June 10, 2019 CAAPB Board meeting minutes:

Board Members present:

Board Members absent:

Others present:
Sophie Leininger, Aara Johnson, Frankie Torbor, Cathy Carlson, Richelle Kuhl, Eric Roesk, Theodore Tucker, William Feeney,
Brian Pease, Luke Fischer, David Kelliher, Jennifer Ellison, Julie Bayerl, Alice Roberts-Davis

Lt. Governor Peggy Flanagan gavelled the Board meeting for the Capitol Area Architectural and Planning Board.

Agenda 1:
Board Member Lanegran MOVED the CAAPB minutes of January 23, 2019, and Board Member Fink SECONDED. Minutes were approved unanimously.

Lt. Gov. Flanagan then administered the oath to new Board Member Rep. Jerry Hertaus of Greenfield, representing District 33A, a rural part of Hennepin County. He’s a Member of Saint Paul Bldg. and Construction Trades Real Estate and Development, formerly a member of his local Planning Commission, and is in his fourth term as a Legislator. All then made introductions, including new CAAPB Fellow Frankie Torbor, who studied planning at Iowa State University with an interest in housing and planning, currently working full time at Project for Pride in Living. Executive Secretary Paul Mandell reported that Frankie was here to work on the CAAPB website and social media on a limited basis (5 hrs. per wk.) for the next year helping us in outreach for the Comprehensive Plan and general communications. He also introduced Will Feeney in the audience, who had been on duty since last fall working for both the CAAPB and Administration’s Office of Sustainability as an Americorps worker. Will has been working through Capitol Commutes on getting the State workforce
more on-board with transit – or at least away from single occupancy vehicles. Will is here through August.

Agenda #2

Lt. Gov. Flanagan noted that Peter was out sick, so then called on Linda Spohr to discuss the 2040 Comprehensive Plan. Linda then walked the Board through the Plan’s memo and attachments and introduced the newest chapter, Chapter 6 – Land Use Diversity.

She reviewed the timeline, reflecting current status in the second quarter, addressing the three-phase approach. First, a chapter-by-chapter development focused on text and policy. This is where we are now and will be for much of the next year as we bring forth one or two chapters at a time. The second phase will be adding graphics as we format the chapters into the unique presentation you have been given copies of, which reflects past approved work and modeled after a major work published by the National Capitol Parks and Planning Commission. The third phase is a three-month public review process. Members Buck, Fink, Mathis, Lanegran and Belton are participating on the Comprehensive Plan Committee.

Linda described work on the various planning tracks, reminding all that the chapters following the introduction are presented as ‘Principles’, found on pgs. 32-33 of the fully-formatted (11x11) document. She reported on three sections in Chapter 6 including the introduction, future land use mixes and patterns; adding that they have determined baselines followed by ‘guidelines’ or recommendations to help us get to our goals. Spohr described the lens for each chapter; healthy living, sustainability in the environment, economic health and communities. She spoke of her planning efforts using those lenses to review each section, adding that pgs. 22-26 reflect an update to their planning process, with of course, Chapter 7a – Capitol-Rice already completed, but for Chapter 6 – land use diversity, the work before the Board proceeds through the mix we have currently.
Spohr noted that there are seven principles (one per chapter) following the introduction, and for purposes of our review – Chapter 6 being the first such chapter addressing a principle, it should still be seen as evolutionary – that is, subject to further changes. She spoke of an icon in the introduction, symbolically referencing the various lens – each addressed in the introductory text, followed by graphic representation of both current and future land use mixes, centered around our Capitol Campus – surrounded by neighborhoods, one of which is downtown Saint Paul. She spoke also of the Transit Oriented Development (TOD) – important with, in particular, three LRT stations in the Capitol Area, and Urban villages – with patterns still tied to the Mississippi River and then a summary of what is found in the final draft of Saint Paul’s 2040 Comprehensive Plan.

