

**STAFF SUMMARY
CITY OF MINNETONKA
SPECIAL JOINT MEETING
MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 2007
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City of Minnetonka

Present: Dick Allendorf, Bob Ellingson, Terry Schneider, Al Thomas, Tony Wagner, Brad Wiersum, Jan Callison, John Gunyou.

Park Board

Present: Bruce Gefvert, Tess Komarek

Three Rivers

Park District

Present: Larry Blackstad, Marilyn Corcoran, Mark Haggerty, Dale Woodbeck, Sara Wyatt, Cris Gears.

Minnehaha

Creek Watershed

District Present: Jim Calkins, Pam Blixt, Dick Miller, Lee Keeley, Jeff Casale, Eric Evenson.

Hennepin

County Present: Linda Koblick.

Hart Howerton

Present: Roland Aberg

1. Joint discussion of the Minnehaha Creek Corridor.

Callison called the meeting to order at 6 p.m.

She said there were three goals for the meeting: 1) to share initial ideas about the opportunities in the Upper Minnehaha Creek Corridor; 2) to confirm mutual interest in continuing a joint planning effort for the corridor; 3) to discuss forming a steering committee to help provide periodic policy direction to staff.

Gunyou gave a presentation outlining the vision for the corridor, recent investments to restore the creek and improve access, and coordinated planning efforts.

Aberg gave a historical overview of the area and potential projects and opportunities. He identified six shared partnership goals for the six mile corridor: preservation and restoration, recreation, civic identity, land uses, transportation, and water management.

Koblick said she recently returned from a trip to Chicago where she saw a boulevard with historic structures and informational plaques. The boulevard

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received federal funding that she said might be available for the corridor project.

Wagner said he supports the efforts. He said Minnetonka Boulevard plays an important role in the city as a main artery. He said the council has supported the transformation of the corridor into a natural downtown area.

Blixt said the project is an excellent opportunity to comprehensively correct mistakes made in the past and prevent further damage to resources in the future.

Blackstad said as a former chair of the Minnetonka park board, and a resident who lives close to the corridor he sees the creek as an important part of the city. He said the discussion came at a good time as the Three Rivers Park District is preparing its budget.

Woodbeck said he admired how the city took the initiative to ensure that much of the area is public property. He said the idea of an interpretive center is a great idea and integrating recreation and transportation makes this a nice project.

Allendorf asked how the budget issues would be addressed. Gunyou said that rather than developing a grand master plan, that different pieces of the project are being developed along the way. As an example the city has set aside money to make improvements in the Mills Park area this year. As the process moves forward Gunyou said it seems to make sense to determine which of the organizations might be involved and determine how the budget issues are to be addressed. Allendorf said there might be a benefit to developing an overall plan, setting goals to work towards. Gunyou said there is a general philosophy being applied to all the pieces.

Schneider agreed with Gunyou that the approach is the way the process must happen as there is no big pot of money available. He said the focus should be to maximize the assets but also set up a strategy to acquire missing pieces. Gunyou agreed with Schneider about the need to make strategic investments and that some of the property owners have indicated an interest in selling their land.

Wiersum said the project is an exciting opportunity but agreed with Allendorf about developing a master plan so that the process isn't done with a piece meal approach. He said a master plan would make clear who is responsible for various aspects. He agreed with Koblick that the historic aspect might make some areas eligible for federal funding. Gunyou said there is a concern about getting bogged down in developing a comprehensive plan that collapses under its own weight.

Miller said he was excited about the multi jurisdiction cooperation.

Wyatt pointed out the presentation showed a wonderful entry point at Gray's Bay

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but there wasn't a corresponding wonderful exit point. Gunyou said the plan is for people to be able to exit at various points of the corridor because not everyone would be interested in traveling the entire six miles.

Koblick said it was important to keep in mind what people don't want. Examples include large parking areas and also avoiding creating an Apple River like attraction. She also said the business community could play a role similar to the role Target is playing in assisting the city of Edina to develop a promenade. Gunyou said that much of the Mills district is private property but said Cargill could be a potential partner. He said that the idea is not to have a large parking area but rather several smaller areas thus avoiding a large influx of people in one area.

Schneider said by sketching together a master plan the plan could be used to market the idea to the community. He said information is needed to explain to the average citizen what is being proposed. Aberg agreed that marketing the goals and objectives to get buy in from the community was a critical piece.

Blixt said she agreed a comprehensive plan was important. She said a plan would allow the watershed district to determine which pieces it could be involved in and contribute its expertise to.

Calkins said he strongly liked the partnership opportunities. He said this is a wonderful opportunity to make the corridor better.

Wagner said it was important to assure the businesses in the area like the Dairy Queen and Dunn Bros. Coffee remain important to the area.

Evenson thanked the city for its leadership. He said that the many lakes in Minneapolis serve as a destination point of the city and there is no reason that the corridor could not serve a similar purpose.

Gunyou said the discussion identified two important pieces going forward: 1) getting a better understanding of the necessity of a comprehensive plan to better define the individual pieces; 2) having the staffs get together to work on individual pieces. He suggested establishing a policy oversight committee to meet periodically to give staff feedback and direction.

2. Adjournment.

Mayor Callison adjourned the joint meeting at 7:24 p.m.

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Respectfully submitted,

David Maeda
City Clerk