



Capitol Area Architectural and Planning Board



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Capitol Area Architectural and Planning Board Meeting April 21st, 2023, 1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. **DRAFT** Minutes

Board Members

Present: Lieutenant Governor Peggy Flanagan, Dana Badgerow, Dr. Kate Beane, Alicia Belton, Hannah Hills, Hannah Hills, Rep. Ginny Klevorn, James McClean, James Garrett Jr., Sen. Sandra Pappas, Rep. Isaac Schultz, Daniel Yang

Absent: Sen. Carla Nelson

Quorum present? Yes.

Proceedings

Meeting Kick-Off

- Board member roll call
- Overview of Agenda

Capitol Rice Investments and State Office Building

CAAPB Executive Secretary Merritt Clapp-Smith began with an overview of the staff analysis and recommendations regarding Capitol Rice Investments and the State Office Building project.

Exec. Sec. Clapp-Smith summarized several proposed Capitol Rice Investment initiatives and their estimated costs. These included an overview of planned updates to the 32-year-old Capitol Mall Design Framework, a shift in public open spaces resulting from the proposed expansion of the State Office Building, a Capitol Area Community Vitality Account and Task Force, and Rice Street redesign and construction.

Exec. Sec. Clapp-Smith then provided renderings of the exterior and interior of the proposed State Office Building expansion. There was discussion of security features in the proposed design, with

Bob Meyerson, former Sgt. Of Arms for the House of Representatives providing some comments on the potential security challenges of creating new public entrances to the building.

Comprehensive Plan Compliance

Exec. Sec. Clapp-Smith next moved through a summary of the projects' compliance with each principle/chapter of the CAAPB Comprehensive Plan.

Board Discussion

Lt. Gov. Flanagan opened the matter for questions and discussion among Board members.

Exec. Sec. Clapp-Smith offered a reminder that the focus of this meeting was to decide whether the Board feels that the State Office Building and Capitol Area investments sufficiently advance the objectives of the Comprehensive Plan and that they're found to be in substantial compliance. That determination would be a precursor for a decision on whether the Board proceeds to the rezoning for the State Office Building and the two other proposed properties.

Proposed Resolution:

Lt. Gov. Flanagan transitioned the discussion to the matter of the proposed resolution.

Board Vice Chair Dana Badgerow commented on her thought process in coming to a decision and her belief that the Board had found a solution to several problems.

Board Member Hannah Hills read a statement* expressing dissatisfaction with the process leading to the project's current state. (**Attachment 1: Hills' statement.*)

Board Member Alicia Belton also expressed disappointment with where the project stood. Ms. Belton acknowledged the need for a new State Office Building but took issue with the size and placement of the proposed building.

Board Member Sen. Sandy Pappas expressed excitement at the attention being given to the Capitol area and support of the plan.

Board Member Rep. Isaac Schultz commented on his concern with the project and suggested that the Board vote on the proposed initiatives one by one in order to better show support for the community.

Board Member Daniel Yang stated his support for the project but also recognized the frustrations of other members of the Board.

Board Member James Garrett Jr. expressed a desire to reiterate the concerns of other Board members and his concern about the timeline for the project and its lasting impact.

Board Member James McClean stated his excitement about the proposed investments in the area and asked for discussion on whether the project could be completed within the next five years if the project was given more time at this stage.

Board Member Rep. Ginny Klevorn stated that the Board voting no on the resolution would put the State Office Building at risk. Rep. Klevorn respectfully disagreed with Rep. Schultz's previous suggestion to vote on the resolution's initiatives individually, saying that it should be considered as a package. Rep. Klevorn opined that the project presents a fantastic opportunity for the community.

Lt. Gov. Flanagan recognized the difficult circumstances of the project and the CAAPB's work on it, and commended Hannah Hills for her statement and for her work as a Board member and community representative. Lt. Gov. Flanagan also stated that she would be in support of the resolution and recommended that the resolution be voted on as a whole.

Hannah Hills asked whether there was a way to raise awareness of the CAAPB and their role to prevent the situation from happening again in the future.

Vice Chair Badgerow moved to the motion for the resolution**. The motion prevailed with seven ayes, three nays, and Mr. Garrett abstaining from the vote. (**Attachment 2: Approved resolution)

Exec. Sec. Clapp-Smith gave an overview of the CAAPB's State Office Building Project Review, including the timeline and next steps.

CAAPB Small Projects, Budget, and Operations

The Executive Secretary next discussed several small contracts planned for the remaining budget for FY23. These include agency performance evaluation services, strategic communications services, Capitol Mall Plan project scoping services, and Capitol Area demographic analysis. Exec. Sec. Clapp-Smith also provided a reminder on items moving forward in the Governor's budget for the CAAPB. These items involved maintaining CAAPB's current service levels, the mandatory update of the zoning code, support for Commemorative Works on the Capitol Grounds, and the update to the Capitol Mall Design Framework.

