

MINUTES
WORKING SESSION
CITY COUNCIL
COUNCIL CHAMBERS IN THE CIVIC COMPLEX
401 WEST WASHINGTON STREET
EAST PEORIA, ILLINOIS

February 1, 2022

The Honorable John P. Kahl Mayor of the City of East Peoria called the Working Session of the City Council of the City of East Peoria, Illinois to order at 5:00 P.M. with the meeting having been properly noticed. The City Clerk certifies that notice of the meeting was duly served upon Council Members via email on Friday, January 28, 2022, at approximately 4:19 p.m.

Upon the roll being called the following answered present: Mayor John P. Kahl, Commissioners, Daniel S. Decker, Mark E. Hill, and Seth D. Mingus.

Absent: Michael L. Sutherland.

Mayor Kahl explained that the City Council is meeting for a Working Session and that no formal business will be conducted by the City Council at the meeting. He explained that the purpose of the meeting is to have a Working Session regarding the East Peoria Community Foundation presentation on Levee Park.

Mayor Kahl turned the discussion over to Susan Yoder Portscheller, East Peoria Community Foundation Board President. Ms. Yoder Portscheller explained the background of the East Peoria Community Foundation and that they took on the creation of Levee Park. There are three phases to the project. The first phase is the Reading Garden that is completed and beautiful. It is has been used by the library and has expanded library programs in the area, including different activities. Phase two is for West Side of the Site of Levee Park. She explained that a performance area would be advantageous to performers and musicians. Seating areas would also be advantageous and includes the restroom, stage, and west side of site. It is estimated to cost \$1,066,574. Phase three is the water feature, splash pad, eastside of site that will cost around \$1,400,000. Ms. Yoder Portscheller presented an aerial view image of the park with each of the three phases color coded. She explained that the last she had spoken with the City Council that she heard positive comments and also concerns regarding maintenance. Annual maintenance would need to be a City of East Peoria cost. They estimate the maintenance would be around \$20,000 annually. The incremental costs would be somewhat less because the City is currently mowing the property already. There is anticipated little to no capitol expenses for the next 20 years. The reason that the Foundation Board sought a meeting is to ask for definitive direction on Levee Park from the City Council. The Foundation Board will continue raising money and completing the park if the City Council confirms its support. The Foundation Board feels that the Levee Park completes the Levee Distict, can make the site even more attractive for community events, and will contribute to the success of any residential development in the downtown area. She explained that they sought information regarding the Memorial Park in Morton as a comparison. The maintenance for Memorial Park in Morton is \$16,000 and included in that is \$6,000 for labor costs and the rest is for contracted services. They also have restrooms that are cleaned 3-4 times per week. Morton built their park to drive traffic to downtown. Ms. Yoder Portscheller recommended that one person should be responsible for the Levee Park to ensure things are done correctly at the Levee Park. She suggested an annual fundraising event or use of hotel/motel tax dollars. She exhibited pictures of what the Levee Park could look like that included a stage design that was open so that it could be viewed on all sides. Ms. Yoder Portscheller explained major donors to the Levee Park and explained that the Foundation Board sought input from well-respected professionals in the design of the Levee Park. She explained that the Foundation Board had worked hard and explained what the Foundation

Board had done regarding Levee Park. She explained the transparency of the Foundation Board and the ways they sought input regarding the Levee Park including a survey that was done in July 2020. Ms. Yoder Portscheller discussed the Levee Park Dedication Ceremony and community outreach group that was created. She explained that the Levee Park is planned to be a special place with multiple uses, including (1) serving every aspect of the community, (2) draw even more people into the downtown to spur economic activity and growth, (3) provide the infrastructure needed for community activities and events, while ensuring current activities are enhanced, (4) minimizing permanent hard features that might interfere with a variety of events, (5) assure access for car show vehicles, and (6) be an important amenity to developer Flaherty and Collins.

Ms. Yoder Portscheller turned the discussion over to Dennis Triggs, Foundation Board Secretary/Treasurer. Mr. Triggs introduced everyone on the Foundation Board that were present at the meeting. He explained that the City of East Peoria and the Foundation currently have until the end of this November to send the \$500,000 DCEO grant which will be difficult if the Levee Park is redesigned and construction is postponed. Also, materials need to be ordered with a lead time of some materials being 20 weeks. This will also put into question the ability to accept the \$400,000 matching OSLAD grant that the Foundation has submitted. The project may or may not be approved during this round of awards; however, the stage and spray pad are key elements included in the grant request. The Foundation will do anything to not require cancellation. Over the last year, the Foundation has made modifications to the plans, including removing planned trees. They must move quickly to determine the park design, a stage or no stage, seating, splash pad, etc. It would break his heart to not receive the DCEO money or not receive the OSLAD grant. The residents that are serving on the Foundation Board and those that made donations to the park are the ones needed to build community pride. It is important to listen to them. The Foundation is asking City Council to approve the design as submitted and to agree to maintenance. If the City Council want a design change, the Foundation wants to know. If no city maintenance costs will be submitted, they need to know that. Mr. Triggs explained that the Levee Park is being built with great quality. The Foundation is going to do it right or they are not going to do it all.

