

City of Sandstone
EDA Meeting Minutes
June 24, 2020

CALL TO ORDER: 6:01 p.m. This meeting took place in-person with a Zoom Video Conference option.

ROLL CALL: Spartz, Anderson, Palmer, Gaede, Rahier, Riley

Members absent: LaBounty

Staff present: Executive Director George, Recording Secretary Nelson

Others present: Mike Fischer with LHB, Alyssa Dykstra with Everyone's Table/Community Garden

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:

EDA Members, guests and staff recite pledge of allegiance.

APPROVE AGENDA

Motion Spartz, second Riley to approve the agenda with the addition of a Closed Session for the purpose of the sale of property. Motion carried 6-0.

APPROVE MINUTES

Motion Spartz, second Gaede to approve the minutes of the May 27, 2020 Regular EDA Meeting and the June 17, 2020 Special EDA Meeting. Motion carried 6-0.

NEW BUSINESS:

Community Development Initiative Plan

The EDA has been working with The Northspan Group to compile all of the action steps, “to-do” items, from 11 different processes/procedures and community input sessions that have occurred over the past few years. The EDA planned to use this data to set priorities for those items that are related to economic development.

In the meantime, the City was informed that the application process with the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency (MHFA) for redevelopment of The Rock requires a Community Development Initiative Plan (CDIP). The CDIP is intended to include housing in the community’s overall efforts to pursue various community, economic, educational or transit-oriented objectives.

Therefore, it was determined that the CDIP can not only help with the MHFA application but also help with the priority setting goals of the EDA and other City Commissions and Boards. Northspan’s scope of work was then expanded to include a community engagement process and a report that would meet MHFA guidelines. To kick off the process, Northspan conducted a survey of community members and then invited those community members to participate in two priority-setting sessions, which took place on June 11th and June 18th. The final report was received on June 24th, just prior to the EDA meeting. EDA Members were provided with a copy of the report, and George reviewed several sections with the EDA. She also explained the City's vision statement and how it has been shortened to a focused and clear proclamation.

Motion Gaede, second Riley to approve the Community Development Initiative Plan as prepared by The Northspan Group. Motion carried 6-0.

The Rock Campus - Library/Civic Spaces

Administrator George reported that, the Library and Civic Spaces will be separate projects than the housing portion of the redevelopment. She stated that it would be helpful to start the predesign work specifically for the Library and Civic Spaces (Sandstone History and Art Center, Old School Arts Center) so that layout options can be explored and

also so that the City can put itself in a position to seek funding sources for these spaces. She asked for a proposal from engineering firm LHB due to their history and involvement in the property.

Mike Fischer with LHB attended the meeting via Zoom to discuss the proposal. He spoke about the team he has put together to work on the design. MSR Design works with LHB a great deal and they are willing to help plan a library and civic space that will work for the community for years to come. The predesign work will take about three months during which they will be looking at the best way to fit the civic spaces in with the adjacent housing development.

The first step would be a project planning meeting with the steering committee to make sure all of the goals are the same. Several of the meetings will be done virtually so that the travel costs will be lessened. The meetings are recorded so that the City may access them at later dates.

LHB will come out with the architects and structural engineers to walk through and analyzing the buildings. There will be individual meetings involving the Library, History and Arts Center regarding each entity's programming needs. The site and building concept drawings and cost estimations will be prepared. Fischer stated that LHB is prepared to begin their work in early August. This date is flexible depending on the needs of the City and possible funding application deadlines.

Motion Anderson, second Spartz to accept the proposal from LHB for predesign services for the Library and civic spaces to be located at 501 Court Ave N (The Rock) in the amount of \$44,500. Motion carried 6-0.

CONTINUING BUSINESS:

Community Garden

A contingent of Everyone's Table Board Members and community members would like to organize a community garden. They considered several location possibilities, and really like the newly-acquired property by The Rock; specifically, the field that borders 7th Street and Commercial Avenue. This area is flat, mostly fenced already, has good exposure to the sun, and is located in town close to neighborhoods and apartment buildings.

They are in the very early stages of discussions and would like to write for some grants for assistance. The University of MN Extension office is one possibility for funding. Step 1 is to see if the EDA is willing to allow the use of this property for a community garden.