Exec. Sec. Clapp-Smith gave a preview of FY24, including the CAAPB office move, special projects, Board member opportunities, and potential hiring.

Other Planning and Project Updates

Peter Musty, CAAPB Principal Planner and Zoning Administrator provided a brief update regarding the soon-to-begin demolition of the old Bethesda Hospital building.

Vice Chair Badgerow wished to commend CAAPB staff efforts over the previous few months.

CAAPB Board Minutes

BOARD APPROVAL: Approval of August 24, 2022, January 27, 2023, and March 8, 2023, Minutes

The Board approved the August 24th, 2022, minutes.

The Board approved the January 27th, and March 8th, 2023, minutes.

Adjourn

Meeting adjourned at 2:25 p.m.

Attachments

1. Statement of Board member Hannah Hills on proposed State Office Building project.
2. Board Approved Resolution on compliance of legislatively proposed Capitol Area investment activities, including the State Office Building addition, with the 2040 Comprehensive Plan for the Minnesota Capitol Area.

Attachment 1: Spoken statement of CAAP Board member Hannah Hills on proposed State Office Building project during April 21, 2023 CAAP Board meeting

First, I am incredibly grateful to everyone who took time out of their busy schedules to answer my questions since the last working group and to the CAAP Board staff for getting out so much information to us in such a short amount of time.

I took on the block club role right before a complicated situation arose with Ramsey County and Fairview to use Bethesda as a homeless shelter so I guess I shouldn't have been surprised when the first issue I'm presented with as a member of this Board is one that is ... complicated.

As a mayoral appointee to be a community representative I see my role as one to speak for those who are impacted daily by decisions made for this area. I want to make clear to everyone here why this is important. Those who reside in the Capitol district are in a part of St. Paul that I would describe as no-man's land. There is so much overlap in jurisdiction between and even within the City, County, and State levels, that no one really takes responsibility for development and investment. Even private entities here are not focused on the local area - the vast majority are regional or state-wide businesses or groups. We are on the edge of everything, so our experience is that decision makers look at this area and have plausible deniability to ignore the needs that impact day to day life. Instead of being the doorway to the Capitol and downtown, we are the doormat.

It has been incredibly sad for me to see how we got to where we are today with the State Office Building proposal and it is very difficult to explain it to people without taking up their whole afternoon. My role is to ask a lot of questions to understand the facts and then hear what people have to say when they come to their own conclusions so that I can best inform my decision for voting. I have tried my best to do my due diligence.

Everyone is in agreement that the State Office Building is in dire need of a complete renovation, likely even expansion, and safety overhaul. Everyone is also in agreement that the process by which we got here is unacceptable. I have seen that legislative buildings are a different beast compared to other state buildings. Another comprehensive legislative building project will likely not come up again in any of our lifetimes with the Capitol and Senate buildings being so recently renovated and built. So being put in the position of voting on something that bypassed the process is especially disheartening because I believe the process would have led to something uncontroversial, benefiting everyone, and bringing beauty in the way envisioned by a diverse range of people in the Comprehensive Plan, more along the lines of what the Capitol project did. But the options appear to be this State Office Building or nothing, or even potentially something worse. Please correct me if I am wrong - if there is some world in which we could have a guarantee that slowing down and re-working some of this would lead to a well-funded, functioning, safe, beautiful building opening in the next 5 years.

To be completely blunt, people are frustrated with the games both parties play and both parties and all levels of government are to blame for us being where we are. The political parties can't trust one another and so when projects finally do move forward, they move forward from a place of fear. In my experience, fear-based decisions might get us something that functions, but fear-based decisions never get us the end result we actually want or that is best. It was a mix of fear, being uninformed, and being unaware that got us to today's meeting where the CAAP Board, in my opinion, has our hands tied in doing our stated mission to preserve and enhance the dignity, beauty, and architectural integrity of the Capitol and the Capitol Area. This board is not infallible, and mistakes likely could have been made even with the Board involved in the process, but mistakes were certainly made on the road to where we are today and those mistakes are

driving the direction of this project without any opportunity to give checks and balances that the people paying for this project, citizens of Minnesota, deserve.

