

CapitolRiver Council Meeting Minutes

Jan. 19, 2021 Board of Directors Meeting

Board member attendees: Joe Baierl, Chris Beckstrom, Tiffany Brace, Kathleen Conger, Tom Erickson, John Ganey, Jess Grams, Lee Knutson, Paul Mandell, Shevek McKee, Crystal Meriwether, Jonathan Reisetter, John Smith, Will Travis.

Other attendees: Jon Fure, Lee Ann Labore, Alan Ostergaard.

- I. The meeting was called to order by Chair Shevek McKee.
- II. Motion by Joe Baierl, seconded by John Smith, to adopt the agenda. Motion passed.
- III. Motion by John Ganey, seconded by Joe Baierl, to approve the Dec. 15, 2020 board meeting minutes. Motion passed.
- IV. RADIUS HEALTH Introduction / Updates / Q&A: Chair Shevek McKee introduced Alan Ostergaard, Street Outreach Practitioner for RADIUS Health, who provided an overview of the work that is being done to find shelter space and / or housing for people who are living outside. A question was asked about the newly available shelters at Bethesda Hospital and Luther Seminary, and Mr. Ostergaard said it has been amazing. There are a lot of reasons why some people don't want to go to a shelter, so it sometimes takes many conversations with a person over a period of time to address their concerns and work to overcome any barriers. He said they are in the process of hiring someone to work with families, because he and his colleagues are seeing more families with small children who are living in the encampments. A comment was made that it seems like homelessness is increasing dramatically, not just in our area but Nationwide. Mr. Ostergaard said one of the national trends has been that as people who are chronically homeless get older, homeless shelters can't support their needs, and there aren't nursing homes or naturally occurring affordable housing options where they can go. A board member said another problem has been that many buildings were developed in the 1960s and 70s with tax credits in exchange for reduced rent for people who are eligible for financial assistance, and now that those 30-year agreements are expiring, the buildings are able to charge market rate for rent. The group also discussed a letter and petition that has been signed by RADIUS Health and other local organizations, asking the City to halt the practice of clearing encampments. Mr. Ostergaard said that one reason he and his colleagues support the petition is because there have been instances where they have been communicating regularly with someone, building trust and addressing the challenges that are making it difficult or impossible to find a safe, stable, indoor housing option, and when the encampment is cleared, they are unable to contact the person. The petition (available online at <https://actionnetwork.org/petitions/carter-stop-the-evictions>) asks the Saint Paul Mayor and City Council to City of St. Paul to immediately:
 - Convene an emergency St. Paul City Council meeting to address these issues;
 - Place a moratorium on enforcement of any illegal camping ordinance, to last the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic;
 - Halt the clearing and disposal of tents and other sheltering materials to ensure that unhoused people do not lose what may be their only present means to self-quarantine and practice social distancing;
 - Adhere to the existing statewide eviction moratorium ; and
 - Follow best practices outlined by the National Homelessness Law Center.

Motion by Chris Beckstrom, seconded by Kathleen Conger, for CRC to sign onto the petition. Motion passed.

- V. Resolution supporting Holiday Lights and Hanging Flower Baskets. The Public Realm Committee discussed the fact that the City is proposing to eliminate funding for these activities. Jon Fure said this has been the case in each of the past several years, and CRC has always pointed out that Downtown residents do not have their own yards where they can have their own garden or holiday lights, so the public-private partnerships are the only way that people can have holiday decorations and / or purchase hanging flower baskets in parks or other public spaces. The committee requested that the CRC board approve the following resolution:

The CapitolRiver Council strongly opposes the elimination of funds for hanging flower baskets for 2022 and holiday lights for 2021-22. These City dollars are matched by private dollars, making the investment minimal and a wise

spend for the City. Both provide important vibrancy to District 17 and makes downtown a more pleasant place to live, work, and visit.

Core values of the 2040 Comprehensive Plan include “Celebrating parks. We are a city that ensures its parks and open space system meets the needs of a growing and more diverse population and is accessible to all.”