Gary Uftring of Uftring Auto Group who is Foundation Board member came up to the podium to make comments. He stressed the importance of things that are being done. He explained that East Peoria is a good community to do business in. He would like the City Council to consider how much money is spent by merchants that do business here or get employees to the community. He spends between \$50,000-\$75,000 per month. He enjoys the other businesses that bring people to the community. Mr. Uftring commented on the businesses that attract people to do business in the City and EastSide Centre. He commented on factories and employees that work in East Peoria and spend money here. The retail impact is keeping the retailers going well. He sees other events and family gatherings that can attract people to want to come to the East Peoria Community. The Foundation is asking for a grant from OSLAD and commented on the natural beauty in East Peoria. He commented on the difficult job that they do. The quality of life is important. Mr. Uftring explained that the City gets sales tax dollars from the area. He feels that the Levee Park is a quality-of-life feature that he would like to see move forward.

Matt Mamer from CEFCU and Foundation Board Member came up to the podium. He explained that the project is supported by his family. He joined the Foundation Board after his father passed away. His family has also supported Levee Park financially. CEFCU has also supported Levee Park financially. He appreciates the concerns over the maintenance costs. The infrastructure and amenities add value to residents and visitors and makes the other businesses located in the City more attractive. He explained that if the Foundation does not have the City's support, then they cannot get more financial support from others.

Mayor Kahl thanked the Foundation Board members. He explained that he supports Levee Park. He would like to identify who is taking ownership of the Park, and he wants a commitment from Council to say we accept ownership, maintenance, and additional capital expenditures in the future. Mayor Kahl would like the stage on the point or against the City Hall building, and he does not like the tiered seating because he feels like it would take away the use of the space. He is willing to take ownership and set money aside for maintenance using hotel/motel tax funds. Mayor Kahl explained that there is minimal city staff to maintain several properties now, and the City will be seeking to add two additional employees.

Commissioner Hill commented on Levee Park. He would like to do a better job taking care of Levee Park and setting money aside for the maintenance. He feels that the City should take ownership and set aside money for maintenance and capital expenses. He is in favor of the tiered seating, the splash pad, and water feature. He does not want a flat oasis and feels appropriate seating and shade trees is important. He commented on the stage explaining that he is open on the location of the stage.

Commissioner Mingus thanked the Foundation Board for their work and the presentation. There are going to be maintenance costs and long-term capital costs. He will support the Park if the money is budgeted for maintenance and future capital costs. He feels that it is necessary to set aside money for the project in order to ensure that it is maintained adequately. Commissioner Mingus supports Levee Park because hotel/motel fund will be used which is not taking money away from public safety or garbage trucks or other services that citizens receive. He inquired as to why the stage is where it is located.

Mr. Triggs explained that there is room for hundreds of people and not thousands of people. Unless there are several thousands of people, then you take the stage out of usage. They envisioned the people area being closer. He feels if the stage is at the tip, then it will not be used. He is confident that you can have hundreds of people utilizing the stage and area if it is placed on the Washington Street side of the Park. Ms. Yoder Portscheller commented on the splash pad its location near the bathrooms and the utility closet for efficiency and logistical purposes. The pedestrian spine is moved further toward Richland Street to give more space in the middle and other large events that would need a bigger space. The terraced seating is for a quick seating for individuals in the Park.

Commissioner Decker explained that he supports and hopes that the Park can be a benefit to the Vietnam Wall. He feels that the Park can accommodate the wall. He agrees that the City needs to identify who will pay for it and start setting aside money now. He believes that there may be an opportunity with future fundraising for the Park maintenance. He commented on the splash pad and ensuring that money is put aside for the maintenance and capital expenses. Commissioner Decker would like to see the fountain completed. He supports the project as submitted.

Mayor Kahl asked for any comments from the audience.

Rick Swan came up to the podium to comment on Levee Park. He explained that he appreciates the Foundation and the work that they have done. He expressed concerns the layout of the Park, the stage, and the tiered seating. He is concerned about continuing car show events with the proposed layout of the Park. He commented on the twenty-two events that are scheduled for the Park. He wants the Park to be looked at with multiple uses in mind.

Mayor Kahl asked for any additional comments from the audience. There was no response.

Motion by Commissioner Hill, seconded by Commissioner Decker; Mr. Mayor, I move you that we adjourn the meeting.

Yeas: Commissioners Decker, Hill, Mingus, and Sutherland and Mayor Kahl.

Nays: None.

Mayor Kahl declared the motion carried and the meeting adjourned at 6:03 P.M.

/s/ Morgan R. Cadwalader

Morgan R. Cadwalader, City Clerk