

MINUTES
CAMPUS AND COMMUNITY COMMISSION
Conference Room 235
City Hall, 515 Clark Avenue
Monday, October 23, 2017

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:04 p.m. by Chair Karin Chitty. Members present were Eric Abrams, Cody Smith, Pete Englin, Warren Madden, and Evelyn Beavers. Rob Bingham and Tom Lindsley were not present. Staff liaison Tasheik Kerr was also present.

Approval of Minutes from September 25, 2017 Meeting

It was moved by Warren, seconded by Cody to approve the minutes from the September 25, 2017, Commission meeting. Motion carried unanimously.

Public Forum

No one was present for Public Forum.

Campustown Plaza:

a. Discussion With City Staff Representatives

Tasheik informed the Commission that City staff members representing various departments were at tonight's meeting. Their goal was to provide a brief overview of issues pertaining to the Campustown gathering space. Donald Kom, Director of Electric Services; Jason Tuttle, Police Patrol Commander; Kelly Diekmann, Planning & Housing Director; and Eloise Sahlstrom, Planner introduced themselves.

Kelly discussed a past workshop held in the spring for the City Council. He noted that some of the same planning, plaza and parking issues were addressed and that staff is there to be a resource for the Commission. Don asked the Commission what is being looked at for the area. Karin answered that everyone is looking at Parking Lot X, which may not be the right thing to do. She thought it better if the Commission thinks about what it wants to do in a space and then decide where the best place for the space would be. She also added that the Commission discussed City-owned spaces as places to have a gathering space.

Don presented some electric issues. He noted Parking Lot X is where electric has all its systems. Kelly asked Don if there were electric issues beyond Parking Lot X that would apply to other locations in Campustown. Don replied that he focused on Lot X based on past discussion on the area. He stated that the area is difficult to work with because all the businesses are served overhead and if the Commission wanted to move underground with wires, it will affect the length of outage. Don provided pictures of poles and noted that future discussions would have to include stakeholders in telecommunications. Warren asked Don if all the utilities in the area are overhead with poles. Don replied that at 124 Hayward, electric put in a transformer box north of the area that is underground. The poles, however, are overhead. Every time Electric replaces a pole with a ground-mounted transformer, Electric is going to be taking more parking. Don provided more pictures of poles. Karin asked Don if they had to consider this issue when looking at other areas in Campustown. Don replied that it depended on what is going to be done with the space. Karin asked about other City-owned lots in Campustown.

Cody inquired on how much electric work would have to be done to make Lot X workable and would it be a significant transition to make Lot X able to host different type of events. Don replied that transitioning the area could cost anywhere from \$200,000 to \$500,000. Eric added that Lot X is not looking like an ideal space and that the Commission should not spend time talking about it as an

ideal green space. Cody and Karin agreed. In response to the discussion on Lot X, Kelly responded that Lot X has been looked at as piece of a significant redevelopment project, and that this year it has been looked at as its own project. Pete added that Lot X was talked about when he was on the Student Affairs Commission. He suggested sending an invitation to adjacent property owners to participate in a conversation about what they would like to see in the space.

Evelyn inquired about the development at 124 Hayward that has led to more traffic. Kelly explained the floating easement the City granted for the area. Kelly suggested having a front face for a public space that is not buried behind everything.

Karin suggested having the gathering space on the corner of Chamberlain and Welch and explained her reasoning. In regards to the T-Galaxy building occupying the space, Karin suggested the Commission looked into whether the building is for sale and whether the owners would donate it. Karin asked Kelly his opinion on approaching Kum and Go. Kelly urged the Commission to consider what they would compromise and trade on and to think about whether the space would be inviting if it is next to gas pumps. Karin noted that the Commission does not have many options in the Campustown Service Center.

Kelly asked the Commission to consider what they want and expect from a gathering space rather than to consider the Campustown development strategy and zoning they would have to give up. Kelly described staff's role, zoning rules and how zoning changes are made.

Warren gave an overview of the study RDG conducted in Campustown in 2008 and provided documents regarding the study.

Pete stated there are various impediments west of Welch Avenue. He suggested that the Commission validate whether the corner of Chamberlain and Welch can be capable of utility infrastructure, relocates, services that need access to the back of buildings, and other processes. The Commission needs somewhere that can be accessed by Welch Avenue, Lincoln Way, and Chamberlain. Pete also stated he does not think Kum and Go will change their mind about its property.

Kelly informed the Commission that they need to know what they want and not to generalize what they think they could do or accommodate. Karin responded that she was just proposing a scenario.

Eloise asked the Commission if they had identified what they want the space to be. How big? How will the space be programmed? What is the purpose of the space? A plaza varies in how it is used. Eric responded that no research has been done at this point and that he would like to move the conversation to the 2320 Chamberlain Lot.

