

**MINUTES
CITY OF DEKALB
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING
OCTOBER 9, 2017**

The City Council of DeKalb, Illinois held a Committee of the Whole meeting on October 9, 2017, in the City Council Chambers of the DeKalb Municipal Building, 200 South Fourth Street, DeKalb, Illinois.

Mayor Smith called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

A. ROLL CALL

City Clerk Susanna Herrmann called the roll and the following members of the City Council were present: Alderman David Jacobson, Alderman Bill Finucane, Alderman Mike Marquardt, Alderman Pat Fagan, Alderman Kate Noreiko, Alderman Mike Verbic, and Mayor Jerry Smith. Alderman Tony Faivre arrived at 5:01 p.m.

Also present were: City Manager Anne Marie Gaura, City Attorney Dean Frieders, Finance Director Molly Talkington, Police Chief Gene Lowery, Deputy Fire Chief Jim Zarek, Community Development Director Jo Ellen Charlton, Public Works Director Tim Holdeman, Management Analyst Aaron Stevens, Principal Planner Dan Olson, and City Clerk Susanna Herrmann.

B. ITEMS ALSO ON THE REGULAR AGENDA

There were none.

C. CONSIDERATIONS

1. STEAM Learning Center Phase IIA Discussion.

Mayor Smith noted that the presentation would last approximately 30 minutes or less with Public Participation immediately following prior to Council discussion.

Community Development Director Charlton provided a background of the development of the STEAM Learning Center project and stated that in 2015, the City began exploring potential strategies for the development of a community learning center in the City. She explained that this learning center would provide hands-on interactive experiences that explore science, technology, engineering, art, and math, and could also be used as a museum to house various community artifacts including those in possession of the DeKalb Fire Department and the DeKalb Firefighters' Historical Foundation. She added that this attraction would draw a wide cross-section of the local population and be a destination designed to bring visitors to the City.

Community Development Director Charlton continued, stating that in June of 2017, Phase II of the STEAM Learning Center project was brought before Council for discussion. She noted that based on feedback received from Council, the STEAM Learning Center work group, which is comprised of City staff, Northern Illinois University's (NIU) Center for P-20 Engagement, the DeKalb Firefighter's Historical Foundation, and Proudly DeKalb,

determined that a Philanthropic Market Feasibility Assessment (PMFA) would be a logical step to take prior to the full Phase II study originally proposed.

Community Development Director Charlton explained that a PMFA is a fundraising capacity analysis that determines whether necessary funds can be raised from donors in amounts required to support the project in the marketplace. Completing a PMFA requires finalizing enough programming details to provide a reasonable estimate of project costs, and the creation of promotional materials that can be shared with potential donors to stimulate their interest in the project. This new project has been identified as "STEAM Learning Center Phase IIA." She stated that if approved, it would provide an indication of whether necessary funds can be raised to support the construction and ongoing operations of the proposed STEAM Learning Center under a 501(c)(3) governance structure, which is consistent with Council direction provided at the June 1, 2017, meeting. She further stated that City staff were bringing this item to a Committee of the Whole Meeting (COW) to seek additional Council feedback before making a presentation at the October 23, 2017, Regular City Council Meeting for formal consideration.

Community Development Director Charlton referenced the City of Bloomington, Indiana, and noted that their learning facility provides an example of how a similar project in that town brought anticipated economic development benefits to reality.

RATIO representative Craig Smith introduced the members of his team and used a PowerPoint presentation to explain the results of the Feasibility Study. He reiterated that this project will be independent from the City and introduced Sarah Wood to continue with the presentation.

Ms. Wood stated that, through the Feasibility Study, it was determined that the STEAM Learning Center is feasible and will become a catalyst for creating a sense of place for residents. She read aloud the mission of the STEAM Learning Facility and discussed the main principles that shape the vision of the project. She emphasized on the importance of creating a strong relationship between the City, NIU, and the community.

Matt Roof stated there is a unique market to DeKalb that other communities do not have, which will ensure the success of the STEAM Learning Facility. He noted some of the conditions of the City of Bloomington, Indiana, during the development of their WonderLab Facility and compared the two regions using a PowerPoint presentation. He concluded his portion of the presentation by listing the economic benefits of the STEAM Learning Center.

Nora Kyger stated that her firm, Ter Molen Watkins & Brandt (TWB), will be completing the philanthropic aspect of the Feasibility Study and will evaluate the interest of corporations, foundations, and individuals. She noted that the outcome of the study will serve to restrain the risks of the operation, especially if there is no philanthropic support from the community. Using a PowerPoint presentation, she listed the focal points of their planning approach and their intention to partner with a Fundraising Planning Committee, which will allow the STEAM Learning Center to achieve its full fundraising potential. She

stated that TWB will develop a strategy that provides concrete, actionable recommendations supported by findings and analysis from the capacity assessment.

