

City of Stevens Point Meeting Minutes

Special City Council Meeting

November 13, 2008, 6:00 p.m.

CenterPoint MarketPlace, 1201 Third Ct.

Mayor Andrew Halverson, presiding

Roll Call: Alderpersons Myers, Walther (6:13 p.m.), Hanson, Wiza, Heart, Slowinski, Trzebiatowski, Molski, Stroik, Brooks.

Excused: Ald. Moore.

Also Present: City Attorney Molepske; City Clerk Moe; Comptroller/Treasurer Schlice; Directors Gardner, Schrader, Halverson; Assessor Siebers; Transit Manager Lemke.

1. Public Input - Redevelopment Plan Centerpoint Mall [CenterPoint MarketPlace]

Mayor Halverson reviewed the process for the evening's meeting. He said as a community we have a number of key decisions to make regarding the concept of the proposed development and noted that it may change with certain dynamics. The questions that need to be answered: 1) Are we going to be involved with the revitalization of this facility; 2) If yes, will that be more than or less than a 15% investment of approximately \$4 million in TIF investment into the property; 3) What is the commitment of the City to the entire project and the revitalization of the downtown as a whole.

Director Gardner made a presentation that included the design of the Children's Museum, a review of the accomplishments of the downtown project, the adopted PDI plan, the connection of Third Street and the Dial proposal. Under the Dial proposal, the City would acquire about half of the existing structure (48%), the Museum would acquire 10%, and Dial would retain the rest (42%) which includes Penneys and Dunham. He then elaborated on the responsibilities of the different entities, cost of the project, and Dial's existing debt. He then highlighted the similarities and differences between the Dial and the PDI proposals as well as the 2001 Downtown Directional Study.

Mayor Halverson opened the floor to public comments.

Tom Brown, 317 Sixth Avenue and downtown business owner, read his letter to the Mayor and Council in which he expressed his support for the general proposal to demolish the mall and reopen Third Street. He does have concerns however. He made a number of different recommendations to improve access including opening up different streets and allowing two-way traffic on others. He believes the situation with the Fox Theater must be rectified and made a number of recommendations to correct it.

Mary McCulm, 2100 Elk Street and downtown business owner, stated that more of the PDI Plan needs to be incorporated into the Dial project.

Amy Eddie, 2324 Eagle Summit and downtown business owner, stated that she is in support of the mall redevelopment project and the Children's Museum enhancements. She believes that it will add value to the downtown. As the President of the Children's Museum Board of Directors, the current space is inadequate as they are anticipating having 20,000 visitors by the end of the year.

Thomas Knowlton, 1921 Michigan Avenue, feels that the City is spending too much money on projects and if Dial Corporation wants this then they should be the one paying for it. He believes the City should be focusing on other priorities.

Mark Hilliker, Village of Plover, sits on the Children's Museum Board of Directors and believes that the City needs to take advantage of this opportunity for economic development. He supports the project and feels it will help turn things around in the downtown.

Rick Whip, 2016 Main Street, President of the Old Main Neighborhood Association read a written statement and said the OMNA Board supports the concept and general design of the project but would like more involvement and input from community organizations in the decision making.

Paul Wachowiak, 1620 Meadow View Lane, believes the Common Council should ask if this project is the best we can come up with regarding the mall and revitalization of the downtown area. He asked if this is just another corporate bailout. He believes the Council should ask for a detailed audit of past TIF's in terms of success.

Rich Sommer, 4224 Janick Circle North, a founding member of Future Generations Sustainable Building Group, said the building has great bones and many alternative uses. He believes these alternatives should be considered and invited the public to a presentation on the upcoming weekend. He also discouraged the building of student housing next to the mall area.

Sally Freckmann, 871 Oakridge Lane, supports the plan for the Children's Museum but believes more needs to be done to draw people of all ages to the downtown including adding additional attractions and businesses, such as a grocery store.

Leo Jacoby, 1724 Oak Street, is concerned that the plan does not include a public place for people to gather especially in the winter time. He feels this plan is just a quick fix and doesn't include mixed uses.

John Kedrowski, 1740 Madison Street, feels that the City is not getting much for its \$3.6 million. He thinks the money should be spent in other ways such as on the Fox Theater, the Children's Museum or incorporating the river front.

Ward Wolff, 4757 Lime Lake Rd, Amherst, as a commercial Realtor he believes that there is a better alternative than this redevelopment as it is a waste of resources. He believes the City should purchase the Sorenson property for \$325,000 which would provide 94 parking stalls. He presented the plat to the Mayor.

