OCT. 4, 2018 CAAPB BOARD MEETING:

Board Members present:

Board Members absent:

Others present:
Christy Khang, Mark McLane, Will Matzek, Cathy Carlson, David Kelliher, Ankita Verma, Amy Spong, Tod Elkins, Curt Yoakum, Brian Pease

Lt. Governor Fischbach convened the meeting at 1:30 in Administration Bldg. room 116B.

Agenda Item 1.  Board member Lanegran MOVED approval of the June 18, 2018 Board meeting, Board member Mathis SECONDED the motion, and the minutes were APPROVED.

Agenda Item 2.  Principal Planner Peter Musty introduced the topic of demo of the vacant medical office building and replacement with a multi-story, market-rate apartment building, incorporating rehab and re-skinning of the attached three-level parking ramp.  He then introduced Mark McLane with Kraus Anderson Development, Todd Elkins with Urban Works Architects and Will Matzek, Kimley Horner.

Mark briefed the Board on the proposed redevelopment of a Kraus Anderson owned 1970s medical office building that’s been vacant for over a year and is now considered obsolete. The building and parking ramp is set on a block that is otherwise completely residential. He reported that they first started to meet with CAAPB staff in late 2016 with a plan for replacement of both the vacant office building and ramp for a larger scale development of 157 apartment units with underground parking. However, the neighborhood was seriously troubled by the larger scale, so as a result, they targeted build-out at under 100 units, partly in response to the economics. The developer then separated the rehab of the parking ramp from the renovation and full replacement of the office building.

The resulting project is now a ninety-two unit, micro-unit apartment building, consisting chiefly of micro-units (390-550 square feet) and some one bedroom units. Mark McLane of Kraus Anderson said that their goal was to serve those at 60-80% AMI (Average Medium Income, a measure of affordability). McLean explained that using Met Council’s numbers for 60-80% for rents, their micro-units fit into their stated rental rates, achieved by limiting size of unit. He
acknowledged for Rep. Dehn that they were intentionally not looking for TIF (Tax Increment Financing), bonds or tax credits.

In response to Board member Buck, McLean spoke of the amenities on the ground floor that includes laundry, a lounge/business center, kitchen/dining, fitness center, etc. He also noted that the lobby spills out onto the front porch at Park and Como, with an outdoor grilling area at another location and dog walk area alongside the apron for the parking ramp. He also noted that there would be one level (off Capitol Blvd.) of parking (100 spaces) reserved for residents, with a secure bike storage area, while the upper two levels of the parking ramp would continue to be rented out to individuals via parking contracts (another 157 spaces).

Kraus Anderson currently owns the building (medical office bldg.) but not the land or the ramp. However, they have contracts to purchase both.

Planner Musty noted the extensive involvement of Capitol Heights Block Club (of which CAAPB Board member Don Grundhauser is a member), with at least two-three meetings with the developer over the past year and a half, addressing density, height and massing. Musty addressed the scale, walkable frontages, the unique nature of the housing type in the Capitol Area and how it’s compatible with the RM zone (multi-family). He acknowledged the greater height (compatible with the district atop the hill being allotted 22’ above the standard CAAPB imposed general height restriction at 944’ above sea level).

Musty noted that both Mr. Grundhauser and fellow neighbor, Christy Khang, were present to speak on behalf of the Block Club, as well as Advisors, who had met with the developer at least twice. A memo developed by Advisor Bjornberg was included in the packet.

Advisor Bjornberg reported to the Board of how impressed he had been with the willingness of the design team to respond to both the neighborhood and the Architectural Advisors. The result produced a very good project that serves as a transition from the commercial to the residential. He added that with leasing, he suspected that this project would spur new amenities for Rice Street, such as a coffee shop or quality retail offerings.

Musty then referenced the five key items for Board approval, the first being density, which at greater than five units requires a Conditional Use Permit. Beyond this, there were four variances, the first being building height. In response to questions, Musty reminded the Board that the original submittal had far greater density and scale which was a concern. Now their project was being viewed by all as having an acceptable size. Don Grundhauser noted that the Block Club had felt well listened to and respected.

Musty then cited the second variance in which the building setback was reduced from eight feet to four feet in order to interact better with Park Street where the upper reach of the building projects forward. The third variance was because the lot size per unit fails due to density and build-out for a residential lot – while keeping the project economically feasible. Zoning calls for 200 sf per unit, so the proposal is off by roughly fifty percent. Lastly, the fourth variance was for usable outdoor space per unit, which again, due to the density of the project, only about half the units pass.
Lt. Governor Fishbach then invited public comment. Christy Khang came forward as a block club member, stating that the only real outstanding concern was parking due in part to all the offices and businesses in the area. Musty acknowledged this problem happens with increased residential density. However the ramp has more than the necessary parking supply. In fact, two additional levels of parking available may actually alleviate some of the existing problem.

Mandell briefed the Board on a similar project which is the Ray just off the Green Line at Raymond where only sixty-percent of the available parking below the building were occupied. He also noted that many of those who work for the State or hospitals also park in the neighborhood.

