

MEMBERS PRESENT: Rick Estenson, Steve Engler, Victor Summa, Rhonda Pownell, Jim Pokorney, Erica Zweifel, Tim Geary, Mike Berthelsen, Pete Sandberg, Scott Richardson, Jay Jasnoch

MEMBERS ABSENT: Marty Benson, Vacant Seat, Tracy Davis, Christopher Sawyer, Neil Lutsky

ALSO PRESENT: Mark Koegler, Jim McMenimen, Larry Larson, Kathryn Summa, Stephanie Hendricksen, Economic Development Manager Jody Gunderson, Community Development Director Brian O’Connell, Recording Secretary Sandra Bremer and other interested persons

I) **Introduction**

Chair Estenson called the joint meeting to order with a quorum present at 6:00 p.m. All members introduced themselves.

Koegler explained the purpose of the Steering Committee. The Committee members will be the sounding board for the ideas that HGKI staff will bring forward. They will be looking for feedback and ideas from the Committee on how to make the process and plan work. He described the team they have working with them on this project. He described the expectations of the Steering Committee.

II) **Scope of Work and the Planning Process**

McMenimen presented the schedule for the master planning process. He reviewed the information that was available to the members in the binder and noted that the binders will be used to collect the data given to them for review prior to each meeting. He noted they have already started doing project area inventory and reviewing current plan studies that may influence the planning process. He noted that market and site analysis will include both Sites A (NW area) and B (South of Hwy 19). They will then focus on only Site A until the City makes the decision on whether to include Site B in the planning process. They are in the process of setting up a web site that will be available to the public. The public will be able to access project progress and provide input on the process on this site. He described the 2-day strategic visioning charrette that is planned potentially for November. They will work on developing preliminary concepts for Site A and Site B while they have the design team together. They will only work on Site A to refine it until they are told to begin working on Site B (possibly in February 2010). Once they have a concept plan that is acceptable to the Committee, they will hold a public open house to gather input. All the information they gather during this process will be reviewed with the Committee. Concepts and draft master plan will also be reviewed with the City Council and Planning Commission. The Master Plan will be finalized in a report document. The Committee will be meeting on a regular basis. The next meeting will be in early to mid November. There will be some joint meetings with the Planning Commission, City Council, property owners, stakeholder meetings and the two public open houses.

Summa asked for more information on the charrette. He felt it was being planned a little too early in the process and questioned if enough data would be ready by November.

Koegler noted they plan for late November or early December. They will have enough background information by that time. This process will get the initial ideas on the table and then the ideas will be refined as time goes on.

O'Connell questioned the process of interaction with the land owners.

Koegler noted it will be done early and often because the land is privately owned. It is very important that the land owners are involved early on.

Jasnoch noted that when additional value is added to private properties through this planning process, this increases the value to the property owners.

Estenson noted that this has been discussed among the EDA a lot and Land Vista has been working with the property owners to get it to this point and will continue to work with them through this process.

Gunderson noted that part of this process is to analyze what industrial land is priced at in the areas around Northfield so they can keep an eye on the costs and value being added to the land.

Gearly questioned if at some point would there be some contractual arrangement with the property owners.

Koegler noted there are many different mechanisms that can be pursued to accomplish the best end result for both the City and the property owners. He noted that after the planning process has been complete, there will be added value to the land. This plan will cover phases over many years. The question has been raised "Is this the best time to do this?" In many ways this is a very good time to do this process.

Pownell noted her concern is that when asked for input some people attend and supply input but the majority of the citizens in town do not participate.

Koegler noted they will use as many tools as they have available to attempt to get the most people to participate. They are trying to use social networking to reach more people. They will be trying live twitter to allow them to have a live chat during the public open houses.

Engler questioned how detailed the information would be on the costs for water and sewer, etc. What can be expected from this planning process? How much money would the City have to put into this project?

McMenimen noted they will be doing preliminary cost estimates for each alternative to determine feasibility of each alternative. They will have a very good sense of the costs involved. They will have a snapshot of how long it might take for this area to develop. This will provide the City with an understanding of what the return on investment will be for the City when they have to decide what money to invest.

