

MINUTES
WORKING SESSION
CITY COUNCIL
401 WEST WASHINGTON STREET
EAST PEORIA, ILLINOIS

October 6, 2020

The Honorable John P. Kahl Mayor of the City of East Peoria called the Working Session of the City Council of the City of East Peoria, Illinois to order at 5:15 P.M. with the meeting having been properly noticed.

Upon the roll being called the following answered present: Mayor John P. Kahl, Commissioners Daniel S. Decker, Mark E. Hill, Seth D. Mingus, and Michael L. Sutherland.
Absent: None.

Mayor Kahl explained that the City Council is meeting for a Working Session and that no formal business will be conducted by the City Council at the meeting. He explained that the purpose of the meeting is to have a Working Session regarding the Levee Park Plan Presentation. Members of the East Peoria Community Foundation Board (the "Foundation") were present for the presentation. Ty Livingston, Director of Planning and Community Development, introduced Foundation were present to make presentation. The Foundation has been preparing and making a park design. There are some grants coming through and quite a few donations to support the park. Board President, Sue Yoder Portscheller and Board Secretary/Treasurer, Dennis Triggs (Treasurer) gave the presentation. Mr. Triggs explained the background of the Foundation. It was created in 2014 for the purpose of being an organization that could build a park without using East Peoria taxpayer money. The Foundation is intended to be long-term and go beyond the creation of the park. This is an organization is a depository for fundraising. In addition to the park, the Foundation received a couple hundred dollars for a K-9 for the Police Department and received money from the Caterpillar Foundation to give to the East Peoria Food Pantry. The inspiration for the Foundation came from Jim Mamer. Mr. Mamer and Morton Community Bank built the most prominent building in the Levee District, and the building is here because of Jim Mamer. After building the MCB Building, Mr. Mamer turned his sights on the Levee Park. Mr. Triggs explained that they visited a park and fountain in Lexington, Kentucky that are inspirations for the Levee Park. The Foundation hired consultants to do a long-term plan. The Foundation has relied upon a number of experts including Aupperle Construction, Midwest Engineering and Associates, and another firm that has expertise in obtaining grant monies. Ms. Portscheller became Board President upon Mr. Mamer's early passing. Genna Buhr, John Kahl, Cindy Reinhart, David Mingus, Diane Oberhelman, Robert Dittmer, Matthew Mamer, and Gary Uftring comprise the Foundation Board. Mr. Triggs explained that there have been several donations, including those from the Ray and Peg Bahnfleth Family, Cullinan Properties, Ltd., Fondulac Bank, Fondulac District Library, Former Mayor Jim Spinder Family, CEFCU, Heinold Banwart, Uftring Auto Group and others totaling \$800,000. The Reading Gardens was Phase 1 of the Levee Park, and there is grant that has been approved for \$500,000 from the DCEO. However, the Foundation is still waiting on the money being in hand. The Foundation has also applied for an OSLAD grant for \$400,000 that was put on hold.

A picture of the Levee Park Reading Garden that is Phase 1 of the Levee Park was shown, as was a rendering of the proposed design of the rest of the Levee Park. This rendering was submitted to the DCEO for the grant. There have been several meetings with the Park District, Library District, Rotary Club, and other community taxing bodies and groups. The Foundation sought public input and received several thousand responses to ensure that the Foundation is doing what the community would like to see for the Levee Park project. Attention has been focused on creating a Park that is aesthetically pleasing and also utilitarian in nature.

