if there would be any restrictions as to who does what if LifeTime relocates. Mr. Stifter described the differences in what each party offers the community.

Recreation Superintendent, Aimee Peterson, commented the senior fitness classes are currently required to be hosted elsewhere, but it is desired to move them all to the Community Center.

It was asked if other communities have done something similar with local options sales tax. City Administrator, Ms. Nelson, responded that Elk River, Rogers, and Excelsior are a few examples. It was also noted that suburbs are finding the option as a great tool and are requesting to pursue the local option sales tax.

Ms. Barnett asked about the process to get authorization to ask the public the sales tax question on the ballot. The City Administrator explained the process and noted it took about a year.

Mr. Mielke inquired about the recent Plymouth Community Center renovation and if they did a sales tax for it. Community Center Manager, Angie Dehn, responded that Plymouth did a bonding of \$5 million and a hospitality tax increase. She also noted the decision was not put to the voters.

Ms. Johnson inquired that if LifeTime was purchased but the referendum does not pass, what happens with it? Mr. Stifter responded if the referendum does not pass, the plan would be to move forward with the minimum investment plan that was laid out. This plan does incorporate the acquisition of LifeTime, as well as renovation of it.

Mr. Marchessault commented the master plan layout of the lower level shows a 2<sup>nd</sup> lap pool. He inquired if this was correct. Mr. Stifter noted the design is not final but still in process. Ms. Peterson, commented that having separate pools

would allow the controlling of water temperature for various program offerings.

Mr. Stifter laid out the focus and timeline for the Community Center Working Group meetings. The first few meetings will focus on educating attendees about the project, community effort, and the website. Later meetings will move on to discuss design space and needs. The purpose of the Community Center Working Group is to talk through things and refine/reshape the plan. Mr. Ferm mentioned a walkthrough of the building would be helpful.

### **Next Meeting**

Director Stifter inquired of the group the best time to hold the monthly meeting. After some discussion, it was determined Mr. Stifter would communicate the decision to the group once it was made. The group was asked for final comments or suggestions, as well as to think about what they'd like out of the project that they may not yet see.

Ms. Spence-Parsons noted it would be good to have a scale on the maps. Ms. Blankford stated she would have a scale added to the next plans.

A discussion was had regarding data on the current building usage, noting it would be helpful to know who uses what in the building. Mr. Stifter responded the data is already being tracked. Recreation Superintendent, Aimee Peterson, noted having the demographics for members but not for drop in visitors. Additionally, the demographics are tracked for those who sign up for a program through the Parks and Recreation department.

The topic of cost of membership was brought up, mainly if the cost would increase under the master plan. It was also noted that there are a lot of gym options now in Maple Grove and the need to compete with their costs. The appeal for the Community Center should be greater to users than other gyms. Mr. Stifter responded with the potential to have membership set up like the current model and noted this is something that needs to be studied more. Ms. Peterson shared on the factoring in of recreational programming when thinking of membership options. She also noted that fitness equipment will be a new market for the Community Center.

Ms. Shepard asked if there has been an area that dropped off in attendance. Mr. Stifter noted this is something that has been studied and they have a good grasp on it. It was also noted that swim lessons are an area that had dropped. Ms. Peterson clarified that there has been staffing issues in regard to swimming lessons. The demand for lessons has been greater than the staff available to teach.

Mr. Newman asked about the potential for curling to be added to the plan. Mr. Stifter responded curling had been on the original list but needed to be removed in order to keep costs down. Other options are being looked at for curling.

Ms. Barnett brought up the challenge of parking, noting there are currently times/events where there is not enough parking. With further expansion, how will there be enough parking to meet the needs. Mr. Stifter noted parking as a good topic to discuss at a future meeting. The master plan layout shows multiple parking areas, dedicated to types of activities/events. It also shows the reconfiguration of surface lots. Ms. Barnett asked if parking will be added under the minimum investment plan option. At this time, limited parking would be added under the minimum investment plan but there would be other ways to strategize parking demand.

Ms. Johnson asked if other uses for the space under the master plan has been looked into. It was noted the “active” purple space on the master plan layout includes space to program for other things. Mr. Stifter stated this is something we already have been doing but it could be doubled with the expansion/renovation. Ms. Johnson inquired about the possibility of hosting events and tournaments to bring other revenue and people in. Mr. Stifter and Ms. Peterson, emphasized the need to develop the preferred membership model first. There was also the caution of programming too much, noting that the current model allows a good mix of usage. While the master plan will allow for additional programming options, some things will depend on the ultimate membership model that will be used.

Mr. Newman asked for advice on how to respond to residents expressing bitterness over how the previous vote to build the community center played out. (Those who voted no on it, it didn't pass, yet it was built anyways.) It was noted that one

thing different about this project is the transparency the public is given. It is clearly laid out what will happen if the referendum does not pass. Additionally, attention was drawn to how plan A and plan B scenarios are stated on the website.

The meeting was closed out by Director Stifter at 8pm.