

AMERICAN FORK CITY COUNCIL
AUGUST 4, 2020
WORK SESSION MINUTES

This meeting was held electronically

Members Present:

Bradley J. Frost	Mayor
Kevin Barnes	Council Member
Staci Carroll	Council Member
Barbara Christiansen	Council Member
Rob Shelton	Council Member
Clark Taylor	Council Member

Staff Present:

David Bunker	City Administrator
Wendelin Knobloch	Associate Planner
Terilyn Lurker	City Recorder
Anna Montoya	Finance Officer
Aaron Brems	Fire Chief
George Schade	IT Director
Cherylyn Egner	Legal Counsel
Adam Olsen	Senior Planner
Darren Falslev	Police Chief
Scott Sensanbaugher	Public Works Director

Also present: John Woffinden, Todd Brightwell, Nick Dahl, and Randy Sant.

The American Fork City Council met electronically in a work session on Tuesday, August 4, 2020, commencing at 4:00 p.m.

WORK SESSION

The purpose of City Work Sessions is to prepare the City Council for upcoming agenda items on future City Council Meetings. The Work Session is not an action item meeting. No one attending the meeting should rely on any discussion or any perceived consensus as action or authorization. These come only from the City Council Meeting.

1. Discussion on the downtown revitalization study.

Todd Brightwell thanked the Council for the opportunity to speak. He explained that his group wished to provide their report so they could move forward to the next steps. He introduced Randy Sant, who, he explained would continue the presentation.

Mr. Sant stated that the report had different sections. One of the sections, he stated, discussed demographic overviews. He explained the general plan talked about the central commercial district planning which included the downtown area. He added that part of the general plan was the continued focus on retail and office areas with the renovation and renewal of existing structures along with adequate parking. He continued that revitalization had been an issue for the last 20

years and added that several efforts had been mounted to save the area. He pointed to the challenges: numerous different owners and the need for eminent domain. He added that the strategy proposed had allowed to attract businesses.

Mr. Sant explained that the goal was to align all participants and receive the commitment to move forward. When putting the report together, he continued, they had used past and current information. Mr. Sant explained that they asked for an economic development committee to help provide some input and had held meetings on a SWOT analysis: concentrating on the findings was important. He stated that they had provided the report and outlined the necessary steps forward.

Randy Sant explained that they had highlighted the common themes brought up in the analysis dealing with strengths, weaknesses, and threats. He stated that the downtown area was a central location with great traffic flow. He pointed that downtown had the City offices, City Library, and a post office, which, he explained created a draw. He continued that the park was also a great asset for promotions and events. Another draw, he pointed, would be created with a residential area, and added that success would require the support of the Administration and Council.

Mayor Frost asked whether this information had already been covered. Mr. Sant stated that it had been discussed two weeks prior. Mayor Frost asked to move to the new information.

Randy Sant stated that the Aspirations were simply to have a destination that would serve everyone. He pointed that the report listed four visioning principles that had been reviewed two weeks prior.

Randy Sant explained that the strategic plan involved four key components: organization, design, promotion/marketing, and economic restructuring. Any successful downtown, he stated, would implement these four components. Mr. Sant explained that some of the challenges were creating better pedestrian accessibility, distance from I-15, width, high-density, access to public transportation, and competing development. There are several tools available to the city such as a RDA/Tax increment financing, Opportunity zones, Revolving loan funds and grants, a Business improvement district, Tax increment bonds, sales tax bonds, Mountainland Association of Governments (MAG) or a Public Improvement District (PID).

Randy Sant presented a concept map where economic restructuring could occur, identifying different areas that could have that opportunity. He stressed that this concept plan did include property owned by several different owners and added that the City could work with the area immediately, including with the area between Church Street to 100 East. He continued that they also felt that the 200 West area could get started as well as a developer had approached the City to develop the area. He pointed that the development discussed was vertical development, not single to two-story development. Mr. Sant further stated that a CRA was a tool the City could use but added that it might be better to go the School District with smaller CRAs rather than the entire area.