Engler wanted to be sure that all the members have access to the necessary plans and studies done by the City such as the EDA's TIP plan, Comprehensive Plan, etc.

McMenimen noted they are going through these documents and will be presenting a summary of them to the members. At the next meeting they will go through the site analysis and the summary of the planning studies and reports that will have an influence on the planning effort.

Engler questioned if there would be minutes kept of all the meetings. He questioned how everyone would be informed of the meetings being held and would they be open to the public.

Koegler noted that someone will be taking notes of each meeting and they will be made available. He noted that all the meetings will be public meetings; however, the Steering Committee meetings will be work sessions and they will not be opening the discussions up to the public at these work sessions. There will be opportunity for input at the public open houses that are being planned.

Summa questioned if the master plan would recommend when the City makes their decision to invest in this project. He sees this as a great marketing tool to bring people to Northfield to develop.

McMenimen noted they will be putting together a phasing plan as part of the implementation strategy for the City.

Koegler noted that at the end of this process, they will recommend whether the City should go ahead with this development and will note the method and timing to do it. At the end they will have a model of what they feel works best at this site.

Summa questioned the feasibility of the City acquiring the land that is not developable on the site.

Koegler noted that when this develops, there will be dedication requirements that will be part of the development process. He noted there might be times that they will have to come forward with some bad news as part of this process. While that news may not be what people want to hear, it will be as realistic as can be presented given market conditions. They intend to present as much information so that the end result works best for Northfield. He asked the members to think about what they want to see on Site A and what types of uses they see going on this site.

Sandberg noted there are a lot of things going on in other areas that are competing with Northfield that will impact what happens here.

Koegler noted Northfield has some very distinctive advantages, one being the two colleges and the intellectual capital invested here.

Pokorney noted it is important to figure out how Northfield makes themselves different from other communities. They have to draw on the history of the City. The key is to understand who we are and what makes Northfield different from other cities in the area. They do not want a cookie cutter business park but they want one that will work just for Northfield.

O'Connell noted part of this process will be to evaluate other industrial parks and use what has worked. They have to look at precedent models that may not be standard to see what makes them work.

McMenimen noted there are only a few fully developed sustainable and eco-friendly business and industrial parks in the United States and there are many more in Europe that they will be looking at. It was noted that after a preliminary review of Eco-Industrial Parks in the United States, most are much smaller in size (50-60 acres). He noted they will need assistance from the Committee and the public to understand the unique sense and character of Northfield.

O'Connell noted that once the master plan is complete it will be tied to the standards from the LDC.

Zweifel raised the issue of the geographical location of Northfield with a pedestrian scale that is very important to Northfield and the issue of connectivity within the City.

Berthelsen noted the City is residential heavy in terms of the tax base. It is necessary to diversify the City and this issue needs to be considered by expanding the business and industrial base.

Jasnoch noted they have to get back in line to what is expected of this project. It is important to understand the terms and challenges necessary to make this work and recognize what will work and what will not work for Northfield – it must be a feasible plan. There is also the challenge of bringing in new businesses to the City and maintaining the businesses that have been in town for many years and that have grown with the community.

Geary noted that the businesses that may fill up this park may have a root in Northfield. The business people that are here are not just out of college. They are the professionals that have many years of experience.

Summa noted that he sees research facilities such as agricultural research, college research, medical research, etc. desirable for this park.

Berthelsen noted that it is very difficult to successfully develop research parks and that even the University of Minnesota (more of a research based university than the two colleges in Northfield) has had it's challenges doing so.

III) **Project Goals and Objectives**

There was a review of the goals and objectives.

Koegler noted that at the next meeting they will be presenting a set of “rules of engagement” for the Steering Committee. They want to be able to leave the meetings open for creative discussion.

IV) **Next Steps**

McMenimen noted they will be conducting site analysis and preparing “white papers” (summaries) of the studies and plans that are in place already.

Koegler noted they intend to provide information for the next meeting in advance of the meeting to allow members time to review it. The members agreed that Thursday evening was the best night and they would meet from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. November 12 was the next meeting date discussed for the Steering Committee. It was discussed that the charrette may be held on November 16 and 17.

V) **Adjourn**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:48 p.m.