Dec. 11, 2018 CAAPB BOARD MEETING MINUTES:

Board Members & Advisors present:

Board Members absent:

Others present:
Luke Fischer, Nancy Tindell, Trista Matas Castillo, Ethan Osten, Kelly Morrell, Taylor Wille, Mike Berkeopec, Namy Nemah, Kati Knutson, Meritt Clapp Smith

Agenda Item 1: Approval of Oct. 4, 2018 minutes. Board Member Lentz suggested that in attendance, CAAPB Architectural Advisors are listed with Board Members in future minutes, and with that, MOVE approvals, SECONDED by Board Member Buck. Minutes APPROVED. Senator Pappas also asked that minutes reflect that she was in attendance via phone link.

Agenda Item 2: 2040 Comprehensive Plan

Executive Secretary Mandell noted that at the October 2018 meeting, the Board had received and approved the first two introductory chapters for the 2040 Comprehensive Plan developed much from the prior 2009 Comprehensive Plan and past history. At the same time, they reviewed and approved the 2040 Comprehensive Plan Principles, all previously reviewed by the Board’s CP Task Force and CAAPB Architectural Advisors. He then advised them that with the new work, staff is compiling into Chapter 7a, a consolidation of material shaping a design framework for future development for the larger, undeveloped sites in the Capitol Rice Area. To accomplish this, Mandell explained that staff had incorporated guidelines for housing, transportation, mobility, street scape and other subjects that will eventually be found in separate chapters of the final Comprehensive plan; but for now, consolidated to serve as needed for any new large development at the League of Cities, the Sears site or one of the two State-owned sites at Rice and University.

Planner Peter Musty briefed the Board on how staff compiled much of the draft chapter 7a from prior policies and CAAPB documents, incorporating recent work from the year-long study of the Capitol Rice area in preparation for the City’s Commercial Vitality Zone Strategy (CVZ). As of November, they had secured about $350,000 in City funds for storefront and other property improvements, designed to dramatically improve appearance of the five blocks north of University Avenue. He added that a good amount of material also came from the City’s Rice Station Area Plan, which had extensive CAAPB staff input back in 2012-2013, prior to construction of the Green Line.
Planner Linda Spohr noted for the Board that their packet included four documents: the Board memo (3 pages), the Comp Plan Principles (2 pages), which the Board has reviewed and approved in October, the new chapter 7a (46 pages), and a glossary for the Comp. Plan itself.

Musty noted that the website will be updated to include all this material and that the packet represents input from numerous stakeholders, including but not limited to Seritage (owners of the Sears 17-acre site) as well as surrounding neighborhood groups, large property owners and institutions, the Department of Administration and the City of Saint Paul. It also represents results from at least two or three meetings with the Board’s Comp Plan Task Force and architectural advisors. In chapter 7a, he cited representation of Leif Erikson Park as a central park for the area or heart of the urban village, possibly becoming far more than it is today. Secondly, the Rice-University area will continue to evolve as an integrated mobility hub (given the presence of the Green Line and numerous bus routes (both north-south and east-west) as well as yet to be developed bike routes. Already, there is the need created by a heavily transit dependent population, the presence of the State with over 8,000 employees, as well as two area hospitals and high visitor counts. This would return this area to its roots as a major crossroads for the streetcar and major thoroughfare University Avenue was prior to the Interstate. Finally, plans call for strengthening Rice Street as a neighborhood main street.

Spohr informed the Board that the majority of this material was totally consistent with past CAAPB policy with regards to the multi-modal, urban village, Rice Street’s potential, and the restoration of the street grid to the Sears mega block. Musty referenced the integrated nature of the district, both north and south of University, as part of the Capitol Area, walkability of the area with a vision for shared improved mobility, connectivity and sustainability. This all builds upon past documents and best practices, laying out more detailed design guidelines and flexibility focused on the assets of a thriving, vibrant urban village. There’s now greater detail regarding redevelopment of the few remaining large sites, including the Sears site now that closing of the store is imminent. The Capitol Area Board has not had a well-defined process through which to steer such large proposals in the past, due chiefly to the lack of any need.

Mandell reminded everyone of the total 10 Principles, including those found in 7a-d (7-10), addressing specific geographic areas support the document in many ways.

Lentz inquired how Leif Erickson Park might develop as envisioned which, as Musty noted, might be dependent upon the redevelopment of lots C and AA into large State Buildings; and would clearly take on greater use with development of an urban village on the Sears site.

At this point, Lt. Gov. Fischbach interrupted to allow for Paul to make a special announcement. He reminded all that upwards of seven of the twelve board members have terms expiring or up for renewal or replacement. This includes the Lt. Governor and all four legislators, one of whom, Rep. Matt Dean, was retiring. Mandell informed the Board that he’d already advised the Speaker’s Office and President of the Senate of the need for them to appoint people. In addition, there is one gubernatorial appointment, Greg Mathis and one Mayoral appointment, Don Grundhauser, both of which were up.