Mayor Frost asked whether the closure of a part of Merchant Street was for parking. Randy Sant stated that the reason for closure was because they might be able to expand the parking across the street.

Council Member Barnes stated that his office was on this street. He pointed that many residents used that street to access the post office coming off of Pacific Drive. He pointed that closing this street might create more problems.

Randy Sant stated that when the work plan was to be created, he would recommend a parking analysis. He added that high density development usually included parking and explained there could be an opportunity to build additional parking to be used for other uses. He added that it was advisable to have commercial uses on the first and second level of these new developments. This, he added, would bring beneficial commercial uses.

Council Member Christiansen stated that people going to the Post Office would have a hard time turning East when going out onto Main Street and would thus turn on Pacific Drive. Randy Sant stated that there were some options they could look at, such as using Center Street. It was noted that in the past, there had been discussions of closing Church or Merchant Street and added that there had been major backlash. Randy Sant stated that this would be discussed during the parking analysis.

Council Member Carroll stated that they had some areas that would require commercial on the bottom floor and pointed that they were only requiring it on the main road. She asked whether there needed to be something similar in the whole area. Mr. Sant stated it was extremely important to have this on Main Street as it was required because of form-based code. He further commented that there were success stories such as Cottonwood Heights and Sugarhouse: it had taken time, but they had been successful.

Council Member Shelton asked about the identity of the property owners waiting. Randy Sant stated that it would be the developer unless the property owners got together and decided to do it. He explained that building the commercial space was not costly upfront, but that spaces needed to be cleaned up and prepared once tenants were ready to move in. He pointed that Mixed Use and the density it created allowed for a better rate to be retained thus lowering the cost.

Council Member Shelton argued that no developer or investor would go bankrupt building a project for a community but that when they had raw land vs. demolition/construction, the latter was more expensive. He continued that if the first floor was vacant and the building was no taller than three to four stories, the project became potentially economically unsound. He pointed that this particular project might be pushing things out until economics allowed them to take place. Randy Sant stated that higher buildings with higher density would help with costs and further added that developers would have commercial users willing to use the space. He continued when building mixed use in higher density, services for residents had to be provided. He continued that one of the most desired services was a grocery store, which was already present downtown. He stated that developers would take the position they could not lease the first floor but argued that they indeed could. He added that while they may not have 100% of leasing, they should get at least 50% occupancy. Mr. Sant gave another example in South Salt Lake that has found success.

Council Member Carroll stated she had asked the question about where commercial space would be required because she believed it was a moot point as Main Street was already entirely commercial. She pointed that rather than thinking of the development as one where commercial was added, it needed to be articulated as a commercial space where residential was added.

Randy Sant explained that when looking at the corner of 100 West and Main Street, commercial spaces in the upper floors might work as they would have good visibility and be accessible. He continued that there might be an issue with commercial development in medium density area. He restated that he was presenting a concept plan but pointed there may be developers wishing to add more floors. He added that the study looked at what was realistic but continued that there may be higher density projects. He explained that the Council should not worry so much about the number of stories but rather the number of feet in height. He pointed that 102 feet was an ideal footage to use.

Randy Sant stated this went back to the four parts of the strategic plan and added he hoped these things would help with the commitment section of the downtown. He continued that they needed to create clearly defined organization structures - whether it would be an individual or an organization assigned to help with this. He continued that an advisory board would be needed and that the Economic Development Board had been helpful. He concluded that the project would need to be promoted and a list of desired tenants formulated. Finally, he explained that there needed to be a strong and meaningful relationship with downtown landowners to develop meaningful public and private partnerships.

Todd Brightwell further explained the alignment and the sequencing of things. He reiterated the need to hire a qualified, full-time project manager, create an advisory committee, establish a toolbox, define commitment, etc. He continued that choosing qualified developers would help kick off the project properly. Ideally, he added, the organization of marketing materials would get the City to the success phase.

