

**STAFF SUMMARY
CITY OF MINNETONKA
CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION
MONDAY, JANUARY 24, 2011
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Council Present: Dick Allendorf, Bob Ellingson, Amber Greves, James Hiller and Mayor Terry Schneider. Tony Wagner and Brad Wiersum were excused.

Staff: John Gunyou, Geralyn Barone, Julie Wischnack, Loren Gordon, and David Maeda

1. Boards and commission interviews

Schneider called the meeting to order at 6:33 p.m. He noted one of the applicants for the community commission was his daughter so he would abstain from interviewing applicants for the community commission. He asked Allendorf to make those appointment recommendations to the council.

William Clark

Clark currently operates a photography business. He said he has the time and desire to serve the city in the capacity the council felt was best and he would bring a business skill set that has proven successful for 38 years.

Hiller asked why Clark was interested in serving on the senior advisory board. Clark said he took a defensive driving class and was told there were openings on the board.

Allendorf indicated that Clark wasn't fully retired and was staying active. Clark confirmed that was correct. Allendorf noted Clark would be one of the younger members of the board.

Schneider asked Clark to elaborate on the activities of the Humor Mill Toastmasters. Clark said Toastmasters was founded on the idea that people should have a positive attitude about themselves and the focus was on ongoing communication and leadership skills. The Humor Mill Club focuses on including humor with speeches.

Greves said often applicants point to their business backgrounds as being a good fit with a particular board or commission. She asked Clark how his background would lend itself well to the senior board. Clark said he had the organizational skills needed to run a sales agency. His interest in photography would also be useful. His philosophy is to try to make his photographs more beautiful than the actual world. He would bring that type of attitude to the board.

Brian Grogan

Grogan said he was a small business owner. He has been heavily involved with the Hopkins Jaycees and was a board member of the Special Education Advisory Council for the Hopkins School District. He has coached a wide variety of sports. He currently serves on the Minnesota Academic Excellence

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Foundation working to close the achievement gap in the schools. He said Schneider encouraged him to apply.

Allendorf asked what got Grogan interested in special education issues. Grogan said he felt it was important to be involved in the community. He became interested in learning what issues faced children with special education needs.

Ellingson asked Grogan to elaborate on his experiences in running for the state legislature. Grogan said the time commitment was challenging and campaigning required a lot of energy especially with three kids and a working wife. The best part of the experience was meeting his neighbors and exchanging ideas.

Thomas Johnson

Johnson said he has worked at marinas and in the hospitality industry. He said he loves spending time on Lake Minnetonka and the lake is one of the most valuable resources in the city. The lake has a great economic impact on the community and needs to be protected. He was interested in serving on the Lake Minnetonka Conservation District because the current representative, Chris Jewett encouraged him to apply.

Greves asked Johnson to elaborate more on his understanding of the issues facing Lake Minnetonka and also on broader sustainability issues. Johnson said there were many environmental issues including invasive species, water runoff, filtration of the water, how water is used for irrigation, wetland buffers, and issues with how the lake is used and who uses it. He said one of the biggest issues was with docks. Another major issue was zebra mussels.

Allendorf noted Johnson's experience managing a marina and asked how things have changed over the years. Johnson said the occupancy rate has declined significantly and that may be due to the economy. There also is greater access now than in previous years.

Schneider indicated that the Lake Minnetonka Conservation District representative represented the city's interest as well as the general lake's interest. The city has one of the smallest percentages of lake shore yet pays the maximum fee to support the district. He asked if Johnson understood the district's statutory charge was. Johnson indicated he was aware of what the district did and would be willing to work within the parameters expected.

Carol Larson, M.D.

Larson said as a pathologist she sat on many boards and commissions. She was on a natural expert review board for her subspecialty area of expertise. She said she was interested in serving the community shifting her interest from individual patients to seniors. Her focus is on the health and wellness for seniors and she wanted to use her medical background to assist in those areas. She also wanted

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to represent the 55-65 year old age group. That group faces a different set of issues than the issues the over 65 year old age group faces.

Allendorf asked Larson what cytopathology was. She said cytopathology was her subspecialty. A surgical pathologist makes a diagnosis on a piece of tissue. A cytopathologist makes a diagnosis on the basis of an individual cell.

Schneider asked Larson how she would reach out to the 55-65 age group. Larson said the city's newsletter was a good way to provide information to residents. She said the senior programs could be highlighted in the newsletter.

Jay Mega, Jr.