Debbie Woehr, 5365 Clarice Circle, as a downtown business owner she feels that it is time to move forward with a redevelopment project for the mall and that this project falls within the PDI Plan. The downtown has the lowest vacancy rate in years but the mall gives the appearance of a dying downtown. She believes the City can't afford to do nothing.

Peter Shuda, 800 Third Street, used to be employed at the mall. He believes that the money would be better spent on increasing the industrial base in the City in order to provide jobs.

Bob Woehr, 727 Second Street, agrees with Tom Brown. He asked the Council to take their time with this project and to consider all the information.

Guy Janson, 1902 Pine Bluff Rd and downtown business owner, believes that the mind set needs to change because the City can't keep band aiding the downtown. He said the Children's Museum must stay downtown and there is a need for more green space in the plan. The City should concentrate on small businesses and not the big box stores.

Erin Andrews, Village of Plover, co-chair of the Children's Museum fundraising campaign, supports the downtown redevelopment plan. Her family located here because of the downtown and the Children's Museum. The leadership of the Children's Museum voted unanimously to support the Dial Plan.

Bill Yudchitz, 1301 DuBay Avenue, owner and renovator of the Point Bakery site, feels that the City needs to do something and that it is time to look forward. He believes that if the City is going to spend this kind of money then it should just buy the mall. He also encouraged quality housing in the downtown area.

Ald. Mike Wiza, 717 Franklin Street, speaking as an individual citizen, noted that in the spring the city offered land to the Children's Museum because the Council was told that the need was urgent and that the Museum needed it right away. He would like to know more about where the city and Dial proposal came from in proposing this new plan. He noted that when Dial purchased the mall it made all kinds of promises to fill the store fronts but they haven't followed through. He believes that Dial can either develop the project by itself or, if the City is going to spend this kind of money, we should just buy the mall and sell off pieces to a developer that is committed to the City.

Erin Andrews, Children's Museum representative, the urgency is still there because they have no more room to grow. A Dial representative read the story about the Lullabye site offer and called her to say that he had some ideas to accommodate the PDI Plan and the Museum. The Board quickly met to decide if they should move ahead with the Lullabye site or this Dial alternative. The Board believes that this alternative has merit for the entire community. She clarified that no one from the city contacted them about this Dial proposal. It was her understanding that Dial then contacted the City.

Sarah Robinson, 1600 Fremont Street, Director of the Association of Downtown Businesses, stated that this is an opportunity to move forward with

the PDI Plan and, while some downtown business owners would like to see some changes to the plan, it is a good point to start. Leonard Szymkowiak, 3119 Martha's Lane, raised concerns about how the mall is managed. He believes that the rent is too high which prohibits businesses from becoming established and successful in the mall. He also feels that the City does not have a shortage of housing and should not allow more student housing to be built near the mall.

Dave Schlehs, 1026 Smith Street, feels that malls are a dying breed. Although he likes some of the ideas in the plan, it needs to be pedestrian friendly and address access to the downtown as well as the surrounding neighborhoods. He also voiced strong concerns regarding the proposed apartments near the mall. He believes the city should push more single family development.

Susan Hintz, 300 Second Street North, is a manager of one of the stores in the mall. She has heard a lot about the dying mall but her business is still here. She said the Council needs to remember the businesses in the mall and support them. She believes they can do better than the plan currently presented.

Larry Sipiorski, 1217 Ridge Road, believes that Dial may be using either the Children's Museum or the Fox Theater as a hook to get the community to approve the redevelopment plan. He encouraged the Council to look at the potential ramifications of having the Children's Museum as part of this redevelopment plan versus the Lullabye site and whether the Fox Theater would be fully utilized if incorporated as part of the plan.

Mary Ellen Pollock, 1233 Ridge Rd, believes that we have a unique downtown. She feels a revitalized Fox Theater would add to the downtown and suggested adding more green space to the plan as well as a grocery store in the future.

Mildred Nevel, 1709 Jefferson Street, feels that the plan is being pushed through. She does not like the separate process for the student housing at the Lullabye site and the mall redevelopment as they are linked. She believes the Council should look at it as a whole, slow the process down and make sure they have all the information before they make a decision.

Bill Schaefer, 487 West Mapleridge Drive, feels that this plan is being rushed through and asked that the Council take their time in making a decision.

