



Minutes City Council's Mill and Lake District Committee August 20, 2009

Minutes of the meeting of the City Council's Mill and Lake District Committee held on Thursday, August 20, 2009, 3:30 p.m., at Don Cassano Community Room, 200 East Fifth Street, Tempe, Arizona.

Committee Members Present:

Mayor Hugh Hallman
Councilmember P. Ben Arredondo
Councilmember Joel Navarro
Councilmember Corey D. Woods

Vice Mayor Shana Ellis
Councilmember Mark W. Mitchell
Councilmember Onnie Shekerjian

City Staff Present:

Charlie Meyer, City Mgr
Travis Dray, Dep Recreation Mgr
Mark Richwine, Parks & Rec Mgr
Chris Messer, Planner
Nancy Ryan, Rio Salado Mgr
Chris Salomone, Comm Dev Mgr
Sherri Wakefield-Saenz, Comm Dev

Jan Hort, City Clerk
Mark Vinson, City Architect
Glenn Kephart, Pub Wrks Mgr
Sam Thompson, Parks & Rec
Kaylee Colter, Comm Dev
Larry Schmalz, Comm Dev
Shelly Hearn, Comm Rel

Guests Present:

Nancy Hormann, DTC
Lara Skutt, DTC
Kevin Moore, Moore/Swick Partnership
Karrie Taylor, DMB
Charles Huellmantel

Adam Jones, DTC
Neil Calfee, ASU
Greg Swick, Moore/Swick Partnership
T.A. Shover, DMB

Mayor Hallman called the meeting to order at 3:36 p.m.

Agenda Item 1 – Introductions

Staff and guests introduced themselves.

Agenda Item 2 – Public Appearances/Call to the Public

Kevin Moore asked why this agenda item is located at the beginning of these agendas. Mayor Hallman explained that various meeting agendas have public comment at the beginning and some have public comment at the end of the agenda. Councilmembers agreed that future Mill and Lake District Committee agendas have public comment located at the beginning and end of these agendas so that the public may comment after the agenda has been discussed in its entirety.

Agenda Item 3 – Approve Minutes from July 2, 2009

Councilmember Navarro stated that Item #4 on the July 2, minutes omitted several of his concerns and comments. This item was tabled until additions to the minutes have been completed.

Agenda Item 4 – DTC Update

Nancy Hormann stated that DTC representatives are partnering with city staff to take regular walks in the downtown to discuss streetscape improvements and identify problem areas in need of further attention. From September through May, DTC ambassadors have been stationed on the light rail line in Tempe handing out informational brochures promoting Tempe. Due to budget constraints, there are some funding challenges that might impact this program, however it will continue at a reduced level of operation.

The Thursdays on Mill Program has been expanded. Beginning September 3, there will be a community organic market on Mill comprised of artisans, bakers, organic meats and fruits and vegetables. The grand opening for this event will be held in October. During this event, there will also be classes held at the Mad Cap Theater to give downtown patrons a variety of activities to choose from.

Another undertaking of the DTC is to create an urban garden whereby growers will be growing produce, herbs and spices for local restaurants. The location of this garden is yet to be determined.

Mad Cap Theater opened on June 12 and operates five theaters. This is an unexpected successfully venue that provides a wide range of genres, live music and theater shows. Corporate bookings and school activities are held in this facility. There has been a lot of positive publicity about this Tempe amenity. Alcohol is only served during special events.

Downtown merchants have worked with DTC to provide back to school discounts for ASU students. Trolleys are also equipped with public information brochures to educate students and visitors on various local discounts and transportation options.

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Councilmember Shekerjian joined the meeting at 3:50 p.m.
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Business development activity has increased dramatically over the past month. The interest in vacant retail space has been encouraging. DTC acts as a facilitator to potential retailers by marketing vacant retail space downtown and then connecting the retailer with the landlord for follow up. Another tool DTC has used to attract new retail activity is to host a retail competition for downtown vacant retail space. The winner of this competition will enjoy a rent free commercial retail space for one year. The winner of this competition will be announced after a lease has been signed.

Even with the existing economic slump, the most recent Tempe Festival of the Arts event exceeded the anticipated sponsorship goals and all vendor booth spaces were occupied. The upcoming Fantasy of Lights Boat Parade program will be expanded to include the Tempe Town Lake ten-year anniversary celebration.

The DTC website has been enhanced. When users click on a downtown business, the website offers parking locations and area shopping/restaurants. Entrances to parking venues and shops are also included in this detail. The Arizona Republic has recognized the DTC for its efforts towards revitalization of the downtown.

In terms of social media, DTC is utilizing FaceBook, Madcap Theater, Twitter, web postings and web voting for amenities downtown. The number one amenity voted on was having a farmer's market downtown. Councilmember Shekerjian was commended for her support of the farmers (community) market concept.