Mega started an advertising firm. He no longer is financially involved with the business but remains involved with providing advice and direction to staff. He said he was prompted to apply because he wants to be involved and engaged in the community.

Greves said Mega's application included a lot of great suggestions and ideas about the community commission. She noted a major role of the commission is bringing neighborhoods and groups in the community together. She asked Mega what some of the key issues were that the commission could address. Mega said he has done a lot of traveling and one issue was addressing the issues related to how the world is becoming smaller. He suggested the city look into adopting a sister city. That would provide a great doorway to the rest of the world on a manageable basis. He also noted the commission has highlighted a lot of different programs and there was a need for focus and measuring what was being accomplished. He said it would be better to have a few programs that are well done rather than such a wide platform.

Tammy Nelson

Nelson said she moved back to Minnetonka because of the quality of schools and to be closer to family as well as the real sense of community that exists. Her family has been active in the community mainly through sports activities. She said she was searching for an opportunity to serve in the community and to be a role model for her children. Her twenty years of marketing experience would be valuable in serving on one of the boards or commissions.

Allendorf asked Nelson to elaborate on the Art Adventure Program at Gatewood Elementary School. Nelson said her children have all participated in the program. The program provides an opportunity to go to the Minneapolis Institute of Art. Certain types of art work and the artists are featured and discussed. At the end of the process the children get to see the actual piece of art.

Greves asked Nelson to elaborate on how she would use her marketing and creative skills. Nelson said it was about finding the avenues of communication as

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well as the most effective way to communicate. Different age groups have different methods of communication. She said at times putting the right mix of generations together is an effective approach.

Ellingson noted his wife is an elementary art teacher and their kids attended Gatewood. He said he was glad Nelson had participated in the program.

Stanley Rakieten

Rakieten said his business career included putting together a manufacturing business with his son. The company sells faucets and sinks throughout the Midwest region. His work with the company has taught him some marketing techniques. He noted people buy kitchen faucets that sell for over a thousand dollars. This is done by teaching the consumer why the faucets are better. His wife encouraged him to apply to serve the community. He said he has a propensity for looking at situations and problems and helping create solvable situations.

Allendorf asked why Rakieten was not available on Thursdays and Fridays. Rakieten said he was busy as an employee of a golf club on Thursdays. His wife schedules their social events on Fridays.

Schneider said Rakieten had an intriguing background. He said he would be interested in seeing how his diverse background could be applied to the senior advisory board.

Madeline Seveland

Seveland said she had a masters degree in water resources and currently is the education coordinator for the Carver County Water Management.

Ellingson asked if Seveland was involved in any recreational activities. Seveland said she is a salsa, ballroom, and Latin dancer. She is a runner and does weigh training as well. She wants to become a Zumba instructor.

Greves asked if Seveland had been to the renovated Williston Center. Seveland said she and her husband are planning on joining once the weight room is completed. Greves noted Seveland natural resources background would be beneficial to issues the park board deals with, but the board also deals with recreational issues as well. She asked if Seveland uses any of the city's parks. Seveland said she has been to Purgatory Park and other parks as well.

Schneider agreed Seveland had a strong water resources background that could add a lot to the park board. One concern with someone with a lot of expertise is that the person would become like another staff person rather than taking a broader look at the issues and ending up dominating the discussion. He said

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Seveland's background could also make her an effective liaison to the watershed district.

Naomi Stock

Stock said she was a licensed social worker and her career has been working out in the community. When she moved back to the community she was in the senior center looking at information and was approached about serving on the senior advisory board. She served on the board for four years. She has also been involved with her homeowners association. She noted the community is becoming more and more diverse with a greater number of seniors. She said one frustration she had serving on the senior advisory board was defining who the board served and if there was enough outreach being done. She asked what the community commission's goals were. Barone said the commission was formed when the city's 50th Anniversary Committee work ended. That committee had brought together a wide variety of interests and it was decided a similar group could be beneficial. She said the commission had been in existence for around three years and its mission was still evolving.

Greves said Stock's comments about the senior advisory board lent themselves well to the community commission as well. She asked Stock if she had further ideas about how to engage neighborhoods and bring groups together. Stock said when the senior advisory board did its programming it often did not take into account the diversity in the city and making sure needs of diverse groups were being met. She said she would like to get a better handle on the demographics of the population and then go out to make sure different groups' needs are being met.