Bernie Coerper, 1400 West River Drive, has been involved in local real estate and believes the mall is a beautiful place. Dial is not actively seeking to rent to long-term tenants and are hoping that someone will buy them out or pay to tear it down. He noted that once AIG moves there will be lots of parking downtown. He said this is inexpensive quality retail space and would be a very expensive parking lot.

Kathy Dugan, 615 Sommer Street, favors redeveloping the mall in some way as well as the Lullabye site but feels this is going too fast. She would like to see more public input earlier in the process.

Daryl Kurtenbach, 5282 Airport Road, feels that the public has not had enough time to study the plan and that the city is moving too fast. He feels the plan has no vision and that the city needs to consider the mall and Lullaby sites together.

Bernice Sevenich, 1324 Fourth Avenue, believes that the DOT should move Highway 10 off Centerpoint Drive and out of town. She also warned that if a sales person is being pushy it should raise a red flag and that with Christmas coming Dial should give the city a present.

Rick Hinder, Plover, believes the plan looks like corporate triage.

Tom Dailing, 1908 Main Street, feels that the mall has mostly failed. The Council should ask if this plan is good enough for one of the Top 100 communities. He outlined a number of issues and concerns that should be addressed by the Council.

Pat Keller, Plover, moved here and believes that the city is heaven with wonderful people. He feels the downtown plan needs to reflect the area's heritage as well as the future and it does neither.

2. Discussion without action on the following: Redevelopment Plan Centerpoint Mall [CenterPoint MarketPlace]

Mayor Halverson asked the Alderpersons to share their thoughts. He also explained the process for the Memorandum of Understanding that is on the agenda for Monday's meeting.

Ald. Walther finds the plan intriguing but that the Council needs to take more time with it as this week is the first time that the public has received information about it. He is concerned that if the Council agrees to move forward there are provisions in place to make sure that Dial doesn't leave the city hanging.

Ald. Wiza said that he has problems with this going back to October 2007. He has zero confidence in Dial as they do not follow through. He would rather the city purchase the mall outright so they can sell portions to a developer who is committed to the downtown. He likes the concept and the idea of the Children's Museum and believes they should reexamine their intentions for this parcel over the next six months.

Ald. Hanson would like to review all the material. He would also like to see if some of the buildings could be moved and if there could be more green space rather than parking. He believes they should slow down to make sure all that everything is in order.

Ald. Molski believes that they need to slow down. She likes the concept of owning the property and eliminating Dial altogether. A number of people had good ideas and they need time to explore them.

Ald. Stroik sees this as a corporate buyout. He believes that the city should hold firm and if Dial truly wants to sell then it should sell the mall to the city for a fair price. He supports redeveloping the downtown but feels that they should slow down and not give Dial a bailout.

Ald. Brooks sees things that he likes but feels we could be more creative. He outlined some possible ideas including a focus on the arts and children with less retail space.

Ald. Heart said that she is committed to redeveloping the downtown but believes there was a consensus at the meeting tonight on the desire for more green space, a public space, and the Fox Theater. She feels the more ideas the better in having a vision for the downtown.

City Attorney Molepske said the original development of the mall included grant money from the federal government, some state money, some city money as well as funding from Tom Barrett and his associates. Subsequent to that another developer bankrolled the mall and the Dunham Store. He said that no, technically there wasn't a forgiveness of debt. The original agreement with the mall did provide that the City had rights to a portion of the mall's profits but over the years the agreements has been changed several times.

Mayor Halverson asked if the city lost \$3 million.

City Attorney Molepske said no.

Ald. Stroik asked that if we have equity interest in the mall why isn't the City pushing Dial to fill all the spaces.

City Attorney Molepske stated the City's power is limited and they have no particular rights to do that.

Ald. Myer feels the City needs to take it really slow and perhaps buy the mall outright.

Ald. Slowinski feels the people need to have more of a say in the plan. He also thinks the City needs to take it slow and noted specific ideas such as a pedestrian mall and more green space.

Ald. Trzebiatowski noted concerns with Dial and feels that perhaps the City should look to local developers instead. He thought there were many good ideas brought up by the public at the meeting.

Mayor Halverson noted that what came across at this hearing was that we need to do something but the question is at what level. He said in listening to the testimony it is clear that the City must slow down and that the parameters of the plan are not right. The question is how do we move forward. The PDI Plan does give us a general road map and there is certainly more work to do.

Meeting adjourned at 8:47 p.m.

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