

**Planning & Development Committee
Special Meeting
Minutes of January 22, 2008
Council Chambers – 7:00 p.m.
Evanston Civic Center**

Alderman Present: S. Bernstein, D. Holmes, A. Hansen, L. Jean-Baptiste, E. Moran, E. Tisdahl, C. Wollin, M. Wynne

Staff Present: J. Wolinski, J. Aiello, K. Cox, B. Dunkley, D. Marino, T. Norfleet, C. Ruiz, A. Stewart, J. Brownlee

Alderman Absent: A. Rainey

Presiding Official: Alderman Hansen

DECLARATION OF QUORUM

Chair Hansen called the meeting to order at 7:14 p.m.

ITEM FOR CONSIDERATION

Resolution 7-R-08 – Lake Front Corridor Master Plan

Chair Hansen gave a brief overview of the results from the January 14th, 2008 P&D Meeting; specifically the consultants presentation. She asked the Committee if they had any question for the consultant at this time. The consensus of the Committee was to hold off any questions until after citizen comments have been heard. Chair Hansen noted that she would begin with calling on those citizens signed up to speak on the January 14th list and proceed to call on those that signed up this evening.

Charles Sheridan, 2331 Church, presented his proposal for creating a new revenue stream from the Lakefront. His proposal takes into consideration another means other than raising taxes to create revenue sources for the City. He proposes to build a new mini-harbor that could hold approximately 16-20 boats and along that harbor have one or more lakefront restaurants. He suggested the area around the lagoon would be ideal and create a “lake or riverfront” type setting for the restaurant with an upscale design and atmosphere. Mr. Sheridan displayed several diagrams illustrating his proposal. He contemplates taking the existing breakwater at Church Street to build the mini-harbor. He further suggested renovating the existing lagoon house for one of the restaurants and possibly another small restaurant concession in the lagoon area. Mr. Sheridan believes the market would be advantageous for such a project because there are no lakefront restaurants between downtown and North Point at the Wisconsin boarder. He further proposed that it might be necessary to excavate a small part of the beach area to create the mini harbor, which he pointed out on his diagrams. He concluded that an estimated cost for such a project would be in the range of approximately \$500,000 which could be acquired in municipal bonds or other similar financing. At the end of the redemption period for the municipal bond, this proposed project could create a permanent revenue stream for the City.

Virginia Beatty, 1509 Forest Avenue, said she has been an Evanston property owner since 1963; she is an avid business woman with a history of experience with being a consultant in environmental education and urban horticulture since 1968; a landscape designer since 1973; and

a radio personality for 25 years giving advice on planting. Ms. Beatty read from a prepared statement summarizing her opinion on the good ideas and not so good ideas resulting from the group meeting regarding the Lake front.

Robert and Alice Eagly, 324 Davis. Ms. Eagly said they have been residents since 1995. She spoke on behalf of she and her husband expressing many concerns for pedestrian safety and pointed out that there is very little consideration of this concern in the presented plan. She pointed out their specific area of concern located from south of Northwestern University down to Davis Street. She gave several examples of unsafe conditions for walkers as well as bicyclists, witnessed in just trying to cross in this area. Also this stretch of area has experienced many vehicle accidents due to the poor traffic design and lack of vehicle consideration to pedestrian right-of-way. Ms. Eagly suggested that this particular area needs more policing and especially during all the months where lakefront usage is more desirable; not just when this area is used for summer concerts and fairs. She also made recognition to the fact of the close proximity of the retirement homes to this area where the average age of those residents is 88 years old. These senior individuals frequently walk to the lakefront. Ms. Eagly concluded that more attention still needs to be considered for pedestrian safety in this area with better solutions other than the suggested cross walk.

Diane Korling, 1914 Orrington said that she has been a resident since 1978 and is an avid fan of the lakefront which she walks to from her home. She elaborated on some of her history and experiences living in close proximity to the lakefront beach area and how it is almost similar to and puts her in the mind of East Coast locations with the same quaint atmosphere. With these thoughts in mind, she supports the comments and position made by Ms. Beatty previously. She also supports the comments made by Ms. Eagly and urges the Committee to seriously incorporate the traffic study along with the concerns expressed and come up with some solutions for pedestrian safety. Ms. Korling expressed her appreciation with the efforts made by staff and the consultants to save the Clark Street Beach and the proposed changed to that park.

Katie Stallcup, 144 Greenwood stated that she is a member and represents the Southeast Evanston Association and she read from a prepared statement (see attached).