Kelly asked the Commission where in the process they would address whether they want a stage, piano, or grass. Karin responded that at the last Commission meeting, the group discussed what they ideally would be looking for in a space and they were to go back to their respective groups and get ideas and a priority list. As far as ideas for the space, the Commission talked about a green space, a place for events, concerts, casual seating, an active space that is accommodating to food vendors. Cody added that the Commission agreed that the space should not be for one group's use, but versatile. Kelly asked the Commission if they envisioned the space holding the entire event or able to combine with other things. Cody responded that the purpose of having the staff at the meeting was to gauge the capability of Lot X. He thinks moving the discussion to the corner on Welch and Chamberlain would be more productive. Cody asked staff what is the capability of the corner on Welch and Chamberlain.

Kelly asked the Commission if they had seen a space or visited another city that had such a space that would fit in Campustown. Such an example could help the discussion as it pertains to size and features. Kelly suggested the Commission ask their constituents what they have seen about a gathering space that they liked. Pete recalled challenges that stemmed from VEISHEA and

occurrences he had to deal with as the past Dean of Students. He believes the space will overflow and that street closures would have to happen. Eric agreed. Pete said he believed the Fire Station was going to close.

Kelly responded that from a planner's perspective it is risky to close streets and to expect commercial businesses to stay open. There are selected areas where that works but you can find more places where such a scenario has not worked and the street comes back. In regards to the relocation of the fire station, such arguments were based on certain patterns of growth happening to the west or southwest that have not yet happened. Therefore, there is no motivation to move a station that receives most of the activity. The fire station is in the perfect spot to respond to service calls.

Eric asked about the Lake Laverne area. Is it possible to do a City-University redevelopment? Warren recalled past proposals for the development of the Lake Laverne area. He noted, however, that there is a lot of sensitivity about the area. Cody added that the area is a valued green space.

Cody asked Jason for his perspective on safety. Jason explained that the police like to have large open spaces for better visibility. Police is largely concerned about the nighttime and Campustown is the largest crime area on the weekend in the 100 and 200 block of Welch Avenue. Jason provided pictures and statistics from past events held in the Campustown and Welch area. Other areas the Police look into include crime prevention through environmental design. Jason explained that when the Commission is in the design phase, the Police want to be involved so they can help the Commission build a safe and secure meeting area. The police will also look into open-faced balconies. The police are always thinking about the worst-case scenario.

Eloise asked Karin about events held in Campustown. Karin described Summerfest, and Crafts and Draughts.

Kelly asked about prioritizing events for space. Karin answered that the top priorities are to have something growing, functional, and safe. Pete referenced Kelly and asked how the group can leverage the space to cause others to participate. Pete added that Lot X does not seem feasible and has no expectations for others to improve the area.

Kelly referenced the City's parking space on Stanton Avenue and Chamberlain Street. He noted that the Lot is not in the main corridor of where people are. Eric added that the street leading into the Lot could be blocked off if there was a large event. Jason compared sightlines of the area to the area near the fire station and off Chamberlain. Cody added that there are hills over by Chamberlain. Jason added that since the lot has meters and there is a waiting list, parking issues would have to be considered. Pete noted that students like to be seen and that is one benefit of being on Welch Avenue and Chamberlain.

Karin asked Kelly how big of a space is Lot Y and the location of the T-Galaxy building (Welch Ave and Chamberlain). Kelly measured out a quarter acre. Cody asked if it is the same as Lot X. Kelly responded that Lot X measured 14,000 square feet and Lot Y and the T-Galaxy building measured 16,000 square feet. Kelly noted that if the Council were open to a trade with Kum and Go, they would have to trade with the developer to get property across street on the corner of Stanton and Chamberlain. The City only has parking lots to offer. Warren added that St. Johns has been approached to sell their property and that they are in discussion about whether a campus missionary is still the focus; Are they better off relocating the church, and could they build another building in another part of Ames?

In reference to Kelly's question of whether parking is important. Warren referenced an event he attended in downtown Naperville, Illinois and the redevelopment of old buildings. He mentioned the parking lot behind the buildings and how the City of Naperville built a parking ramp. The private sector maintains and redevelops the parking ramps. Warren agreed that at some point, parking has to come into the mix or the gathering space will not work. Kelly added that he would urge the

commission not to focus on parking, but to figure out the plaza question and let the City work on parking once the priorities are known.

Cody asked the group what are the safety concerns with having a space on Welch Avenue. He mentioned Pete's comments on having a pedestrian mall as something that could resolve the safety concerns. He asked the group if a pedestrian mall would improve the safety of the area, or would it inhibit the ability to respond to incidents.