Lastly, Spohr spoke about the Missing Middle; a specific mid-range style of housing discussed on page 7 of Chapter 6 consisting of duplexes, four plexes, small courtyard apartments – already found to some degree among the majority single family housing of the Capitol Area neighborhoods north of the freeway. Rep. Raymond Dehn suggested that many cross reference using number of units per acre, while acknowledging that sometimes that becomes less than clear. Spohr spoke to the difference between our northern Capitol Heights and those blocks of residential within the area but south of the freeway – all to some degree, connected or governed by the height restrictions, knowing, for example, the Sears site potential caps out at 5-7 stores.

She proceeded to then address the current mix of land uses, the initial (yet to be completed) chart showing the mix of goods and services, community anchors and opportunity sites (all mapped out), acknowledging that anchor would apply to those land uses which bring people to the neighborhood (such as a grocery store or, on a far smaller scale, a full-service coffee shop or hardware store).

Spohr also detailed plans for a graphic presentation showing what kind of residential and commercial mix there is in the Capitol Area, including the new 90 plus micro-units that will be built at Como and Park, on site of the old Krauss Anderson Medical Building. She pointed to the five primary
goals supporting the guidance for regulations – including the highest and best use for redevelopment, which then dictates, reduction of the amount of land dedicated to surface parking. She acknowledged the goal today was to secure approval of the Chapter for release to the general public, supplemented with final data for the charts we’ve recommended.

Hearing no further discussion, Rep. Dehn MOVED approval, Board Member Mathis SECONDED. Motion APPROVED.

Agenda Item 3 – Zoning Proposal for tobacco sales facilities:

Executive Secretary Mandell advised the Board that after the City of Saint Paul developed a new ordinance governing smoking/tobacco shops in relation to youth forced separate retail operations that resulted in an area with two existing stores to split into two separate facilities, both the grocer on Rice and Sherburne and the Holiday Superstore at Rice and Pennsylvania. In the case of Holiday, the vacant police substation will be converted to a cigarette store, recalling that years ago, they came to the Board and received a variance for their digital sign over staff objection, with the argument that it was retail inside the store, not the pumps, that provided far more than the majority of profits. So now, they are asking for a separate retail operation for sale of cigarettes, then another in the neighboring strip mall, leaving us facing three locations, in violation of the City required distances but not covered by the current CAAPB zoning rules. For these reasons, CAAPB staff are asking, not for a moratorium, but a new policy that any future application for a tobacco store in the Capitol Area would require CAAPB action, as if but not identical to the required Board vote for variances and conditional use permits.

In response to questions, Mandell noted that the three mentioned already had licenses, so they would be grandfathered in, and that when we finish the Comprehensive Plan, a new re-write of our Zoning Rules would include language to address this issue. Until then (2021) this new policy would serve us and those in the Capitol Area. The recommendation then is to approve the Board policy requiring Board review and approval for new
tobacco licensing permits. Board Member Lanegran MOVED the recommendation, Vice Chair Buck SECONDED, and MOTION APPROVED.

Agenda Item 4: Hillside Solar Install on Cass Gilbert:

Paul Mandell advised the Board that pursuant to Board action of March 23, 2018, RECS, FMD and Administration’s Office of Sustainability has continued to work on design through details. He noted that installation of the six rooftop elements continues to progress and that CAAPB staff and Advisors had continued to work with Administration through their Office of Sustainability, awaiting only final details on the actual plantings and pollinator restoration within the suggested construction zone. He cited Board approval back in 2018, pending final approval by Staff and Advisors, of the details once design is accomplished, which Mandell said is likely by the end of the summer or certainly the end of construction season.

As for other actions in the Capitol Area, Mandell cited the build out of the new office building/dialysis clinic at Como and Rice, across from Bethesda HealthEast, still hoping for a pedestrian-friendly retail or service in the corner space. Additionally, there is the new apartment unit at Como and Park mentioned by Spohr earlier. That project includes tear-down of the current building and a new building to replace it, then minor rehab of the existing parking ramp with the resulting 92 units at 300-500 sq. ft. charging $1000-2000; with the lowest floor of the ramp reserved for residents via a secured level.

As for Sears, we continue to speak with leaders and anticipate a proposed site plan before the end of the calendar year – with mixed-use redevelopment of 5-7 stories max., now expecting the big box Sears building itself to be demolished. He noted that some parties continue to shop around parts of the draft plan to different companies but stated that all understand that there’s no plan until the CAAPB approves one. Lt. Gov. Flanagan stated that she wanted to underscore what Paul had said, that while some folks are shopping plans around town, she sees it imperative
that all understand that until the CAAPB approves a plan, there really isn’t a plan.

