
**Minutes
City Council's Mill and Lake District
Committee
July 2, 2009**

Minutes of the meeting of the City Council's Mill and Lake District Committee held on Thursday, July 02, 2009, 3:30 p.m., at the Tempe Transportation Center – Don Cassano Room, 200 East 5th Street, Tempe, Arizona.

Committee Members Present:

Mayor Hugh Hallman
Vice Mayor Shana Ellis
Councilmember P. Ben Arredondo
Councilmember Joel Navarro
Councilmember Onnie Shekerjian
Councilmember Corey D. Woods

Committee Members Absent:

Councilmember Mark W. Mitchell

City Staff Present:

Chris Messer, Redevelopment
Mark Richwine, Parks & Recreation
Kathy Berzins, Community Services
Mark Vinson, Community Development
Shelley Hearn, Community Relations
Sheri Wakefield-Saenz, Community Development
Shauna Warner, Neighborhoods
Chris Salomone, Community Development
E. Hunter Hansen, Community Development
Molly Enright, Community Relations
Travis Dray, Parks & Recreation
Nancy Ryan, Community Development
Jeff Kulaga, City Manager's Office
Glenn Kephart, Public Works
JymeSue McLaren, Community Development
Charles Meyer, City Manager's Office
Jan Hort, City Clerk

Guests Present:

Greg Swick, The Moore/Swick Partnership
Kevin Moore, The Moore/Swick Partnership
Nancy Hormann, DTC
Lara Skutt, DTC
Charles Huellmantel
John Minett, Urban Designer
Veekas Shrivastava, Mayor's Youth Advisory Committee
Jevin Hodge, Mayor's Youth Advisory Committee

Mayor Hallman called the meeting to order at 3:35 p.m.

Agenda Item 1 – Introductions

Mayor Hallman welcomed everyone to the meeting. Greg Swick, Kevin Moore, John Minett, Veekas Shrivastava, and Jevin Hodge introduced themselves.

Agenda Item 2 – Public Appearances/Call to the Public

None.

Agenda Item 3 – Review Minutes from June 11, 2009, Meeting

Motion by Councilmember Shekerjian to approve minutes of June 11, 2009. Second by Councilmember Ellis. Motion passed, 5-0 with Councilmembers Mitchell and Arredondo absent.

Agenda Item 4 – Walk-about Downtown Tempe Feedback

Nancy Hormann, DTC President with the DTC Executive Committee scheduled a Walk-about Downtown with City Manager, Charles Meyer and staff on Tuesday, June 30. This was a project for public spaces to see different ways to enhance street cleaning and streetscaping. They discussed placing visible cleaning on the street. Also, it was not very clean. The group discussed plans for planters and trees. DTC recommends an independent landscaper come in and do a complete plan rather than piecemeal. In recent times, the Police Department did well at responding to complaints regarding aggressive pan handling which has made a difference. Councilmember Navarro stressed the importance of comprehensive right of way maintenance and improvements in order to achieve a distinctive overall feel.

Mayor Hallman discussed with ASU president the possibility of re-forming the Downtown, University, City and Chamber task force being brought back to look at the downtown area. Mr. Crow was interested in taking the initiative in reinserting themselves into the former task force to improve the environment downtown. Ms. Hormann wanted to see coordination between public and private sector.

Councilmember Navarro felt we should establish a process that would make it a more vibrant community and would like to see a process established that was world class and defines the “feel” of Tempe. He suggested contracting an outside consulting firm to develop ideas.

Woods also supported the efforts. He has heard from some faith community who were concerned about the police crack down as well as others who was concerned about the aggressive panhandlers. He supports what they are doing to make it a safe place to visit.

Councilmember Arredondo joined the meeting at 3:45 p.m.

Ms. Hormann thought it needs to be separated out regarding homeless that need help from those who impede business. This has been increased since light rail because they are now mobile and can go where they can make money.

Councilmember Shekerjian noted that everything evolved around striking a balance to assure that people have the right to be on the street without hassles and felt that the DTC could strike a balance.

Mayor Hallman looked at Seattle which marked places for controlled entertainment to handle issues.

Agenda Item 5 – Mill Avenue Street Trees Discussion

Mr. Richwine explained that last summer, the City lost a lot of trees and has been in discussion about what to do about replacing the trees. Several factors have led to these discussions. The Ficus trees on Mill Avenue were planted over twenty-six years ago with a life expectancy in ideal conditions of twenty years. The trees are also infected with a disease which was attributed to the harsh conditions and environment of the downtown areas. In addition, over 400 trees throughout the City were lost last summer due to monsoons. Mill Avenue lost over sixteen Ficus trees. The City sought the advice of the Davey Resource Group which suggested the Chinese Pistache. The canopy and structure are similar to the Ficus tree.