It is an understatement to say this project is huge and the ripple effects of both moving forward or not moving forward with this project are far-reaching. I do not appreciate being put in a time constraint where I can ask questions, but the answers are that everything has already been decided and nothing can be done to amend anything at this point. I do not appreciate having a promise that the displaced green space will find a home elsewhere but not having any sort of study done to understand how, and even if, that will actually work. I do not appreciate being told that it is a high priority to have economic funding available to an area that desperately needs it but no working plan to see what that money will actually do. I do not think it is outside the realm of possibility that on paper the resolution looks like a net gain but in practice it will be done poorly. I do not appreciate being presented with two bad options - a pretentious building that will shift the Comprehensive Plan in ways we aren't yet aware of or an unsafe building in terms of the physical structure as well as security for both the elected officials and hundreds of lay people who work in various government departments.

I'm a stay-at-home mom and have been thinking about this vote while raising three kids. I have been questioning how I will raise my children to think well about murky issues like this as well as how I might counsel them if they come to me in the future with an issue like this. Needless to say it's led to a couple nights of rough sleep. I wish things would have been done differently - we deserve to be looking at a plan that included more voices and one with more public survey results. But we are voting today based on where things are. And I look forward to working toward as positive a future as possible no matter where things land today.

Attachment 2: Board Approved Resolution on compliance of legislatively proposed Capitol Rice area investment activities, including the State Office Building addition, with the 2040 Comprehensive Plan for the Minnesota Capitol Area.

Whereas, on April 21, 2023, the Capitol Area Architectural and Planning Board (CAAPB) reviewed a set of proposed plans and projects for the Capitol Rice district of the Capitol Area, as follows:

1. Renovation and expansion of the State Office Building as proposed in schematics as of this date.
2. Creation of two new open spaces on the northeast and southwest corners of Rice Street and University Avenue, with a combined size not less than the total square feet of open space displaced by the State Office Building addition into Leif Erikson Park.
3. \$25,000,000 to redesign and reconstruction of “Capitol Rice Corridor” (including portions of Como, Rice Street, 12th and St Peter) between Pennsylvania and I-94.
4. \$5,000,000 for creation of a Capitol Area Community Vitality Fund for community and economic development, to be spent on activities approved by the CAAPB, based on recommendations by a Capitol Area Community Vitality Task Force, whose work will be supported by \$150,000 for consultants and related activities.
5. \$1,000,000 to update the Capitol Mall Design Framework plan; a plan that guides all changes and improvements to the Minnesota State Capitol Mall and campus, such as landscaping, walkways, lighting, benches, location of memorials and commemorative works, wayfinding and interpretive signage, irrigation, public rights-of-way, and the overall visitor experience. \$5,000,000 of initial funding for implementation of the updated plan is also proposed; and

Whereas, funding for item 1 is already authorized, and items 2 to 5 are proposed in budget bills advancing this legislative session; and

Whereas, the State Office Building project requires the Capitol Area Architectural and Planning Board to review and vote on the rezoning of land from G-2 for Public Open Space to G-1 for Government Buildings for the portion of the building that encroaches into Leif Erikson Park; and

Whereas, the State Office Building project requires the Capitol Area Architectural and Planning Board to review and vote on a zoning permit for the building use, massing, site plan, and design; and

Whereas, the Capitol Area Architectural and Planning Board must consider the Comprehensive Plan in determining whether to approve rezoning and a zoning permit for the State Office; and

Whereas, the 2040 Comprehensive Plan for the Minnesota State Capitol Area did not anticipate the expansion of the State Office Building, nor the potential of adding new open space in its proximity; and

Whereas, the proposed plans and investments for the Capitol Area create significant potential to transform the area and context around the State Office Building, and these plans advance many key objectives of the 2040 Comprehensive Plan.

Now, Therefore, Be It Resolved, by the Capitol Area Architectural and Planning Board, under the authority of Minnesota Statute 15.B, that the Board finds that the combined effects of the State

Office Building Project and additional initiatives advancing this session in the adjacent Capitol Rice district, as previously described in this resolution, substantially change the context of the State Office Building area by significantly advancing implementation of the Comprehensive Plan; and

Be It Further Resolved that the Capitol Area Architectural and Planning Board finds the basis for the State Office Building, in combination with the four Capitol Rice initiatives, as previously described in this resolution, to be in substantial compliance with the 2040 Comprehensive Plan for the Minnesota Capitol Area; and

Be It Finally Resolved that the Capitol Area Architectural and Planning Board determines that the condition of Comprehensive Plan compliance as required for approval of rezoning of a portion of Leif Erikson Park and the issuance of a zoning permit for the State Office Building is hereby met and does not require further evaluation, unless the projects described previously in this memo and as written in legislative proposals as of this date April 21, 2023, change in any way or are eliminated. If any change occurs, the Board will re-evaluate and vote on Comprehensive Plan compliance. This resolution does not address other required conditions for approval of rezoning or a zoning permit. The Capitol Area Architectural and Planning Board will evaluate the other required conditions during formal application review.