

COMMUNITY CENTER WORKING GROUP

Thursday, October 6, 2022

Maple Grove Community Center

6:30 p.m.

Meeting	The Meeting was started by Parks and Recreation Director Chuck Stifter at 6:34 p.m.
CCWG Members Present	CCWG Members were: Kristy Barnett, Joyce Deane, Rachelle Johnson, Phil Leith, Al Madsen, Lee Newman, Randy Marchessault, Andy Mielke, Chuck Skajewski, Martha West.
CCWG Members Absent	CCWG Members absent were: Brett Angell, Jan Cariveau, John Ferm, Steve Fischer, Ken Kumpula, Ted Lyons, Pat Shephard, Lise Spence-Parsons, Colin Steen, Deb Stock, Ryan Wilson.
Also Present	Also present at the meeting were: Mark Steffenson, Mayor; Heidi Nelson, City Administrator; 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; and Todd Stone, of Rapp Strategies, Inc.
Welcome and Agenda	Director Stifter welcomed the group and gave an overview of the agenda for the night.
Open House Feedback And General Feedback	Director Stifter noted the open house held on September 7 was well attended, with over 100 people. He said those who participated in the tours seemed very engaged and had asked good questions. He requested feedback from those who attended the open house. Aimee Peterson and Carol Morris both shared they received feedback from a couple concerned about the Community Center focus being more for regional usage, rather than Maple Grove residents. Andy Mielke noted he was encouraged by the turnout, thought it was very informative, and heard mostly positive comments from those who attended. He did mention he spoke with one person who questioned why the city didn't plan for the current needs. Chuck Skajewski stated he also heard that same feedback, but overall received good responses from participants and thought it was a successful open house.

Rachelle Johnson shared that the general feedback she has heard is either overly positive or not supportive of the sales tax referendum. Those who are not supportive seem to be ones who haven't researched the project and do not know what it entails. She has also heard people are worried about inflation, do not think a third sheet of ice is needed, or have concerns about the increased operating costs.

There was a brief discussion regarding the status of Life Time. Director Stifter noted there had not been any change but continued discussion.

Randy Marchessault mentioned someone asking about a total relocation. Director Stifter reminded the group of previous discussions on the topic and the great expense that would occur with a relocation.

Phil Leith stated that most of the people he has talked to are for the Community Center project.

Ms. Johnson noted she has heard some concern about the effect of the local option sales tax on businesses. Director Stifter referenced a study done by the University of Minnesota on economic effects of local sales tax increases in other cities. The study found little evidence of a negative impact. He noted a majority of businesses seem supportive. It was also mentioned that when the City of Rogers passed a local option sales tax, it did not seem to have a negative effect on businesses.

Kristy Barnett shared that she had met people who are not on social media nor are familiar with the expansion and renovation project. She has also met those who are not supportive of it or are concerned with the increased operating costs which will incur. She stressed the importance of getting the information out in a variety of ways, so to reach everyone.

Communications Update

Director Stifter gave an update on the community presentations that had been completed, as well as those scheduled. Carol Morris noted the website hits have been stronger each day while the emails and voicemails have been

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quieter. Todd Stone added the website has had over 10,000 unique visitors. He explained how they are seeing the traffic rates double after a social media post has been added. Mr. Stone noted a 15% engagement of the website, which he explained are solid numbers for a website.

Mr. Stone went over his presentation agenda. He did a review on the importance of communicating with the public. He highlighted city led communication areas, which are factual and meant to inform and engage residents. He also noted the value of advocacy communication, which is citizen led and operates independently from the city. Mr. Stone gave an update on the completed communication efforts, including op-eds by the mayor and park board chair. He noted they are seeing more engagement and questions on social media, as well as more direct website visits. In regard to the final weeks, he stated that information on voting would be highlighted. He reminded the Community Center Working Group of their role to answer questions, stick to facts, and initiate conversation.

Rachelle Johnson asked if there was ever discussion on limiting the sales tax to certain items. Heidi Nelson responded that the city would need to follow Minnesota state sales tax rules. It was suggested to develop a clearer way to explain the half-cent sales tax as it seems to be a cause of confusion for people. One suggestion was to show an actual penny with half of it shaded. It was also suggested by Ms. Johnson to highlight the half cent sales tax is it was not a new tax. Mr. Stone noted Rapp would create a few social media posts to address these suggestions.

Martha West commented she would like to see bolder communication from the city. There was some discussion on what the city can and cannot do or say. Ms. Nelson noted she would have the legal memo regarding parameters sent out post meeting.

A question was put forth regarding the ballot language. Mr. Stone read the question to the group and noted he would have it added to the website.

The meeting was closed out at 7:55 p.m. by Director Stifter.