Councilmember asked the water usage in comparison to the Ficus tree. Mr. Richwine stated that the Chinese Pistache use considerably less water. Councilmember Navarro asked if it would be feasible to replant some of the Ficus. At this point, Mr. Richwine responded, anything is feasible. However, he agreed with Ms. Hormann that a plan should be developed before we start doing anything.

Councilmember Arredondo felt that it should be referred back to the staff to calculate a not to exceed expenditure. He reminded all that we still need to be cautious on the expenditures.

Mayor Hallman asked as to whether this plan should include shade structures which would be more conducive to the business and signage to provide for shade structures and potential reduce long term maintenance costs and address other issues such as misters, water usage, reduce bird droppings, etc. Also, pursuing excise tax options to generate funds to enhance the district to cover the cost the City incurs. Mr. Salomone is currently looking into this.

Agenda Item 6 – Brickyard Courtyard Design Concepts

Mark Vincent, along with the ASU and the property management team, explored feasible option for the Brickyard complex inner courtyard space. The Brickyard complex has not generated the desired level of activity called for in the Urban Open Space study. John Minett Associates, in conjunction with the London-based Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment, was invited to conduct a SpaceShaper study. An option found at the Tempe Marketplace may provide a feasible short-term solution. Options, including fabric shade structures, as well as, umbrellas and green screens, were presented.

Councilmember Shekerjian had priced these for her own home and found them surprisingly inexpensive.

Agenda Item 7 – Placemaking Pilot Project Discussion

At the June 11, 2009 Mill and Lake District Committee meeting staff was asked to discuss options for an area to develop a demonstration project. The prior presentation showed an array of opportunities. Mr. Salomone and Ms. Hormann presented ideas. Brickyard is owned by ASU. 6th Street Park or north of 6th Street Park has potential. Councilmember Navarro asked if the trash area could be removed to open up the area. Mr. Salomone and Mr. Kephart confirmed that moving the trash area could be looked into. Mayor Hallman stated that the challenge isn't moving things but rather how to activate areas. The idea that the retailers, which front out on Mill, could also front the alley space to activate the area is opportunities that exist. It's not the amount of space but how it is used. Connecting to the splash playground may activate spaces to keep people there.

Discussions were also held on spaces by the light rail station that could be used. Ms. Hormann explained that starting on Thursday nights they would organize a community market in the light rail station and allow the merchants on Mill to be part of it. Mayor Hallman asked if the DTC plans expand to all of downtown to include Farmer to College. Prior discussion centered around Mill Avenue only and the possibility is there to expand in both directions.

Councilmember Navarro further asked in regards to the potential of the street car project that would go down Mill. How are we focusing on how to transition downtown? There appears to be a lot of potential for the corridor from

Farmer to College when planning the transportation aspect of downtown. Ms. McLaren explained that they are looking into a street car in correlation with Mill Avenue looking at both economic development and potentials to change or transform that area. Criteria of the project for approval include cost effectiveness, land use and economic development. Councilmember Navarro believes Tempe can really capitalize on this project.

Another space for consideration is the Z Tejas area expanding into the alley.

Councilmember Navarro asked if this space enhancement (water feature, umbrellas, shading, etc.) for the 6th Street Park/Brickyard space would be a City function or tied into potential restaurants or business. Ms. Harmon felt that programming space would revolve around a partnership to extend the hours of downtown. Mayor Hallman clarified that this would be a private sector partnering with the City facilitating.

Mayor Hallman stated that we need to ask: is there a cost associated with redoing something to activate the space? Can we generate resources that get invested back into the central district that do not tax the tax payers differently by possibly using a GPLET and taking the differential and applying a fee to generate those resources that can be centrally managed.

Mayor Hallman summarized that the following areas are possible “placemaking” pilot projects

- o ASU Brickyard
- o Behind Mill Avenue between 6 & 5th
- o Alley between Maple and Mill
- o Public space Transit Center
- o North of Brickyard
- o East City Hall Park

Direction was given to staff to create a priority list of both public and private “placemaking” projects throughout the Mill and Lake District for the next meeting.

Agenda Item 8 – Future Agenda Items

Review Current Sign Code and Public Policy – Deferred to the Issue Review Session

Meeting adjourned at 4:30 p.m.

Reviewed by: Chris Salomone

Jan Hort, City Clerk