Mark Simon, 204 Lake Street said he has lived at this address for the past 10 years. He pointed out his concerns in the area from Clark Street to Greenwood Street with traffic and parking implications. He feels the Plan does not take into consideration many traffic problems that will occur with the proposed street design changes. He pointed out the intersection of Davis and Forest which is a main outlet for exiting to the north; it is not feasible to close this street off.

Daniel Pyne, 400 Ridge Avenue said that he is proposed to additional commercial activity on the Lakefront especially the addition of food establishments and concessions. He suggested in view of the pedestrian “peril” noted at Davis Street is a major thoroughfare where safety is a big concern. He suggested that it might be better to have an underpass at this intersection.

Norbert Budde, 1108 South Blvd. said that he likes the Plan, the accommodations made for pedestrians, bicyclist and general public to the Lakefront. He feels a philosophical issue seems to be at stake here and that is the residents that live directly adjacent to the lakefront want it to remain like a neighborhood park setting. He strongly feels the lakefront belongs to everyone and this Plan needs to take that into consideration.

Mark Metz, 2125 Sherman is the Playground and Recreation Board President. He made all the meetings and has heard all the citizen comments and input. He feels this is a good Plan, not perfect as he does not agree with all the issues, but as a whole, support this Plan. He definitely feels the Plan needs a traffic engineering review and study to complete the traffic issues around the Lakefront to complete the Plan. The proposal for low impact commercial use would be desirable such as a small café preferably near the Lighthouse and maybe some small concession stands at each beach entrance.

Overall Mr. Metz feels this Plan allows more access for everyone to enjoy the Lakefront. In his opinion the Plan is evident that the architects listened, staff listened and he urges the Committee to support this Plan as presented.

Paul Grottlick, 1034 Michigan expressed his concerns with the area of Hamilton and Lee Street where a new restroom is proposed at the end of this beach. From that intersection a bathroom facility building would not be a preferable first view of the Lakefront in his opinion. He requests that consideration be given to move this building over so that is it not the first view of the lake from that intersection.

Candace Gusmanski (?), 1430 Sheridan expressed her concerns with traffic problems between Greenwood and Lake Street. She said it is extremely congested and does not need to be a two-way street in this area. She feels that traffic will bottleneck and there needs to be the relief on an exit from Patriot's Park. She also feels it would be a mistake to take away any extra grass areas to put up covered picnic areas. More people enjoy the open space by bringing blankets, picnic supplies and being able to move around freely. The covered picnic areas only accommodate a few people at a time versus the open grass area that can be enjoyed by everyone.

Andrew McGonagle, 2625 Princeton Avenue – Feels the consultants have done a great job and that the general consensus is in favor of this Plan. He said that traffic study should help relieve some of the traffic concerns expressed by many citizens.

Holly Reynolds, 204 Davis Street, said that the Plan has many benefits, however she feels there still remains many concerns that are not represented in this Plan. She is against the addition of concession stands, feels naturally unpaved areas should remain and minimization of any additional paving for wider walkways. She agrees with all traffic and safety concerns for pedestrians mentioned previously.

Maureen Glosso, 901 Hinman said that she is pleased with Plan and the emphasis on green issues. She expressed her concern for water safety with regards to expansion of boat usage and other commercial uses proposed for the Lakefront.

End of Citizen Comments

Ald. Wynne commended the consultants and all their work done on the Lakefront Plan. She asked what the process is from here once the traffic study has been done.

Mr. Gaynor informed the Committee that the City has received a grant from the State to begin implementation from Lee Street to the Clark Street Beach in the amount of \$550,000. This is in addition to the City's 2005 Strategic Plan committing \$300,000 in support of this project. He said the visioning process has been an extensive public involvement and the emphasis will be a continuation of public input if this Plan is supported by Council and moves forward.

Ald. Wynne said that she is particularly in favor of the redesign of the curve around Calvary Cemetery and she asked if there is any idea of when this part of the plan can be implemented. Mr. Gaynor summarized an approximate time frame he would hope to start implementation of the project. Ald. Wynne would like to see this part of the project started as soon as possible.

Ald. Wynne stated in her opinion, that it would create a much more dangerous situation by closing off Patriot Park with a cul-de-sac. She suggested that this situation be reconsidered. Mr. Gaynor assured that this matter will be taken into consideration in the upcoming traffic study as well as all the other comments and concerns pointed out this evening. The consultant, Mr. Greg Weykamp verified that several optional plans will be reviewed in the traffic consultant's study.