Mandell then spoke to Ramsey County’s planning for redesign of Rice Street – that while MNDOT right-of-way progresses up to a key point along Rice beyond just the frontage road, that the City owns the rest up to University Avenue, while the County, with responsibility from University to the north end. In some kind of an initial RFP process, the County is moving forward with a study of the middle third - between only Pennsylvania (on the north boundary of the Capitol Area) to Wheelock (not even to the boundary of Saint Paul). He explained that he was in communication with County Commissioner Ortega on how this fails to address comprehensively on those key issues facing Rice Street.

Beyond planning, Mandell told the Board that renovations continue at the Capitol Area – from the wholesale repair of plaza and key elements at both the Wilkins and Peace Officers Memorials – including all the bronze work at Wilkins to those elements at Peace Officers: the colonnade, the pool, pumps, lighting and eventually landscape.

On the work proceeding, he noted that, using Capitol Building funds set to expire that were redirected toward the remaining twenty-one memorials – some of which had already been addressed with the work on the Aurora pedestrian plaza, including Johnson, Nelson, Columbus and to some degree, Olson. This new scope will address safety issues, some electrical, stone work and in certain cases, landscaping over the next two years with design contracted to Leo Daly via Michael Bjornberg.

Mandell next addressed the Medal of Honor Memorial, which had achieved the $500,000 fundraising mark and, during this past legislative session, secured another $150,000 to be matched again, rounding out their goal of over $750,000. Lastly, he noted progress for the Nellie Stone Johnson Statue to be placed in the Capitol Building (north corridor, first floor). With
$30,000 in State money and over $70,000 in private dollars, plus interest, statements of interest from artists was due June 11, with final responses to the RFQ due July 1, 2019. He noted that it looked like there could be as many as twenty or more responses for the RFQ, with the Jury scheduled to meet the week of July 15 to narrow it down to between 3-8 artists to compete for the second stage RFP, with the goal of having photos of the final mold or casting for unveiling at the 2020 Nellie Stone Johnson Scholarship Dinner on March 20, 2020, with installation following 2020 Session.

Mandell then briefed the Board on staffing at the CAAPB, citing Linda who accomplishes so much at only twenty-five hours per week. Hired originally as a Spring fellow, then extended to a year, and, after securing her Master’s in Landscape Architecture, hired back part time through the end of calendar year 2020. She’s especially talented in her skill working with graphics, photo manipulation, computer apps and so much more. He noted that the CAAPB annual budget received a bump of $1000, now at $351,000 so with Linda part-time (her husband works in the building too, so she doesn’t need so many benefits), and Frankie (our new Fellow) at only five hours per week, along with Lisa too at 25 hours, we manage to get a lot done. He informed the Board that Linda, Pete and he will be going to Louisville for the Congress for New Urbanism, which next year will be held in Saint Paul, which will be an opportunity for both staff and Board to take part in June 2020.

Rep. Dehn asked about Sears, and Linda spoke of how they detailed extensively, using the draft Chapter 7a for Capitol/Rice as a Design Framework, to address most everything from transportation to design criteria to extensive timeline for CAAPB review. Mandell added reference to coordination, through consultant services with Meritt Clapp Smith of TKDA, with the City of Saint Paul for official environmental review stages – involving an AVAR as a check on development processes – adding that that too was all part of 7a which was reviewed and approved by the Board, first in December and again in February.
Shelly Kuhl, a resident, asked to speak and complimented the Board on the extensive and long-term support of the neighborhood, especially on the 590 micro-unit apartment project.

Mandell added one reference to legislation regarding a new World War I Plaque correcting the history of how many died both fighting abroad and at home, in camps, as a result of a flu pandemic, which claimed the lives of more Minnesotans than those in fighting. So he invited Board Members to be involved in either the new plaque or the jury for Nellie Stone Johnson.

With that, Ann Buck MOVED adjournment and Board Member Matthis SECONDED and the meeting was adjourned.