Jason responded that the issue with the area is that people hang out after the bars close. They look for action. They want the entertainment. If you give people a space to cluster, they will do that. He referenced the Taste of VEISHEA and the riot that occurred. One of the benefits of the mall would be fewer traffic related incidents. People would be more prone to linger, however, given the larger space, which keeps the police in the area longer rather than responding to other calls. Cody reiterated his question on whether it would be more or less safe than having the gathering space on the corner of Chamberlain and Welch. Jason responded that he would have fewer concerns if the gathering space was on the corner of Chamberlain south of the Fire Department. He noted there could be more issues with a pedestrian mall given the issues that arose in the past with closing streets.

Kelly added that on closing Welch there are three main vehicle problems. The fire trucks, for example, have to have access. On closing Welch, Hayward becomes a one-way alley. It is expected that vehicles would enter through Welch because there is no other circulation around Hayward. Kingland has a parking lot on Welch. Welch is in the CIP plan to be rebuilt completely. Welch Avenue changes long-term, but it will be tough to get vehicles off completely.

Karin asked what time the parks close and would the green space be subjected to the same restrictions. Kelly interjected that Tom Evans Plaza is the closest thing to a gathering space. Pete asked the Commission if they want a green space or a gathering space. Kelly added that a green space could be possible if the events are infrequent. If the Commission leans toward an event-centric space, it is going to be planters and concrete.

Tasheik asked the Commission what are their next steps after hearing from staff.

Development of Next Steps

Cody shared his perspective that Chamberlain Lot 2320 and Lot X are not feasible options. He was interested in closing Welch and building a pedestrian mall, however, he can see reasoning with not doing so. The corner on Welch and Chamberlin is the most feasible option. In addition to safety, all of the groups can utilize the space and geographically the corner is in the best position. Cody also noted that a town hall meeting would be held with administration and students in the second week in November. He will bring this issue to the table and solicit feedback. Pete suggested that Cody have a conversation with President Wendy Wintersteen. The gathering space idea was important to Gregory Geoffroy, former ISU president.

Cody asked Jason if security cameras could cover the corner on Welch and Chamberlin. Jason responded that he has not seen the final plans of where the cameras are located. Cody noted he is aware of the camera on the east side of the clock tower, but does not know the model or range. Karen noted that she is aware of one on Legacy tower, at the intersection of Welch and Lincoln Way and at the Intermodal facility. Jason said he would check with the Police Chief on the locations of the cameras.

Kelly measured Tom Evans Plaza.

Pete asked Karin what elements would the Campustown businesses want to see in a space. Karin noted that opinion is divided over the space. There are those that say they do not need more people hanging around and there are others that do. Pete asked if there was any formal way to provide

input and recommendation. Karin responded that a CAA committee is trying to gather feedback.

Pete suggested to Cody ways to gather student feedback such as having student government passing a resolution.

Kelly noted that Tom Evans Plaza is about 7,000 to 8,000 square feet. Chamberlain and T-Galaxy is 16,000 square feet. Pete noted space was too small.

Pete commented about the need for restrooms. Eric agreed with him about the need for restrooms. Pete noted that the reason he brought the restroom topic up was that when the restroom was going to be relocated, there was a possibility to put a restroom area there. Evelyn commented that she believed the restrooms at the intermodal facility were open until midnight.

Warren asked Kelly about the space Kum and Go would need. Kelly responded that their prototype west of Ames is about 7,000 square feet plus a gas station. Kum and Go will need about 7,000 square feet plus about 20 parking spaces. Warren asked if Kum and Go could be convinced to do something that will benefit everyone.

Pete left meeting at 7:37 pm
Returned to meeting at 7:41 pm

Karen asked the Commission if they had received feedback from their groups. Cody noted that student government would have a meeting with administration that is co-hosted and another in November with just students. Karen recommended that the Commission tighten their ideas on what they are interested in having in a gathering space.

Warren asked the Commission if they are still evaluating having an event or green space. Karen replied that she does not think they should refer to the space as an event space. Eric added that the term they used at the Council meeting was a gathering space.

Kelly added that an alley extension from the Kum and Go site through Chamberlain would allow access other than Welch. Discussion ensued on the T-Galaxy building.

Warren asked the Commission if they are now focusing on the corner of Welch and Chamberlain. Karin added that from the information they received tonight, the corner on Welch and Chamberlain is the most likely of the spaces they have explored. She noted it is important that the Commission focused on what it wants and then they will know if the space is appropriate.

Pete asked Kelly about property owned by Kum and Go and zoning regulations. Kelly responded that it was up to the City Council to change policy.

Eric suggested that the Commission bring the issue to the City Council with the recommendation to negotiate with property owners.

Commissioner Comments

No Comments

Adjournment

Cody moved the meeting be adjourned. The meeting adjourned at 7:52 p.m.