Todd Brightwell continued that they needed the Council to weigh in on the commitment level of the City to allow them to get to the next step.

Mayor Frost stated that no funds had been set aside in the budget for a full-time project manager. He added that they had talked about asking the Chamber of Commerce whether they could help or hire someone. David Bunker agreed that this was a big task; it was beyond the scope of what he, Adam Olsen or the Chamber of Commerce could handle. He pointed that the person in charge needed to be dedicated specifically to this task and would need to be someone with experience in bringing multiple groups together. He added that the plan was fragmented as it included many different owners and that a level of skill was necessary to bring every player together on this project.

Council Member Taylor stated this could not be anything but a full-time person as it was a herculean effort. He added that hiring a group might help but added that he wished to see one person being involved with the project in a significant way. Council Member Shelton stated that having one person dedicated to the project could work for all of economic development and pointed that this could work in conjunction with the Chamber, though such an arrangement had not worked well in the past.

Council Member Shelton continued that while cleaning his office, he had found documents that Dale Gunther had left when he exited as council member. Mr. Gunther, he explained, had been passionate about the downtown area and had talked about purchasing streetlights as a cost saving device for the City. He explained that he liked the idea of a smaller CRA to be presented to the School District. He continued that an investor who was interested in the opportunity zone area

had approached him and added that it would help to have a one-point person to ease communication.

Council Member Barnes asked about the realistic time frame from when the Council would decide to when they would see a building. He also asked about the commitment from the City. He explained that he saw several different places where the City would have to be involved in order to move forward, doing things such as hiring an individual and figuring out some infrastructure. He further asked about the kind of costs involved and how quickly the Council needed to budget. Finally, he asked about the ways in which the rest of the community would benefit and whether there would be a lot of disruptions for everyone.

Randy Sant stated the timing was the question. He explained he had seen projects happen within a year, but he had seen projects that had taken much longer. He continued that the key was identifying all that needed to be done, then having a committee or group that could begin talking about how to start. He explained that the needed tools had to be put in place and added that there were things that could help with the costs such as CRAs and the Opportunity Zone. If he were looking at this, he went on, he would not start by seeking a significant amount of funds from the City. He explained that studies might need to be funded but continued that no large expense should be sought. He continued that developers should be petitioned to create a partnership. He thought the Chamber would be great to work with in terms of promotional purposes and meeting with property owners. He pointed that in his experience, downtown had not been successful because there had not been the organization in place to put the work plan together. He added that they were looking to the City to identify a process and make it happen. Furthermore, he explained that the Council should go visit Ogden City or meet with that City as he gave an example of what had been done in Ogden. Having worked on the Ogden project, he described some of the hurdles that had been overcome. The key, he continued, was the commitment to move forward with the vision. He concluded that there were three key aspects: images to help move forward other developments, increased revenue with additional property tax, and sales tax. Some benefits, he pointed, would be monetary, while others were intangible.

Council Member Carroll asked whether the Council had already tried to hire an economic development director. Mayor Frost answered that there had been someone hired at some point but added that too many responsibilities had been placed on this person, and it had not worked well. Council Member Carroll asked whether they did see the option of an economic director as a viable one. She was told that it would be. Council Member Shelton stated that the City had had a part time economic developer at one time but had then hired a person to do both PR and Economic Development. He stated the farthest they had gone with the downtown project was with that individual and added that he liked that someone was responsible.

Council Member Carroll felt the City would benefit from an economic development director as there were a lot of moving parts and development happening. She added that Adam Olsen had played that role but that he had a lot of other duties occupying his time.

Council Member Shelton stated that what had not worked was that no one had been hired after the prior individual left. Mayor Frost stated that he had gone to a conference with this person. He added that economic developers in cities helped attract developers.