Bd. Member Lentz MOVED closing the public hearing and Lanegran SECONDED, Motion public hearing was closed.

Planner Musty then walked the Board through his recommended language for all the necessary approvals, variances and zoning elements. Board member Mathis MOVED approval, Vice-Chair Buck SECONDED, and the Motion was PASSED.

**Agenda Item 3. Floyd B. Olson Statue Inscription**

Executive Secretary Mandell cited a letter received from Stephen Kelly regarding interest in greater information at the Floyd B. Olson Statue because he feels that there’s insufficient information at the site. He offered his own efforts, if needed, to add more info via additional engraving or a plaque. Mandell noted that an effort developing an addition would need to involve both the MNHS and CAAPB, so at this point, we’re only looking to the Board to approve consideration for further discussions with Mr. Kelly and the Historical Society in terms of what might be added to the Olson Statue on Martin Luther King Blvd. (located south of the Capitol Building), to better inform the public on this person’s role in history.

Board Member Lentz suggested a more comprehensive look at all the memorials as far as exploratory information and also suggested a further look at the possible use of QR codes or an app to make more information using technology readily available to the public. Vice Chair Buck raised some concerns for the use of QR codes, especially if there’s no one maintaining the website or electronic resources. Mandell noted that all the other Memorials have far more information, for example, Wilkins added a large plaque after the fact to help explain the Memorial and newer Memorials are using a QR code in signage (MFT and the new addition to the Firefighters Memorial). The Historical Society also offers printed walking tours of memorials and statues on the grounds for this very purpose.

One of the Bd. Members referenced the Floyd B. Olson statue on Highway 55, named after him, to which Bd. Member Greg Mathis noted that little descriptive information is available at that statue too, and the highway work schedule may cause the statue to be relocated.

In response to another set of questions, Mandell noted that the CAAPB website already has key information on each statue and memorial.

Board member Lanegran then MOVED approval to further pursue the idea, Vice-Chair Buck SECONDED the motion, which then PASSED.
Agenda Item 4. 2040 Comprehensive Plan

Mandell then referred to Planners Peter Musty and Linda Spohr, our Spring fellow that we were able to bring back on a part-time basis for the Comprehensive Plan for at least the next year if not two, depending on budgets for 2020-21.

Musty briefed the Board on the introductory sections of the 2040 Comprehensive Plan draft demonstrating the approved format and structure based on principles, adding that Linda would be addressing this in detail. Peter added that planning tracks are progressing, with the rehab/physical improvement grant progress for Rice Street as part of the Commercial Vitality Zone, which has now successfully netted $327,000 for improvements such as new signage and permanent storefront improvements, equipment upgrades for the stores, and retirement of all outdated signage, with a $20,000 cap in place for any projects on Rice Street.

He also told the Board of a successful grant award for an MPCA Americorp person to work with the CAAPB, Administration’s Office of Sustainability and the group working as Capitol Commutes. Capitol Commutes consists of six different State and regional bodies including Health, Admin., MNDot, Move MN, CAAPB and Metro Transit facilitated by the CAAPB to address commuting patterns for converting more people who currently drive alone (approx. 74-77% of the Capitol Campus workforce) into transit, vanpool or other means for purposes of sustainability, reduction of future parking and to help reduce the state’s carbon footprint. The Americorp person is William Feeny, and his work over the next eleven months (with rent covered by Admin OES, phone and computer covered by CAAPB) includes a commuter survey along with interviews of department sustainability coordinators, along with creation of a methodology for measuring bike and pedestrian facilities, activity, and relative successes in advancing alternatives – all as part two of our Capitol Commutes project. It was noted that Mr. Feeny is a product of Macalester College, which Bd. Member Lanegran acknowledged, given his knowledge of him through the college classes, how valuable he expected Mr. Feeny’s work to prove.

Musty then cited the third planning track, Capitol Connections, ‘piggy-backing’ on MNDOT’s Rethinking I-94 and conducted in cooperation with Administration, dating back to the first general workshop in June – looking at improved connections between the Capitol Area and downtown Saint Paul, adding that if and when Sears site redevelopment occurs, the area could be seriously impacted with upwards of over one million new square feet.

Planner Linda Spohr presented what amounts to the first two introductory chapters of the Comprehensive Plan, running through some background, including statutory authority, our boundaries, the three primary influences on the plan (past, present and future), the history of the area and St. Paul, as well as the standing policies of connecting the Capitol Area to the City and surrounding neighborhoods, also tracing the immigrant history of the area, streetcar as predecessor to the LRT, and the evolution of the Capitol Area and Capitol Mall through the twentieth century. She showed how the plan moves through the building of the Interstate, clearance for Sears, slow conversion of surface lots to open space and, more recently, new state buildings and structured parking, along with the various stages of commerce on Rice Street up to creation of the CAAPB in 1967.
Then she spoke of the new effort in this revision that moves us from commitments to being a good neighbor to the surrounding community to more of an integration, lifting up and weaving into the fabric of surrounding areas with the same vitality. She then addressed the five different areas that make up the Capitol Area, Fitzgerald Park south of the freeway, Capitol Heights north of the Capitol, the connections to downtown across I-94 or 35, the Capitol Campus and then, Capitol Rice – the area the Board has spent the past year studying and analyzing in order to secure the City Vitality Zone. She then spoke to the next chapter to be worked on, 7a, focused on this last area, Capitol Rice, where the majority of the undeveloped or under-developed areas, both public and private are located – with Leif Erickson Park, the 17 acre Sears site, the League of Cities half-block and the two State surface lots on the southwest and northeast corners of University and Rice.