Mr. Gaynor noted that no plans have been confirmed regarding the addition of any commercial/restaurant usage in the Lakefront Plan; there has only been discussion. However, there has been discussion and a consensus to rid usage of the truck concessions currently used at the Lighthouse Beach with smaller kiosk type concession stands.

Ald. Tisdahl stated that she is very uncomfortable with supporting or voting on this Plan ahead of conducting the needed Traffic Study. She also agrees with no addition of any commercial uses, however, she is in favor of replacing the concession trucks used at the Lighthouse Beach.

Ald. Moran stated that he also sees no necessity of any additional concession stands along the lakefront. He agrees with the Lincoln Street Overlook and dune restorations. In his opinion, the restrooms can use upgrading and renovation but not total replacement. He likes the current design and certain nostalgia of these buildings and suggest maybe adding the green roofs. Ald. Moran expressed some concern with the Sheridan Road redesign. He's worried about taking away 2-lanes down to 1-lane traffic. He reminded that this thoroughway can be heavily used during peak hours and there has not been a great amount of success with reducing lanes where the result usually causes bottleneck traffic.

Ald. Bernstein questioned the time frame for passage of State approval to acquire the funding through the Illinois Transportation Enhancement Program. He asked staff what the provisions are. Mr. Gaynor responded that all grant applications require an approved Master Plan and concept be completed and submitted before the Department of Transportation can accept for State approval. Once achieved, the State will draw down the funds and they can move forward with the implementation state.

Ald. Wollin agrees with Ald. Wynne's position regarding the need for exiting from Patriot Park; she is opposed to the cul-de-sac design. From comments made earlier, she questioned the addition of the covered picnic areas because that is not clarified anywhere in this Plan. Mr. Gaynor concurred that was only a suggested option that was discussed. Ald. Wollin supports the restroom improvements and enlargement from the current buildings. The proposed design seems safer than the current buildings as well. The current restrooms are insufficient and in dire need of replacement. She supports some type of concession availability and would like to see some type of safety element added to these structures considering staff that has to handle money. In her opinion, overall this is an extraordinary Plan that is proposed and she supports the Traffic Study and moving forward with the implementation of the next Phase to come. She feels this Plan is more passive than aggressive for the lakefront vicinity.

Ald. Holmes first commended the consultant's work on this proposed Lakefront Corridor Plan and staff's involvement and administration in moving this process in a timely manner. She encourages enforcement of the traffic concerns and obvious violations expressed by many citizens this evening as well as the many safety concerns for pedestrians that need to be addressed immediately. She does not see the need to wait for any traffic study to be done before asking the Police Chief to look into these concerns now. Mr. Gaynor assured that he will pass this request on to Chief Eddington. Ald. Wollin agreed.

Ald. Moran questioned the need for a cul-de-sac on Judson because he feels there is a fairly significant amount of traffic on this street. He request that this matter be considered in the traffic study. Also he feels one of the worse traffic and pedestrian safety problems pointed out this evening is at Davis Street. He supports the idea given previously by Mr. Pyne be a consideration for an underpass at this location.

Ald. Wynne noted that the addition of having a 4-way traffic stop at the intersection of Hamilton and Forest significantly helped a very dangerous situation. She said this intersection was averaging 1 accident per week before the 4-way stop signs were installed. This is something else that might help somewhat at the Davis Street intersection.

Ald. Jean-Baptiste moved approval of Resolution 7-R-08 adopting the Evanston Lakefront Corridor Master Plan, seconded by Ald. Wynne.


Chair Hansen expressed her appreciation for the proposed new bike paths being separated from the pedestrian paths. She feels this is a definite improvement and benefit for the lakefront. She also agrees with Ald. Wollin and Wynne's position that the cul-de-sac design on Judson and at Patriot Park will be detrimental to traffic flow and cause more problems than solving. She suggests that the 1-way traffic would be much calmer and should be continued on these streets. Chair Hansen agrees with the addition of restrooms buildings being located at entry points to the beach areas for convenience as well as safety for the public. She strongly opposes any underpass as a solution to pedestrian safety because she feels they create more of an unsafe condition in the long run and could be a very costly solution as well. All consideration should be given to rectifying the concerns expressed by many citizens this evening with traffic problems and safety for pedestrian crossing. Mr. Gaynor informed the Committee that if this Plan is adopted, it will complete Phase I and the next phase will proceed with the Traffic Study and engineering phase followed by the contracting and construction administration phase.

The vote was 9-0 in favor of the motion.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 9:27 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Jacqueline E. Brownlee