Mandell informed the Board that Rep. Dean had served on the Board since 2010. However, his initial involvement with the Capitol Building restoration was in the early 2000s when he, as an architect, had advocated for the restoration of the Capitol Building before there was any bipartisan or even partisan support for a comprehensive approach. Mandell presented
Dean with a compilation of CAAPB Biennial Reports and a Friends of the Capitol mug. Then he read the press release about his appointment by then Governor Pawlenty, acknowledging that Dean had served, first as a citizen and then in 2014, as a House Member.

Dean affirmed the importance of having legislators on a Committee and having them invested, despite the difficulties with Legislators due to schedule conflicts and other issues. He complimented all on the work they achieved on the Capitol Building, reflecting their hard work and good work with the Legislature.

The agenda resumed with Board member Buck inquiring about responses from the City of Saint Paul. Musty reported they were working closely with the City, including a CAAPB contract for limited part-time services for consultation on working through the review and approval process for those parties outside the CAAPB. Merritt Clap Smith, a former planner for the City of Saint Paul PED, who was a lead project manager for the Ford Plant Site Redevelopment Plan in Saint Paul, who now works for TKDA. He stated that staff has also been working with the City constantly, and had been involved with the City ten years ago on the Rice Station Area Plan, while the City was directly involved in the planning for the Commercial Vitality Zone. Musty added that City staff had been meeting with CAAPB staff and had at least three opportunities to review the document prior to today. He also noted that CAAPB’s reason for contracting with TKDA, specifically Ms. Clap Smith, was for the expertise in maneuvering through the various reviews of a larger site that as staff with the City she had handled, including platting, environmental review, demolition, permit processing and site plan review.

Board member Buck inquired about the CVZ project, to which Musty responded that the grant total was $350,000 and expectations were for as many as twenty applications, with grants capped at $20,000 adding that the money was grant, not a loan or match. Senator Pappas inquired of the expectations for Leif Erickson Park with again, Musty responding in general. Katie Knutson of the Commissioner’s Office for Administration testified to their support for the plan’s call for urban villages, re-development of the Sears site, restoration of a street grid, for protection of view sheds, transit-oriented development and sustainability regarding water, energy and waste, and the need for improved wayfinding. The Dept. of Admin. complimented the Board on the thorough and comprehensive nature of the work on the 2040 Comprehensive Plan while noting that given their lack of progress in re-visiting the 1993 and 1995 Strategic Plan for Locating State Agencies, stressed the need for flexibility in addressing Capitol Complex employment trend analysis, mobility improvements, and safety issues. She noted the many questions a State Strategic Plan would resolve, answering questions or concerns regarding congestion that might be associated with a multi-modal site development in the area of Leif Erickson Park, given the 8,000 employees, approximately 300,000 visitors (600,000 per MNHS).

She cited the fact that approximately 30% of State parking on the Capitol Campus is in surface lots representing a large gap in the supply, as in the case of the Sears Lot or Block 19 ramp.

She made it very clear that reducing surface parking and converting to higher and best uses is definitely the right goal, but solutions will be dependent on bond funding, as would be the case with increased way finding, a visitor center, a multi-modal hub and some of the proposals for properties at Rice and University. She re-iterated their interest in continued
partnership but said that pending greater detail on implications and costs, the State Administration would have to remain neutral on some of the latter referenced recommendations.

Executive Secretary Mandell told the Board that today the Board was being asked for preliminary approval to publish in order to solicit public comments, with a final review of chapter 7a and approval scheduled for the next Board meeting on Jan. 23rd.

Board member Buck MOVED Preliminary approval and Board Member Mathis SECONDED. MOTION APPROVED.

There was some additional discussion regarding Administration and the next chapters that would be more encompassing of the entire Capitol Area looking holistically at parking and all other impacts as in previous Comprehensive Plans (1990, 2000, and 2009).

(Note): The CAAPB has issued new Comprehensive Plans in both 2000 and 2009 while the concerns for a new Strategic Plan existed, and this year, CAAPB is conducting the re-write of the Comprehensive Plan without any infusion of additional funds.

In closing, Mandell revisited and reminded members of their terms. He acknowledged that for staffing, we have Linda Spohr on board part-time working on the Comprehensive Plan through at least this fiscal year and more than likely the next fiscal year (June 2020); Will Feeney, from Green Corps not funded by CAAPB with the exception of supplying computer and phone services. He will be working through next fall on the Capitol Commutes project, and lastly, the limited part-time contract with Ms. Clap Smith at TKDA through this June.

With no further business, the meeting adjourned by Lt. Governor Fishbach.