Musty and Spohr then cited the related Saint Paul 2040 Plan, incorporating into our Plan trends, issues and opportunities, and the desire to move toward strong efforts in travel demand management via technology and other best practices, and key to the effort, a shift from a location-based plan to one based on principles. The Board is being asked to release the draft framework with the first two draft chapters for publication and review, allowing for affected stakeholders to comment. Spohr walked the Board through revisions to the current vision statement from 2009 – moving from being a “good neighbor” to actually a unifying factor transcending boundaries. Principle one, on the role of the Capitol Building in the State, as seat of the government; the second on that role for the City of Saint Paul as the “Capitol City,” as a landmark and point of civic pride and quality. The third focused on walkability and pedestrian-friendly streets, with the fourth addressing patterns of a return to multi-modal transportation-based district. Principle 5 addresses the Capitol Campus as a model work place, both competitive, and productive as well as a pleasant place to work. Principle 6 focused on land-use diversity and mixed-neighborhoods, and Principle 7 focused on four key site specific neighborhoods.

With that, the resolution was to accept the seven draft principles and release it for review and comment while moving forward with preliminary organizing of the chapter structure, as outlined in the Staff/Advisors Memo – all presented as a draft document. Board member Mathis MOVED approval of the draft document and release for public review, Vice-Chair Buck SECONDED; Motion PASSED.

Agenda Item 5. Executive Secretary Mandell, speaking about funding for Memorials, informed the Board of approval in 2017 of $350K for the Peace Officers and the Roy Wilkins Memorial and in the 2018 Special Session, full funding for the $3.25 million request to address needs of all the campus memorials, including the Quadriga – a request pending since 2012 and joined this year by the CAAPB. For the first step, a complete renovation will be scheduled for the 2019 construction season of both Peace Officers (paving bed, pavers, pool and blue line (light) in the floor) and Wilkins (paving bed and pavers, renovation of the swing biographical doors and re-patination of all the bronze. The balance of memorial work will be scheduled over the next two-three years.
On the issue of Memorials and the maintenance funds Mandell cited past history since 1996 of a required private match of 10% of construction (which changed to 20% in 2006 to reflect inflation). This new money will bring all sites up to a new baseline of safe and restored condition, and discussions of a future dedicated funding source continue, similar to upkeep of walks and such using a small portion of rent charged to those bodies on the campus.

Agenda Item 6 was postponed. Executive Secretary Mandell strongly encouraged all Board members to thoroughly check out the new CAAPB website, a work in progress that was dramatically improved over a year ago.

Other Business

Agenda Item 7. Next, Mandell suggested that the chair entertain having the Board learn more about who its' newest Board member Alicia Belton is. Mandell then informed the Board that last year the Legislature approved formation of a new Capitol Building Art Advisory Committee to serve the Preservation Commission. CAAPB is to have an ex-officio member and until then, Executive Secretary Mandell will do so, adding that Bd. Member Ted Lentz will be a voting member. Mandell added that the scope covers the east wing of the third floor and much of the basement, except the historic spaces and corridors which are already under the authority of the CAAPB and Minnesota Historical Society.

Exec. Sec. Mandell next advised the Board that they need to set an official policy for reimbursements which he cannot find any record of. His memo for the Board captured a draft proposal – where the public members (Legislators are covered by their respective bodies) can request reimbursement for mileage, parking and per diem for any official meeting of the Board and/or Board committee or task force – but not for those occasions where, by right of their service on the Board, they are invited to ceremonies or other public events where the Board conducts no work. He noted that the AG had reviewed and approved the draft language.

Board Member Lentz MOVED approval of the official policy, Vice-chair Buck SECONDED. Motion PASSED.

Lastly, Mr. Mandell informed the Board of forthcoming transitions with up to seven Board Members terms up including both Senators and both House members plus the Lt. Governor with Representative Matt Dean not running for re-election, he will be leaving the Board in January. In addition, Mr. Mathis’ term is up, eligible for renewal, as a gubernatorial appointment, and Mr. Grundhauser will be finishing his second term, a Mayoral appointment reserved statute for someone who lives in the Capitol Area (meaning either Capitol Heights or one of five blocks by downtown).

At this point, Ms. Belton introduced herself as a licensed architect in MN, with her own practice of twenty years with a focus on architecture, project management and community engagement, who knew only Rep. Dehn before joining the Board.

Board adjourned.