



COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

AGENDA

4:00 PM August 21, 2024
2nd Floor Conference Room, City Hall

1. ROLL CALL

- a. City Council: Brent Lenssen, Kyle Strengtholt, Gary Bode, Scott Korthuis
City Staff: Heidi Gudde
Guests: Mary Lou Childs, Dean Francis, real estate couple (did not catch their names), Shane Bajema

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- a. Community Development Committee Meeting Minutes of 7/17/24 approved as presented.

3. DISCUSSION ITEMS

- a. **Land Swap – Benson Crossing.** Shane Bajema (developer) and Mary Lou Childs (property owner) joined the Committee to discuss a potential land swap with the City. The swap would trade an easternly portion of their privately owned property that is burdened by the Runway Protection Zone (RPZ) with an equal amount on the west end of the city-owned property. The city-owned property was purchased with a grant from WSDOT more than 20 years ago and is meant to reduce land use conflicts that may occur due to runway use immediately to the east. The property parcel is larger than the portion meant to be used for this protection area.

Bajema explained the development concept which would include homes with private hangars as well as townhomes. The hangar homes would allow for additional airport-access properties if the city agrees to allow for additional taxi-way. The first step, however, is to confirm if a land swap is feasible.

The benefit of the swap is that development would be focused on the future arterial - Pepin Parkway frontage at the west end of these properties rather than on the Benson Road frontage. And, more importantly, vertical encroachments could be removed from the Runway Protection Zone (RPZ) which extends north (and south) outside of the parcel currently owned by the city.

Bode expressed interest but cautioned that it seemed there were still details yet to be worked out for the development including ensuring that modifications could be made to the city-owned property per the agreement of the grant. Strengholt expressed support for swap and saw only benefits for the City. Lenssen expressed concerns regarding the obligations of the property but, if this was not a hurdle, agreed that this swap and removing vertical encroachment from the RPZ is a good precedent for future protection on the south side of the runway protection parcel.

Conclusions: CDC encouraged the property owner and the development group to continue with the concept of the land swap. Staff will be working with the developer on a draft agreement which will then be vetted by the City's legal counsel prior to being presented to full Council.

- b. **Transpo Contract.** Gudde presented to the committee the proposed contract and budget for consulting services to update the City's Transportation Element. The Element is a required portion of the City's Comprehensive Plan and, to date, has not been included in current consultant scopes. Transpo has worked closely with the City on other transportation project including the most recent Comp Plan updates.

The Committee was concerned about the cost of the contract. Staff reported that Transpo was the only consultant who responded to the Request for Proposals. The Mayor also noted that Transpo was the consultant who was updating Transportation Elements of all neighboring cities and Whatcom County as well. The Committee agreed that Transpo was likely the best suited for the update.

The initial scope, Gudde reported, had been over \$150k but reductions in transportation-specific outreach and gleaning data from existing contracts that the city has with Transpo reduced the overall cost.

The Committee asked if any of the costs could be covered by grant funding for the Comp Plan update. Gudde reported that the \$125k in grant funds were being used to update the comp plan as a whole and compensate the County for coordinated work. There were no remaining funds in that grant for the Transportation Element. However, Gudde offered to review the Transpo scope with staff and pull out elements that could potentially be funded by the Climate Planning Grant. The city has remaining funds in this grant. To access these funds a revised grant request could be submitted to the Dept of commerce so that some of the nearly \$120k could be funded with grants money.

Conclusions: Transpo contract to be taken to the full Council for approval. In the meantime, Planning staff will identify elements of the contract which could be added to an amended Climate Planning grant request.

- c. **2025 Budget.** Gudde discussed the upcoming budget for 2025 for each of the three divisions in Community Development including staffing levels and the largest initiatives. The Department continues to work on the transition of paper permit submittals to digital permit submittals. This improvement will have benefits for Com Dev but other divisions throughout the City.
- d. **Downtown Parking.** The group briefly discussed the availability of parking near downtown noting how the parking lot owned by People's Bank at Liberty and 5th Streets. Others noted that there was lots of on-street parking available just a few blocks away from Front Street. The committee agreed that continued coordination between business owners and their staff was worthwhile. And, perhaps the Downtown Business Association could engage with People's Bank about an agreement to use the parking lot.

Next Meeting Date: September 18, 2024