(<https://www.stpaul.gov/departments/planning-economic-development/planning/citywide-plans/2040-comprehensive-plan/2040-1>) Most downtown residents and business owners do not have their own land where they can plant flowers or put up exterior decorations. These partnerships with the City are the only ways to add festive decorations to parks and to put hanging flower baskets in parks.

A “healthy network of community partnerships” is one of the 5 goals in the Parks, Recreation and Open Space chapter in the 2040 Comprehensive Plan (https://www.stpaul.gov/sites/default/files/2020-12/Parks_CSP_2040_CompPlan_FinalAdopted_110920-4.pdf). Many downtown residents and business owners have supported such healthy community partnerships by donating money for hanging baskets and holiday lights, and these activities cannot take place downtown without the City’s involvement.

We also request that annual funding be included in the City’s base budget for 2022.

Motion by Joe Baierl, seconded by Crystal Meriwether, to approve the resolution and send it to City Council Member Rebecca Noecker. Motion passed.

VI. Appointment of Skyway Governance Advisory Committee Members:

Motion by Joe Baierl, seconded by John Ganey, to appoint the following people to the Skyway Governance Advisory Committee: Vijay Andrew, Adrean Clark, Peg Guilfoyle, Bill Hanley, Jean Krueger, Crystal Meriwether, Olga Nichols and Alan Ostergaard.

VII. Financial Update and 2021 CRC budget. Jon Fure provided an overview of the financial statements and presented the draft budget for 2021. Spending and revenue are similar to those of 2020, except that due to delays in receiving the Cultural STAR grant from the City for the wayfinding project, which is a partnership with the Downtown Alliance and the University of Minnesota’s Resilient Communities Project, all of those dollars will be part of the 2021 budget (the grant had been anticipated in 2020, and it was intended for 2020 and 2021). The group also discussed challenges related to fundraising. Several board members expressed interest in helping with grant writing.

Motion by Joe Baierl, seconded by Will Travis, to adopt the 2021 budget. Motion passed.

VIII. Bylaws update. Jon Fure said he and Secretary Crystal Meriwether have been reviewing the CRC bylaws and discussing how to adjust them to allow for online voting, as was necessary at the last Annual Meeting. They have also been looking at making “plain-language” changes that will make the bylaws easier to read and understand. Chair Shevek McKee said he would like to have a set of recommendations for the board to consider at the February board meeting. The current process is that a special meeting would need to be scheduled, and all general members (including people who attend CRC meetings who are not board members) must be invited and informed that they are able to vote on the proposed changes.

IX. Saint Paul Area Chamber (SPAC) Updates: John Smith, Vice President of Development for the Chamber, provided information about the Chamber’s rebrand, which includes a new tagline and an equity statement. He also talked about the affiliation program, which offers ways for local businesses to be members of SPAC at a discounted rate if they are joining a local Chamber. The full text of the SPAC Equity Statement and other information and resources are available on the SPAC website: <https://www.stpaulchamber.com/about-us.html>

X. Definition of Family Study: Jon Fure explained that the timing of the Planning Commission meeting meant that he was unable to send feedback on behalf of the board, however, the Planning Commission recommendation is what the CRC board had recommended (to delete the word “family” and replace it with “household”). No further action is

necessary, because the City Council will need to vote on the changes, and he will submit the board's support for the Planning Commission recommendation to the City Council.

- XI. Letter to the City from district council staff regarding Capital Improvement Budget (CIB) process. Jon Fure said this was discussed at a recent meeting of district council staff. The City solicits public input on infrastructure investments through the CIB process. For various reasons, including the pandemic, the City's process provided very little time for district council board members and staff to review and rank the proposed projects. The letter is intended to convey to City officials that we care about good, equitable, inclusive engagement, and we are committed to making good-faith efforts to get public input on such important decisions, but we need to be given more time to do that work. No action is required, but he wanted the board to be aware that district council staff are working with City officials to improve that process in the future.

The meeting adjourned at 6:45 p.m.