Bonnie Sussman

Sussman said she has worked in the field of interior design specializing in executive office design. She formed her own company where she did residential design. She later established an art gallery and helped form the Metropolitan Art Dealers Association. She said she has the reputation for following through on things. In the mid-80's she got heavily involved with Christian/Jewish relations. She has remained interested in that area and now days it includes relations with the Muslim community as well. She moved to Minnetonka three years ago. Her latest venture was co-founding the Twin Cities Jewish Chorale. She has also been the chair of her high school reunion committee.

Greves asked Sussman if she had interest in serving on the community commission since part of its mission is interacting with the faith community. Sussman indicated she would be willing to serve where needed depending on meeting schedules.

Schneider called a recess at 7:54 p.m. He called the meeting back to order at 8:07 p.m.

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Bruce Gefvert

Gefvert said when he applied to serve on the park board eight years ago he did so because he was involved in the hearing business that gave him a unique perspective on senior related issues. Now that he is retiring he has a desire to remain connected with the community. He said he was honored to serve on the park board.

Greves asked if Gefvert had thought about serving on the community commission. He indicated he had not but he valued the council's assessment of his capabilities and would make himself available where he was most needed. Allendorf agreed Gefvert might be a good fit for the community commission. Greves noted that there was an overlap between the community commission and the senior advisory board in looking at issues that impact seniors.

Schneider said he agreed with earlier comments that the community commission might need more focus and prioritization of its work.

2. Hwy 7 / 101 Village Center Study workshop

The consultants, Mark Koegler and Bryan Harjes, went through the presentation.

Ellingson said at previous meeting one of the business owners told him that the Franks Nursery store was the number three store in the country in terms of sales. He asked how the Target and Cub stores in the area rank with the rest of the metropolitan area. The owner of the Cub Foods said his store ranked in the top ten. Wischnack indicated the Target store has the highest retail volume in the metropolitan area. Koegler said during the process he learned that because so many Target executives live in the area, the Target store served as a microscopic store that helped provide information for the company.

Allendorf noted that the concerns about connectivity to the southwest quadrant were about finding a way to get people in and out quicker and more efficiently. The concerns about adding traffic came from the residents and not necessarily the businesses.

Schneider said that in both options the idea was to bring the building and site more in compliance with the city's hard surface coverage standards. He asked what incentive existed for a potential developer to try to rebuild the building to bring it into compliance. Wischnack said the second option of moving the building would require compliance. The first option did not have such a clear cut incentive. Schneider said it was his understanding that a green roof would not work on the existing structure. Wischnack said the concept was to look at if the council was OK with looking at options of improving the existing conditions.

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Gordon said the arrangement of space from the street edge to parking was looked at. It would be difficult to move the building closer to the road with parking on the backside. Wischnack said another possibility would be a combination of the two options.

Gordon said the next step would be to put the information into a plan document that included guidelines and graphics that showed what the city might like a development to look like. The document would incorporate the public input and the plans that were prepared. This would provide something the city could show to a potential developer who asks what the vision for the area is. He said it would not be a prescriptive zoning plan. The document likely would be presented to the council for consideration in March.

Allendorf said he was comfortable with the process that had been used but he was unsure about using the same process for the Shady Oak/Excelsior Village Center. He said he preferred to think about the process for a little while longer.

Schneider said the process that is used for the Shady Oak/Excelsior Village center would depend on the momentum or lack of momentum for the light rail project. There is uncertainty given the current political climate. He said the light rail will eventually happen but the timeframe is uncertain. He noted that for the Highway 7/County Road 101 area there was not a major driver for redevelopment but for the Shady Oak/Excelsior area there will be people interested in getting involved upfront. He said it was important to have some principles and guidelines in place or the city would always be trying to catch up. It likely will take some time to go through that process.

Allendorf clarified what he was looking for was some market testing to see if the city could attract someone or to show developers what has been done to plan the Highway 7/County Road 101 area to get feedback.

Schneider said he had difficulty connecting the two areas because there are completely different things happening. He agreed there is no immediate hurry to start the Shady Oak/Excelsior process but the city needed to pay attention to what was going on.

Wischnack said the developer reviews would occur before the plan is brought back to the council. She noted that there is more interest in the Shady Oak/Excelsior area than any other area of the city.

Schneider said the Highway 7/County Road 101 plan was more based on guidelines and principles with outcomes on what the council wanted to see happen in the area. For the Shady Oak/Excelsior Village Center more specificity will be required. Wischnack agreed.

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3. Adjournment

The study session adjourned at 8:52 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

David E. Maeda
City Clerk