The Foundation is seeking to enhance and not take away from events that occur in the City currently. The Foundation is planning on stamped concrete and some trees but not too many trees to allow for events to occur and make the space more attractive for events. A splashpad is planned with a fountain surrounding the splashpad. The plans also include space for the Farmer's Market, tents, and other special events. The Foundation is mindful about not planning for hard permanent features that will make it the area less versatile. Concerns have been raised regarding the terraced seating and that it might block the view of businesses on Richland Street. However, the fountain planned is at the same elevation as the terraced seating, and there will be an archway entry into the park. The terraced seating will be no higher than 5 feet. The timing of this project is important, and the Foundation has spent time analyzing how the Levee Park project will be done in phases. The terraced seating can be done in the last phase. A stage is planned, and the terraced seating is an amenity to get the \$500,000 grant. Mr. Triggs explained that the Levee Park plan can accommodate the Vietnam Traveling Memorial Wall in the future. A fundraiser has not been initiated yet; however, fundraisers can be done in the future to raise more funds. The next phase in the plan is for the area along West Washington Street and is estimated to cost \$800,000. The Foundation has \$500,000 in a grant from the DCEO and around \$570,000 in the bank. The Foundation wants to ensure that they have buy in from the City. There is a \$400,000 grant that the Foundation believes it will be awarded. Mr. Triggs expressed gratitude for the enormous effort that has been made by many people with the Foundation and the Levee Park project. Mr. Triggs explained that Director Livingston has assisted in being the liaison to the Foundation so a little of his salary can be said to have been spent assisting the Foundation. He discussed the Flaherty and Collins apartment building that is planned, and he believes that the Levee Park could be a good amenity for them as well. Other plans for the Levee Park include top lighting, security cameras, and separate restrooms from the atrium inside the Civic Complex. Mr. Triggs believes that having a separate restroom makes the Levee Park more attractive to those holding events, as it provides a modern fully equipped restroom that does not require the Civic Complex to be open. He explained that the Foundation has ensured in their plan that the facility can be driven on for the car show and has other temporary facilities. The Foundation plans do limit the number of cars that can be parked on the property currently. Mr. Triggs suggested closing down part of Richland Street for a time.

Ms. Portscheller explained that the park will be green, a family-centered image, and will attract younger families to the community. People could come to the park to get their pictures taken. She explained that there are a lot of uses for the area to enjoy, including the splashpad, picnicking and among others. There is also an outreach committee with the Foundation. The Foundation concluded their presentation and asked for questions or comments.

Mayor Kahl asked for any comments from the City Council.

Commissioner Decker commented on the success of the Vietnam Traveling Memorial Wall. He feels that this is a good idea and agrees with the restrooms. He inquired about the distance between the Reading Garden and the fountain. It appears from the drawing that there is at least forty feet between the Reading Garden and the fountain. Commissioner Decker expressed his gratitude on the work completed on the park and plans, and he feels that any issues can be worked through.

Commissioner Hill thanked the Foundation. He feels that visibility across the park is important; the five feet elevation is a workable groundwork; the elevation and seating area is going to be key; and the Levee Park will be a positive thing for the city. Commissioner Hill expressed fondness toward the balancing of the events and fully supports the car show. He believes that the maintenance and who will take care of the Park need to be worked through, and he looks forward to breaking ground soon.

Commissioner Sutherland expressed reservations about the water features as part of the Levee Park plan, because he is not enthusiastic about it. The property has to stay a park and a community park and as long as no taxpayer has to pay for the Park, he feels that the Foundation should do what they want with the Levee Park.

Commissioner Mingus likes the Levee Park plan but is concerned about the maintenance of the park, splashpad, and fountain. He feels that there will be a cost to the City regarding the maintenance and that it will need to be discussed.

Mayor Kahl asked if there was anyone in the audience who wished to make comments.

Rick Swan, Director of the East Peoria Chamber of Commerce came up and thanked the Foundation. He expressed concerns about the elevation change for events. He believes that the elevation changes take away from events and asked that the berm be moved. He feels that it needs to be discussed and feels that the maintenance is a concern. Director Swan explained that the survey done by the Foundation reflected that people are concerned about the current events that are going on. He feels that there are a lot of things to be discussed and explained that around 45,000 people attend events here.

Mayor Kahl asked for any further comments from the audience. There was no response.

Mr. Triggs explained that the location of the elevated seating on the works in its current planned location and that turning everything around does not work. The Foundation's effort is to enhance community events.

Mayor Kahl asked for any other comments. There was no response.

Mayor Kahl thanked the Foundation and explained that his only concern is the elevation and berm.

Motion by Commissioner Decker, seconded by Commissioner Mingus; Mr. Mayor, I move you that we adjourn the meeting.

Yeas: Commissioners Decker, Hill, Mingus, and Sutherland and Mayor Kahl.

Nays: None.

Mayor Kahl declared the motion carried and the meeting adjourned at 5:59 P.M.

/s/ Morgan R. Cadwalader

Morgan R. Cadwalader, City Clerk