Ms. Kyger informed Council that TWB will develop a case prospectus to share with potential donors and explained that the case prospectus provides a rationale for support and describes the outcomes resulting from the successful completion of the campaign and the building of the Center. She noted that TWB will then conduct interviews with up to 35 potential donors.

Ms. Kyger continued with her portion of the presentation by discussing the steps that will be taken during the implementation of the strategy, addressing possible challenges during that implementation, and assured Council that TWB will provide thorough recommendations should any challenges arise. She concluded her presentation by providing a brief background on TWB.

D. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Dr. Federico Sciammarella stated that opportunity and innovation are what the City is all about. He expressed his belief that providing this facility can offer both opportunity and innovation and he feels that the STEAM Learning Center will put the City “on the map.” He declared his support for the project.

Dwayne Brown expressed his belief that the STEAM Learning Facility is not feasible based on the findings of his own research. He dedicated Andy Williams’ “Dream the Impossible Dream” to City staff and asked Council to halt development on the project.

John Anderson noted the poverty level of the City and expressed his belief that the City is not in a financial position to continue with this project. He stated that residents in the community are already over-taxed and there is no funding available for the project.

Michaela Holtz asked Council for their support of the STEAM Learning Center and discussed her concerns as a new mother. She expressed her opinion that DeKalb needs a facility that will engage youth in an academic setting, especially one that is conveniently located in the downtown area.

Jennifer Jeep Johnson showed enthusiasm for the development of the STEAM Learning Center. She discussed the number of families that travel to neighboring counties due to the lack of a facility of this nature in the City. She also noted that as a resident in the same TIF District as the proposed STEAM Learning Center, she believes that this is just the kind of one-time capital expenditure that TIF funding was created for. She verbalized her support for the project.

Alex McConachie shared his opinion that the idea of a STEAM Learning Center is amazing. He expressed excitement over having a facility of this nature in the community to reduce, or eliminate, the travel time of citizens who are interested in visiting a learning facility with their families.

Anne Kaplan referenced a letter from NIU President Lisa Freeman that was presented to Council and discussed her participation in the Center for P-20 Engagement at NIU. She noted that one of NIU's main focuses is to create a "pipeline" from NIU to the downtown area. She also noted that a STEAM Learning Facility will not only benefit NIU, but it will also enhance the livability and vitality of the City, which will inevitably assist in the retention of students. She agreed that the City should establish a philanthropic capacity to maintain operations before moving forward with any development of the project and mentioned that NIU has already invested in the planning process by supplying program expertise and active participation. She strongly supports the utilization of an independent organization to assess financial feasibility of the facility. She concluded by assuring Council that her team is committed to participating in activities pertaining to the STEAM Learning Center.

Nicole LaDue stated that there are very few in-door recreational activities for toddler aged children in the City and her family often travels 45 minutes or more to utilize facilities of that nature. She spoke of her experience as a former teacher and mentioned that many of her colleagues choose to live in the Chicago suburbs for the accessibility of other learning facilities. She shared her belief that the STEAM Learning Facility will assist in reclaiming revenue that has been lost to surrounding communities who are able to provide citizens with a learning center, or a similar facility. She discussed how elementary schools are struggling to support science education standards and stated that this type of community organization can provide those science resources and support the development of students of all ages.

Firefighter Todd Stoffa provided a brief background of his interest in the project, which stemmed off of his role in the DeKalb Fire Fighter's Historical Foundation (DFFHF). He stated that a STEAM Learning Center would provide the DFFHF the opportunity to educate residents on Fire Safety and the history of the DeKalb Fire Department in a structured facility. He expressed his support for the project.

Mayor Smith read aloud email communications from the following members of the public: Lynn Neeley, Harry Fitzpatrick, Dan Kenney, Mariah Nagy, Dena Mickelson, Mark Charvat, Patty Perkins, Barry Schrader, and Jillian Cargile.

Mayor Smith noted that the meeting had extended past 6:00 p.m. and the Regular City Council Meeting would begin at 7:00 p.m.

Community Development Director Charlton stated that the purpose of the meeting was to allow everyone an opportunity to voice their comments and concerns regarding the STEAM Learning Facility project. She clarified that staff is requesting feedback from Council regarding their needs to make an informed decision. Community Development Director Charlton continued, discussing the positive impact the STEAM Learning center would have on workforce development and the role it would play in supporting resident's decisions to stay in the community.

Alderman Fagan referenced the WonderLab Facility and asked what the City of Bloomington, Indiana, contributed to the development of that facility, in terms of monetary

value. Mr. Roof responded that the City of Bloomington, Indiana, contributed only the land that the WonderLab Facility is established on.

Discussion ensued between Alderman Fagan and Mr. Roof regarding the comparison of the conditions surrounding the development of both the WonderLab Facility and the STEAM Learning Center.