Director of Leasing for DMB, TA Shover, was called upon to give a leasing update along Mill Avenue. Mr. Shover stated that Five Guys Burgers and Fries will be operating out of the former Coffee Plantation location. Clancy's and Jimmy John's Gourmet Sandwich have also signed leases to operate along Mill Avenue. These new leases combined with other office space leases soon to be confirmed will bring the occupancy rate for Centerpoint to nearly 100%. Councilmember Shekerjian asked when the occupancy rate is expected to reach capacity. Mr. Shover stated that by next spring these leases should be in place, after some tenant improvement work has been completed.

Councilmember Navarro requested an elevated focus on the vision for streetscape/vegetation improvements and transition ideas from one area of downtown to adjacent areas – specifically downtown entryways and medians; world class vibrancy is the goal. Mayor Hallman stated that on two previous occasions, this idea has been studied and perhaps staff should bring back to Council the results of those works of study to find out where things currently stand. Prior areas of interest covered density, building height, historic preservation, uses, overlay districts, pending projects, etc. Councilmember Arredondo also suggested that staff prepare a report of the tree replacement program for the next meeting agenda.

Councilmember Mitchell asked who will be participating in the community market. Councilmember Shekerjian responded that there will be artists selling works of art, the Mad Cap Theater will be hosting vending activity outside of the theater, the Permaculture Guild will be offering classes inside the theater and there will be live entertainment along Mill Avenue. All of these events are designed to create synergy along Mill Avenue on Thursday evenings and a desirable destination for residents as well as out of town visitors. Councilmember Mitchell cautioned event organizers against creating competition among existing downtown merchants. Councilmember Shekerjian acknowledged this and responded that community feedback has indicated a great deal of interest for something of this nature and hosting this on a Thursday night encourages downtown patronage on a weeknight that would otherwise not have as much pedestrian traffic. Councilmember Navarro pointed out that Tempe residents are the overall priority. Nancy Hormann stated that a majority of vendors are Tempe based and added that eventually the vision is to move some of this activity to closer to the light rail for additional patronage and exposure.

DIRECTION:

Staff was directed to prepare a compilation of former reports/findings regarding streetscape visions for the next meeting.

Agenda Item 5 – ASU Block 12 Responses / University Drive Streetscape

Neil Calfee reported that ASU received 31 responses to an RFP for an office building/bookstore. ASU staff is in the process of reviewing the RFP's for financing viability and completeness of responses.

Mr. Calfee stated that ASU officials are contemplating a forum with City officials to discuss streetscape themes along University Drive as a focus of study. Councilmember Shekerjian voiced the importance of preserving walkways, grids and continuity within this district. Mr. Calfee stated that until the RFP responses have been evaluated and a developer selected, it is premature to discuss these issues with the RFP respondents. Councilmember Arredondo asked for a future update regarding what ASU intends to do with fraternity housing. This item will be placed on the October 2009 meeting agenda.

Agenda Item 6 – College Avenue North Streetscape

Mark Vinson pointed out that College Avenue is a short segment with 'anchor' uses at each end. Building facades, landscaping and the rights-of-way are all taken into consideration when considering streetscape designs. Kaylee Colter stated that staff is in the process of studying various downtown areas, including the ASU Downtown Phoenix campus, that are considered areas of visual interest and assessing areas in need of refurbishment in order to bring continuity to these public spaces. Details such as utility boxes, trash cans, street furnishings, lighting, paving patterns, and landscaping are some of the elements that are taken into account. Vehicle access is another area of

interest that poses challenges. Drought tolerant plant materials are desirable. Mr. Vinson closed by saying that staff is working towards creating a compatible, yet distinct streetscape space for College Avenue North, a portion of which could be incorporated into the Block 12 redevelopment. Mayor Hallman elaborated on that concept by stating that the space to be studied is much broader than College Avenue and should be brought to a future meeting to consider this project and others in a more comprehensive fashion. It was suggested that the Decision Theater could be the meeting venue for the next meeting because of the 3-dimension technology for studying such projects, although staff can project simulated 3D images on a standard screen.

Agenda Item 7 – Tempe Town Lake Update

Nancy Ryan passed out an information kit regarding the upcoming 10 year Tempe Town Lake anniversary celebration. There will be free boating for a day, bands, competitions, gifts and several other activities. This event is being promoted on Twitter, FaceBook and various other media outlets.

The Rio Lago boat rental contract will cease on September 13; all of their equipment will be removed from the lake by October 14. Rio Lago will be operating tour boats, which requires patrons to secure a reservation ahead of time. SRP is proposing to hold an auction of boats and docks. Staff is discussing either issuing an RFP for future boat rentals or perhaps supporting a venture of this nature using Community Services staff. Councilmember Shekerjian voiced concern over not having a boat rental feature on the lake.

Agenda Item 6 – Announcements

None.

Meeting adjourned at 4:55 p.m.

Prepared by: Kay Savard

Reviewed by: Chris Salomone

Jan Hort, City Clerk