Randy Sant stated he felt it could transition as the City moved forward. He continued that economic development department could be made of one or many people with or without

consultants. He mentioned that all individuals on the board had to be involved and added that the most important step was for the City to make a commitment of dependable operational funding and present a plan. He continued that the City might find it needed to form other committees depending on the kind of help required. He further pointed that patience was important.

Council Member Shelton asked about the next step that needed to be taken. He also asked about the cost expended in form-based code. He mentioned that the next step might be a form-based code or getting a CRA and added that the City would get much of the development without a CRA. Randy Sant stated that the City could hold off on the CRA and start on the form-based code. He added that the City should hire someone to put the work plan together and that the CRA should come after that. He added that the City could create a project area in three months and that property owners would want to move forward with the process. He continued that the first step should not be the CRA.

Council Member Shelton stated that the CRA had been viewed as a major focal point. He added that he was concerned to put all resources in play if the City had business partners not willing to follow down that path. He continued that it was the School District that held the ability to help the City out: the City needed to know where the School District stood with this project as said project should be given the best chance of success. He mentioned that the City needed to make sure the District was comfortable. Randy Sant stated that the project manager could meet with the other taxing entities to build a positive relationship with them. Council Member Shelton stated that some of this work needed to be done before a project manager was hired. He stated that the interest level had to be gauged ahead of time.

Council Member Carroll stated that she did not want to ask for something only because the Council thought they could get a CRA. She stated she wanted to design something that residents wanted to see in the area. Council Member Shelton didn't disagree but added that developments twenty years prior were vastly different from what they were now. He added that without the CRA, the redevelopment plan might be vastly different. He explained that people needed to be partners and that the City should work with developers to get the project started. Council Member Carroll stated she did not want to have to rely on developers and have a plan beforehand.

Council Member Shelton asked what the chances of success would be if the City did not have a CRA. Todd Brightwell explained that they did not really know where the gap was, but they could do some of that work during the transition. He stated that a full-time individual would be helpful and added that he would assist in providing intelligence for the project. He continued that it was important to approach the School District and continued that bringing in the form-based code could help as it would allow to understand the cost.

Council Member Carroll stated the Council had been talking about adding a residential component to the area while never discussing redoing the code. She added that the City had a pretty unrestricted code as it was. Adam Olsen stated that with or without a form-based code, the City was looking at allowing residential uses in downtown. He continued that the downtown zone was quite liberal, and they saw that as an incentive. If the City opened this up, he continued, there could be some redevelopment in the downtown area. Mr. Olsen stated that there were two developers interested in residential uses downtown but pointed that until the code opened up, it would not be possible to allow residential uses. Full-time residents in the area, he continued, would help drive traffic to businesses. Randy Sant explained that a land use plan could be created with a new chapter expounding on some of the things they looked at in a form-based code. He

added that there were many things were required to create the work plan and subsequent steps necessary.

Randy Sant stated that he felt this should fall under the RDA and added that the person hired could work on this entity. The RDA, he continued, had a lot more flexibility when it came to acquisition of property and budgeting. He added that the RDA was independent: it could write its own policies and procedures and was independent of the City. This downtown development, he continued, should go under the RDA. He pointed that the key was the workplan and that it was the first thing that should be put together by the committee and project manager. Adam Olsen stated that there were two developers interested in residential uses downtown but pointed that until the code opened up, it would not be possible to allow residential uses. Full-time residents in the area, he continued, would help drive traffic to businesses. Randy Sant explained that a land use plan could be created with a new chapter stipulating the potential residential uses.

Council Member Shelton stated that he did not want to change the code until the City had a comprehensive plan in place. He further stated feeling more comfortable beginning with a form-based code rather than creating one after the development. Adam Olsen stated that the codes were there to allow commercial development and continued that this was to open up said codes to allow residential. He continued that this was not creating a new zone and was including only the downtown area.

