

COMMUNITY CENTER WORKING GROUP

Thursday, May 5, 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: Brett Angell, Kristy Barnett, Joyce Deane, John Ferm, Steve Fischer, Rachelle Johnson, Ken Kumpula, Phil Leith, Ted Lyons, Al Madsen, Andy Mielke, Lise Spence-Parsons, Pat Shepard, Colin Steen, and Martha West.

CCWG Members Absent

CCWG Members absent were: Jan Cariveau. Bob Joiner, Randy Marchessault, Lee Newman, Chuck Skajewski, Deb Stock, and Ryan Wilson

Also Present

Also present at the meeting were: Chuck Stifter, Parks and Recreation Director; Angie Dehn, Community Center Manager; Aimee Peterson, Recreation Superintendent; Carol Morris, Communications Coordinator; Cara Anderson, Admin Secretary of the Parks & Recreation Department; Todd Rapp and Todd Stone of Rapp Strategies, Inc.

Rapp Strategies -Public Communication Update

Director Stifter welcomed the group and introduced Todd Rapp, CEO & President and Todd Stone, Senior Director of Rapp Strategies, Inc.

Mr. Rapp presented on engaging city residents about the Maple Grove Community Center Project. He highlighted four key reasons the city should engage residents: City leaders and staff are viewed as experts of Maple Grove government and expertise attracts questions. Residents are to local government what customers are to businesses, and should not be ignored. If local governments don't communicate with residents, someone else will. The city can learn from questions it receives and feedback can help the city know if the communication efforts are effective.

He noted some reasons good proposals fail to obtain public support, highlighting the importance of communication from the city. The city communicates though various ways, including newsletters, media stories, website, social media, brochures,

and meetings. These and other avenues are foundational to building a communication plan leading up to September 23, which is when early voting begins. Research that informs city communications is also conducted. Some examples of this would be surveys, community meetings, and user input.

Mr. Rapp noted successful local government communication should be transparent, accurate, consistent, and accessible. He went on to discuss the two types of communication during a referendum: information and advocacy. Information communication is city lead, contains factual information, and uses public dollars. Advocacy communication is citizen lead, uses private dollars, and does not include city involvement.

City communication focuses on nine areas: a vision for the future, the need, the process, the plan, the benefits, cost and tax impact, consequences of inaction, how to find more information, and when and where to vote. Mr. Rapp reiterated the community center planning does not include a plan B. It was stressed that in order to promote a plan B, it would need to be presented to and approved by city council. He also noted there will still be ways city leaders can talk about various options if an alternative plan is needed.

Mr. Stone presented an overview of key messages to the public. He stressed the importance of maintaining a clear and consistent language for the vision, need, and process. He reiterated that, by law, the city is only allowed to provide factual information. As the Community Center Working Group is a city task force, members cannot conduct advocacy as a group but are able to as individuals. Members of the group are able to be those who can answer questions and direct people to the city site for more information.

Lise Spence-Parsons commented that people want to vote yes but are concerned about what happens if the project goes overbudget. There is concern the overspend will be paid for by the residents. Director Stifter responded the pre-estimate costs do account for inflation and include a conservative material cost. Community Center Manager Angie Dehn explained how, during the bid process of the project, there is opportunity to modify various things in order to keep the project on budget.

Kristy Barnett noted the legislature is only approved for 90 million, which means it is not possible to go beyond that.

Rachelle Johnson brought up the question of how to promote and market to those who don't use the services offered by the community center. She stressed the importance of assuring those who don't use the Community Center still see the value it brings to the community. Colin Steen commented how it compares to school bills for those without kids. It is important to highlight how the referendum is about future generations and the overall betterment for the community. Andy Mielke mentioned to highlight that the Community Center is a multigenerational facility. A person might not currently use the center but may down the road. Mr. Rapp noted the importance of explaining what is available at the center to those who haven't visited it. Ms. Barnett stated how the expansion will allow for more business opportunities, having a positive economic impact on the city. She noted the importance of thinking of it more in the long term rather than the next six months or a year.

Ms. Spence-Parsons inquired in the instance the referendum does not pass, can it be brought to vote again. Mr. Rapp answered it could but would first need to go through the full process for legislative approval.

A discussion took place regarding the specific expansion amenities that ought to be highlighted. Mr. Rapp noted the challenge of highlighting various components, as the funding details are not yet finalized. He also touched on the different forms of communication that are available and how each highlight different things, yet keeping the main message consistent.

Ms. Barnett inquired how to walk back the \$59 million minimum investment plan that has already been put out to the community. She specifically asked how to respond when a member of the community inquires about it. In answer to the questions, Mr. Rapp stated to note it is one of the city's options.

Brett Angell suggested having the building façade as one of the highlights, noting how voters may appreciate the image's visual benefit to the community. It also may peak interest for people to visit the website for more information.

Director Stifter informed the group of new informational materials available at the meeting. These included a business card and flier with the QR code to the website, as well as revised info and FAQ sheets. PDFs will be sent out post meeting to the group.

New Community Outreach Planning

Director Stifter explained a new outreach effort aimed to target specific community groups, at their meetings. This approach will share project plans, answers questions, and listen to feedback from community members. Each will include a brief presentation and time for Q&A. The outreach presentations will run June through September. He provided a list of potential groups and asked for input on any that may be missing from the list. Director Stifter encouraged group members to participate in the outreach meetings. Kristy Barnett suggested adding something for National Night Out. John Ferm noted the importance of targeting youth associations beyond the hockey associations. Lise Spence-Parsons suggested having a booth at the art fair during Maple Grove Days.

A tour of the Plymouth Community Center is scheduled for May 19 at 5 p.m. An email will be sent out post meeting to gather RSVPs. All are encouraged to attend. The tour will be approximately an hour.

The next meeting will be on June 2, 2022 at 6:30 p.m. The meeting was adjourned by Director Stifter at 8:10pm.