Alyssa Dykstra attended the meeting via Zoom to provide more information about the project. She spoke about the garden in Pine City and how they would like to model theirs after what Jimmy Johnson, UofM Extension Educator has been doing with SNAP, as an educational space for youth. They are hoping to put in 6-8 raised beds, a wash station, and picnic tables. If there is community interest, some of the land could be tilled and used by others in the community. One of the EDA members asked about the grant process. Everyone's Table would be overseeing the entire garden project.

George received a couple of quotes for running water from the street into the property, and installing a hand pump. The cost is approximately \$7,000. The question was raised as to if the grant money that Everyone's Table is applying for would cover that cost. Dykstra wasn't sure.

The only hesitancy of the committee is that in the future, someone might want to purchase the property. Gaede suggested that the adjacent lots that the School District owns might also be an option for the Community Garden. There was discussion about the possibility of Everyone's Table forming an alliance with the School District because they are also exploring possibilities for an educational garden project.

Motion Spartz, second Rahier to allow Everyone's Table to move forward with their plans to develop a teaching/community garden at EDA-owned property on 7th and Commercial Avenue. Motion carried 6-0.

Various Updates

- The Rock Redevelopment
 - The City's application has been **approved** for the Strengthening Communities Grant offered by Minnesota Housing Partners to help with pre-development expenses. The grant will cover up to \$10,000 in expenses, with the EDA covering \$10,000. Items included for funding include Northspan's fee to facilitate the community engagement-priority setting session (\$5,600), work to update the National Register Nomination to include the auditorium addition (\$10,000), survey (\$1,500), appraisal (\$5,000).
- Properties for Sale
 - The 3 lots south of Grouse Street were advertised, with bids due by May 29th. Four bids were received. The EDA held a Special Meeting on June 17th to review the bids. No decisions were made at that meeting as staff was directed to follow up on a few details.
 - The 2 lots north of Grouse Street have been listed with local realtor Pam Lewis. Interest continues to be shown on these, but no offers yet.
- Tom Willett – Small Business Development Center (SBDC) – Willett made a presentation at the June 10th Chamber meeting. He plans to be in Sandstone the 2nd and 4th Tuesday every month to assist local businesses in a variety of ways.
- Amy's Restaurant has not opened yet. In speaking with the owner, the following issues were preventing her from opening yet:
 - she can only seat 38 people inside and outside with the spacing limitations
 - she would bring herself back and 2 employees
 - employees have to wear masks – that won't work for the cooks
 - a case of burgers has gone from \$42 to \$117, as an example
 - the State is also requiring ventilation system upgrades/improvements – she has talked with D&E. They told her they've talked to 6 different companies trying to find out what the requirements are, but no one knows. D&E's advice is that when the doors open, just wait for the health inspector to come around and maybe they can find out then what will be required.
 - With all these things, if the restaurant were to open today, she would be running in the red. So, she is waiting for, basically, more density and lightening up on the masks.
- Site of the former True Value business. This property has been vacant for a long time. Property taxes haven't been paid for 3 years (2020 is the 3rd year). A letter was sent to the address on file to see if we could perhaps start a conversation about acquiring the property for use as a business incubator. This is just an idea at this point.

CLOSED SESSION:

Motion Riley, second Spartz to close the meeting at 7:13 p.m. Motion carried 6-0.

In accordance with Minnesota Statutes 13D.05, Subdivision 3(c), this meeting was closed to consider offers or counteroffers for the sale of real or personal property. The following properties were discussed: 45.0040.000, 45.0101.013, and 45.0101.014.

Motion Spartz, second Anderson to suspend the closed meeting at 7:18 p.m. Motion carried 6-0. The closed session was suspended because Alyssa Dykstra joined the meeting at this time to discuss the Community Garden.

Motion Gaede, second Riley to return to the closed meeting at 7:32 p.m. Motion carried 6-0.

Motion Spartz, second Riley to open the closed meeting at 8:12. Motion carried 6-0.

ADJOURN

Motion Spartz, second Anderson to adjourn at 8:12 p.m. Motion carried 6-0.

Valerie Palmer, Vice President

Kathy George, Executive Director