Mayor Frost asked whether the Council wanted to find money for a project manager. David Bunker stated that as they brought someone on board, this person would need direction and guidance from the Council. He explained that he believed the code was a good thing to start with and added that the TOD was not off the table. He continued that the Council should also start exploring the CRA for downtown as they had approached the District in the past. He mentioned that the District would want to know what tax increment would be generated and pointed that the increment would have to be advantageous. He continued that the first step would be to look at the code.

Council Member Carroll stated that she agreed with this assessment and wanted the priority to be a change in the code. Council Member Shelton stated there might be a difference of definitions between Council Member Carroll and himself but pointed that the Council had to have a plan in place. He discussed some of the details which he believed should be part of a concrete plan. Council Member Carroll stated that the area was limited: three blocks. She added that what Council Member Shelton was describing was use-based. Adam Olsen pointed that the changes would be confined to a small area. Council Member Shelton stated that he wished to see exactly what the zone consisted of. Council Member Carroll stated that developers could work any of the uses listed in that area but added that the City could restrict things on specific streets. She added that if a developer wished to build a commercial building in a residential area, she did not believe the Council should refuse the demand: she advocated for openness.

Council Member Shelton stated that if the City did not have a good concept plan in place, it would only end up with high density housing. David Bunker stated that the plan was what Advisors Consultants had started doing for the City and that said plan would be the backbone of the project.

Council Member Christiansen stated that the City needed have a good idea of who they wanted to hire as the right person should be believed in the same concept and be willing to promote it.

David Bunker stated that the Council could learn from other cities and could do some homework on what had been done well and what had caused struggles.

Council Member Taylor stated that the developer had poured lots of money in developments and had drawn many people. Randy Sant explained that the key was that Ogden City had gone through something similar to what American Fork needed to do. He went on to explain that Ogden had to have a vision and a plan before anyone could start implementing said plan. He added that once the City had this, it could go find partnerships. He added that this was all part of the process they were recommending: economic restructuring was not only building new but changing and implementing what the Council and community would like to see downtown.

Council Member Taylor stated that American Fork was on a different footing than Ogden: they were a great example, but they were not in the same situation as American Fork did not have huge factories and stores to carry the project. He pointed to what American Fork did have. He continued that the Council needed to get something going by either getting in the pool or out. He mentioned that the City needed to start investigating options, come up with the finances, and hire an individual. He concluded that the Council could figure out zoning but that unless they were in, they were wasting time.

John Woffinden stated that he agreed that the Council needed to look at other cities as examples.

Mayor Frost stated that the City should move forward and let Adam Olsen work with the Planning Commission on a residential component to see how Planning came up. Council Member Carroll stated she agreed. Council Member Barnes agreed that Planning should look at the code but added he also wanted to have individual conversations with other council members because of his lack of knowledge and experience. He added that tonight's conversation had brought up many other questions. Council Member Christiansen stated she was not ready to make up her mind as of yet. She added that having the Planning Commission look at the situation was a great start. Council Member Shelton explained that adding a residential component gave him heartburn. He continued that he would be open to looking at what changes could be made to make downtown successful and not restrict the addition of residential. Council Member Taylor explained that he felt the Council needed to start somewhere so he was okay with this. He added he was also in favor of bringing on a full-time employee.

Council Member Barnes stated he was not prepared to bring on a full-time person as he did not understand the need for one. Council Member Carroll explained she was okay with hiring someone but would like to see more information on the options of hiring an employee versus hiring a consultant. Council Member Taylor stated he was talking about a staff member. Council Member Christiansen explained that she approved of taking a look to hiring an individual. Council Member Shelton mentioned that first, he would have liked to see the zone in place. He stated that the first step would be to get zoning aligned and then hire someone.

Mayor Frost stated that the Council could start by defining the job responsibilities and move the code along with a residential component.

Todd Brightwell explained he appreciated the work done and felt there had been some progress. He added that his group was committed to providing the Council with more data.

Mayor Frost thanked everyone.

2. Adjourn.

The work session adjourned at 6:05 p.m.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Terilyn Lurker".

Terilyn Lurker, City Recorder