

Council Proceedings

Special Meeting/Work Session

January 10, 2005

Pursuant to due call and notice, a Special Meeting/Work Session of the City Council of the City of Bemidji, Beltrami County, Minnesota, was held on Monday, January 10, 2005, at 5:30 p.m. in the Council Chambers of City Hall, Mayor Lehmann presiding.

The following Council members were present: Johnson, Erickson, Lehmann, Downs, Markeson, Meuers, Hellquist

Staff Present: Minke, Tweedale, Oakes, Sherman,
Others: Siegert

Lehmann opened the meeting and noted that the purpose of the meeting was to give the Council an opportunity to discuss redevelopment at the old high school site and perhaps identify what interests the Council wants to have considered in the decision by the School Board for the reuse of that property.

Cliff Tweedale was present to facilitate the discussion.

Tweedale opened the discussion and provided some background and direction for continued discussion:

- In 2002, a Reuse Committee worked with the School District to review a variety of reuses and agreed on a multiple use facility that would include some office space and housing.
- In 2004, there was some rethinking about whether that particular use made sense or whether another reuse would make more sense for that site.
- December 20, 2004, the School Board rescinded their earlier motion and authorized the Superintendent to solicit new proposals for review in 90 days. At that time, the School Board will weigh in on what they think the reuse should be.

What's on the table now:

- A reuse that could include some housing.
- An expansion of the BSU facility – possibly a multi-purpose events center with Division 1 hockey being the anchor.
- A small subcommittee is working with BSU President Quistgard to develop what a multi-purpose events center might look like on the old high school site (how it would fit – traffic flow patterns – parking, etc.)

Tweedale suggested that the City is in the middle of the process and is trying to determine whether they should have a role and what the role might be. He noted that it would be difficult at this time to recommend a specific proposal because the City does not have all of the proposals, or all of the facts. He suggested that the City:

- Has authority to talk in general terms about redevelopment of that site – what types of uses make sense in that part of the City.
- Is obligated by statute, through a Comprehensive Plan, to determine how the City should be developed in the next five-ten years.
- Can promote the desired reuse characteristics without picking a developer or a specific reuse.

To further discussion, Tweedale asked the Council to consider:

- Is there some general reuse of the old high school site that the Council agrees is clearly in the long-term best interests of the community, and if so what it is.
- If there is agreement on a long-term general re-use, are there considerations for the development of that re-use that the city wishes to propose?
- If there is not agreement on a long-term general reuse, can the City make recommendations to the School District on considerations for the development of this site, regardless of the specific type of use?

Council discussion regarding general uses included the following:

- Property should be returned to the tax rolls – best interest of the taxpayers.
- BSU is proposing expansion – this site is adjacent to campus - they will have a hard time finding a more suitable location for expansion.
- BSU is one of the most important economic generators in the community.
- If BSU cannot use this site, they will have no other option but to purchase and remove other taxable property from the tax rolls.
- BSU expansion at this site is logical.
- If BSU uses this site for a multi-purpose event center with D-1 hockey as the anchor, they will still be landlocked – unable to expand in other areas - property acquisition around campus will still need to happen to expand classrooms, programs, etc.
- BSU and the City should be community-minded partners.
- Commercial development – depending on what type – could have merit.
- Do not want to see industrial development.
- Probably not a good location for a park with Diamond Point and Cameron so close.
- Assuming the City needs a multi-purpose events center, the plan should be developed and then the location chosen.

Rich Siegert, owner of the Hampton Inn, asked whether the Council has ever considered a government office center at this location. He also suggested that this location is a strong area for BSU to do some real expansion in areas where there are critical needs, such as larger departments. He questioned whether one ice arena would be enough to respond to the current needs for more ice time. He asked the Council to look at what goes into a multi-purpose event center and develop something that is good for the community overall.

Tweedale asked if there is general consensus on whether the Council feels it could support and promote the ability for BSU to expand at the old high school site – without an endorsement of any particular development.

In a roll call vote by the Mayor, Council reached unanimous consent to support acquisition of this site by BSU for future expansion, with no suggestion for any particular development. Council further agreed that the City should communicate the consensus to the School District and request that the School District and BSU work closely with the City and surrounding neighborhood.

Council expressed appreciation to Tweedale for facilitating the discussion.

There being no further discussion, meeting adjourned 7:10 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Shirley Sherman, City Clerk