Alderman Noreiko asked if there has been any consideration from NIU to assist in scaling down the cost of the project. Marilyn Bellert stated that NIU will only contribute the program expertise. She added that their marketing efforts need to remain focused on the recruitment of students.

Alderman Noreiko noted that the project has been presented to Council as a “regional center” and asked if there has been any consideration given to seeking funds from other local organizations. Community Development Director Charlton responded that staff had not yet considered reaching out to other organizations for potential funding but stated that they would be willing to evaluate that approach if it is the consensus of Council.

City Manager Gaura asked Ms. Bellert to return to the podium, where she (Ms. Bellert) elaborated on the definition of “staff support” in reference to NIU’s involvement with the program structure of the STEAM Learning Center.

City Manager Gaura then asked what NIU’s P-20 Engagement will bring to the STEAM Learning Center. Ms. Bellert discussed the successful STEM events and programs that she and her staff have hosted and participated in through the Center for P-20 Engagement and how that structured programming will contribute to the success of the STEAM Learning Facility.

Alderman Verbic asked Ms. Bellert if she considered the STEAM Learning Center to be a catalyst for attracting and retaining NIU students. Ms. Bellert replied that she believes it will be a factor. However, she expressed her belief that the immediate focus should be on high school students and assisting their progression to higher education at NIU.

Community Development Director Charlton acknowledged the concerns of Council but reminded them that the facility will reside in a TIF district and briefly discussed the purpose of TIF funding.

Alderman Finucane commented that he is willing to continue into the Phase IIA Feasibility Assessment with the understanding that TWB will immediately notify Council if the project ever becomes not feasible. He then asked if there has been any assessment on economic impact the City should anticipate in relation to this project. Community Development Director Charlton replied that staff has not yet conducted that type of assessment.

Alderman Finucane left the dais at 6:39 p.m.

Alderman Faivre verbalized his support of a STEAM Learning Center, but wondered why the City is investing this amount of time, energy, and expense into a project that it will not have a continued involvement with. He stated that he does not support the facility as a City project, but would be more receptive to the development of the project if there were more private donors identified.

Mayor Smith wondered if it would be possible to reach out to donors to cover the \$114,000 cost of the proposed assessment by TWB.

Discussion ensued.

Alderman Jacobson echoed the concerns of Alderman Faivre. He stated that he is in support of the project with minimal funding provided by the City.

Alderman Finucane returned to the dais at 6:41 p.m.

City Manager Gaura addressed Alderman Jacobson's comments and reminded Council and the community that this project was supported by the group that founded Proudly DeKalb. She then asked Council to consider the place-making entity that will attract people to the downtown area if they decide not to move forward with the STEAM Learning Facility.

Patty Sievert recalled a community meeting that she attended where this type of facility was discussed as part of an envisioning plan for the City. She also noted that if the City does not move forward with this project, they may lose the opportunity entirely.

Alderman Noreiko asked if the cost of the study can be reduced by minimizing the number of donors that will be interviewed in the fundraising assessment strategy. Ms. Kyger explained the reasoning for the amount of donors TWB plans to interview.

Alderman Faivre commented that if the City misses the opportunity to utilize TIF funds for this project, there will be other options available.

Mayor Smith expressed his belief that there are private donations available in the community to move forward with the proposal to utilize TWB's services.

Alderman Marquardt commented that this project is an opportunity for the City to create an environment that will retain residents and combat negativity in the community.

City Manager Gaura requested direction from Council in regard to this item.

Alderman Fagan reiterated that he is in support of the idea, but not in support of ownership of the facility.

Discussion ensued between Alderman Fagan and City Manager Gaura regarding ownership details of the STEAM Learning Facility.

Alderman Verbic echoed the concerns of Alderman Fagan, but agreed that there needs to be some contribution from private donors before he can feel comfortable voting on the proposal.

Mayor Smith concurred with both Alderman Fagan and Alderman Verbic.

Alderman Jacobson added that the City is not responsible for contributing funding towards the proposal.

Alderman Noreiko expressed her belief that other organizations have not yet been contacted regarding their willingness to contribute to the project.

E. RECESS FOR EXECUTIVE SESSION OF THE CITY COUNCIL

1. Approval to Hold an Executive Session to Discuss the Purchase or Lease of Real Property as Provided for in 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(5).
2. Approval to Hold an Executive Session to Discuss Personnel as Provided for in 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(1).

Not acted on.

F. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION

Alderman Finucane moved to adjourn the Committee of the Whole Meeting; seconded by Alderman Fagan.

VOTE

Motion carried on an 8-0 voice vote. Aye: Jacobson, Finucane, Marquardt, Fagan, Noreiko, Verbic, Faivre, Smith. Mayor Smith declared the motion passed and the meeting adjourned at 7:09 p.m.

SUSANNA HERRMANN, City Clerk