

CITY OF ST. JOHNS

CITY COMMISSION MINUTES

APRIL 22, 2024

The special meeting of the St. Johns City Commission was called to order by Mayor Dzurka at 5:01 p.m. at the Clinton County Courthouse, 100 East State Street, 2nd Floor, Suite #2200, St. Johns, Michigan.

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Eric Hufnagel, Brad Gurski, Scott Dzurka, Chris Hyzer

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Jean Ruestman

STAFF PRESENT: Chad Gamble, City Manager; Kristina Kinde, City Treasurer; Mindy J. Seavey, City Clerk; Justin Smith, Director of Public Services

Agenda

Mayor Dzurka asked if there were any additions or deletions to the agenda.

There were none.

Motion by Commissioner Hyzer seconded by Commissioner Hufnagel that the city commission approve the agenda as presented.

YEA: Hufnagel, Gurski, Dzurka, Hyzer

NAY: None

Motion carried.

Public Comments

Mayor Dzurka asked if there were any public comments.

There were none.

Welcome, Meeting Overview

City Manager Gamble said city reached out to MSU to more formally look at the area around the depot. He said he was thrilled to be able to work with these 5 fine students. He introduced the team leader, Thomas Boss.

Michigan State University Practicum Team Presentation: St. Johns Gateway Improvement Plan

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Thomas Boss, team leader, was present. He gave some background on the capstone project. Mr. Boss said they were looking at the site with the depot. He discussed: 4 project goals; existing conditions. He introduced his team: Sommer Nafal, Gaurav Sagvekar, Tyler Schewe, and Josh Shelton.

The MSU Practicum Team discussed:

- Future land use.
- Surrounding environment.
- Parking.
- Situational analysis – strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.
- The survey.
 - 354 responses.
 - Results.
 - Like to see more of: recreational space was #1.
 - Roles of train depot: as is, public event space.
 - Role of grain silos: art space/adaptive reuse.
 - Prefer more green space: 58.3% yes.
 - Written response questions.
 - Hundreds of comments.
- Recommendations
 - Grain silos.
 - Proposed conceptual render.
- Train depot
- Connectivity
 - Pedestrian accessibility.
 - Bicycle accessibility.
 - Parking.
- Park and recreational space
- Downtown activities
- Proposed conceptual renders
- Mixed use development
- Proposed conceptual renders
 - Train depot.
 - Mixed use development.
 - Enhanced streetscape.

They thanked Chad.

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Commissioner Comments

Mayor Dzurka thanked them. He said we will put the full version of the presentation online.

There was a discussion of:

- How many acres is east of the depot
 - 8 acres whole space; maybe around 4-5 acres.
- Thoughts on bringing rail cars up to speed.
 - Looking at a few examples such as Union Station in Lansing, but they are not sure what renovations it took for those.
 - Recommend we don't keep all of them, but instead find a way to remove some of them and keep 1-2.
- Have they thought about any potential issues with the right-of-way relating to the trail?
 - They have considered some buffer between the buildings and trails. This is just a concept rendering.
- Would there be any additional parking built into the plan for any recreational space added?
 - There already is some parking being used at the gateway site now. Some of the site could be reused as a parking space. We would want to guide people from some of the other lots to the gateway site.
- The sidewalk and widening, how far down would it be widened?
 - Just the 3 blocks of downtown area.
- The survey, green space, and reason why you picked mixed use?
 - West side of lot is majority green space; mixed use would be more temporary day-to-day things going on; purple, blue and orange areas would be green space majority of the time.
- Goal for public gathering space.
- Mixed use will add more people towards the east of the site.
- MDOT's position on trail connectivity.
 - One of the parcels here is still owned by MDOT.
- Any thought about bringing that property back together since the trail bisects the land?
 - Thought of it as a central focus, most of their recommendations can go either way.
- Pavilion that is there now, is the pavilion the right size? Thoughts of expanding the pavilion?
 - Plan didn't address the pavilion too much.
 - Supplements what already goes on.

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- Area in blue, consider that for mixed use development?
 - In initial design, they wanted to preserve some of the green space.
- What steps we should take in the next 5 years.
 - Try to start with some of the lower cost, immediate solutions first: paint silos, benches, signs, bike racks.
 - Focus on landscaping of site; make it a more welcoming space.
 - Silos be removed as soon as possible.
 - Permits and ordinances are the first and foremost; gaining ownership of all the land; making sure of what you can and can't do; low-cost recommendations first; plan out building projects.

Wrap Up and Next Steps

City Manager Gamble said for 4 of them, this is their last requirement before earning their degree. He told them they would always be welcome here and presented some mementos on behalf of the team, city commission and Heather Hanover. He thanked them for their hard work.

Adjournment

Motion by Commissioner Hyzer seconded by Commissioner Gurski that the meeting be adjourned.

YEA: Hufnagel, Gurski, Dzurka, Hyzer

NAY: None

Motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:37 p.m.