

MINUTES
SPECIAL MEETING OF THE AURORA CITY COUNCIL
MESABI EAST HIGH SCHOOL LIBRARY MEDIA CENTER
WEDNESDAY, JUNE 27, 2018
7:00 p.m.

PRESENT: Councilors Worshek, Gregor, Cromley, Lakso, Mayor Lislegard

ABSENT: None

ALSO PRESENT: Gregg Allen, Gene Maki, Walt Hautala, Rob Hill, Tiffany Bockelmann, Erik Erie, and Amy Maki from Mesabi East School; Tim Kauppi, Aurora City Clerk/Treasurer; Tim Soular, East Range Police Chief; Kevin Berdice, Joanne Ceglar, Butch Ceglar, Richard Hess, and Michael Beach, Site Construction Manager, RA Morton

A special joint meeting with the Mesabi East School Board was called to order by Mayor Lislegard at 7:00 p.m.

An agenda of discussion points was presented in advance of the meeting. No additional items were added other than the meeting started with discussion regarding the existence of wetlands on the proposed project site. A wetland delineation study was performed and a meeting on that study was held on June 19th with Tom Fait from Soil & Water Environmental Consulting and Andrew Chambers from the Army Corps of Engineers in Duluth. The report stated that five wetlands were found and there are three different criteria or thresholds that pertain to the situation. The timeframe for the process is greatly increased when the amount of land affected increases. Christie Kearney, a wetlands specialist, was brought in to review the report and the site. She had indicated that any landlocked wetlands would potentially be excused by the Army Corps and that the delineation study should be amended to reflect that. Gregg Allen said that he was going to follow up on that with the consultant, and once that was received, a copy would be forwarded to Larson Engineering to complete the Notice of Application to process the wetland delineation. The engineer is also looking into leaving a couple of wetlands in the updated design since purchasing wetland credits can be very expensive but the Army Corps prefers to have them purchased before creating your own wetlands. Mayor Lislegard proposed a joint meeting with elected officials and other influential people to see if that would be of help to move the project along in a timely manner. Gregg Allen indicated that these requirements will delay the construction timeline and that more would be learned soon once the application is completed and submitted.

The school has recently purchased a home on Railroad Avenue leaving the Ceglar residence the last remaining home being served by Railroad Avenue. The footprint of the project will require vacating Railroad Avenue but that process cannot be done until an alternative ingress/egress is created. Costs to build a new road were received from Benchmark Engineering and discussion was had on how to fund the cost. The City of Aurora is working with the DIRRR to see if they have any options available to them. Brief discussion was had on the process to vacate the road once an alternative option is created and a discussion was had regarding who owns the land under the shed used by Bradach Lumber and if it is time to remove the structure when breaking ground on the new facility since it appears that the useful life of the shed has been exceeded.

Discussion was had regarding all of the legal agreements to swap the city-owned land for the school-owned land. The legal agreements have been finished and are ready for recording once all of the other outstanding issues are resolved. It was noted that Mike Patchin has retired but will still be available on a consulting basis until the land swap is completed. He can also help draw up a contract that will allow the school to use the old athletic facility until the new one is completed and ready for use. The issues to be addressed in that document include who will maintain the fields, the amount of required insurance and the responsibility to clean all of the remaining structures on the old field once the new athletic facility is completed.

The group also discussed the current logging done by the city on the proposed site. The group felt that that current clear cut is sufficient for moving forward. The school has asked if the logger was going to perform any additional chipping. The City Clerk said he would check but thought that he was done with his work on the site.

Police Chief Tim Soular discussed the issues related to parking and traffic flow. He explained the concerns regarding site lines when leaving the facility after a game and the options that he feels would best fit the design plan and that adopting a similar design flow that is used in Grand Rapids may be highly beneficial.

The construction timeline was discussed further in light of the wetland delineation application. Mike Beach was present from RA Morton to discuss that in a little more detail and also addressed the issue of three major development projects occurring simultaneously in the same general area. He said that he would coordinate a meeting with the three project managers to ensure that each project was not being impacted negatively by the other projects.

Final discussion centered on the communication aspects for the project. A lot of concern has been raised to council members based on misinformation and other incorrect data. Gregg Allen spoke on behalf of the school and addressed all issues that were raised. He explained that new forms of communication will be implemented soon so that public will know at all times the status of the project. Superintendent Allen indicated that he is planning to launch a blog in the very near future so updates can be communicated in real time and he is also considering ways to use Cable Channel 2. Mike Beach also offered his direct phone number to answer any and all questions from the public. He wanted to ensure that this project is very transparent and encouraged the public to call him. There are several drawings/renderings and other support data that exist at the school and he is more than willing to answer any questions that may exist.

In closing, the school and the City Council agreed that regular meetings moving forward should occur to keep the project moving forward in a positive manner. It was suggested that everyone wait for the results on the wetland delineation, and once the results are known, to schedule the next meeting.

Moved by Lislegard and supported by Cromley to adjourn the meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 8:33 p.m.

ATTEST:

David Lislegard, Mayor

Tim Kauppi, City Clerk/Treasurer