

METROPOLITAN COUNCIL
390 North Robert Street, St. Paul, Minnesota 55101

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Wednesday, May 2, 2012

3:30 p.m.

Members Present: Chair Susan Haigh, Steven Chávez, Jon Commers, John Đoàn, Steve Elkins, Richard Kramer, Jennifer Munt, Sandra Rummel, Roxanne Smith, Gary Van Eyll, Lona Schreiber

Members Absent: Wendy Wulff, Gary Cunningham, James Brimeyer, Harry Melander, Adam Duininck, Edward Reynoso

CALL TO ORDER

A quorum being present, Chair Haigh called the Committee of the Whole to order at 3:36PM on Wednesday, May 2, 2012.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

It was moved by Rummel, seconded by Commers to approve the agenda for the meeting of May 2, 2012. **Motion Carried**

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

It was moved by Smith, seconded by Van Eyll to approve the minutes for the meeting of April 18, 2012. **Motion Carried**

1. Regional Development Framework Update – Framing Presentations

- Center of the American Experiment: Kim Crockett, Chief Operating Officer and Peter Nelson, Director of Public Policy
Center of the American Experiment is a non-partisan, tax-exempt, public policy and education institute that brings conservative and free market ideas to bear on the hardest problems facing Minnesota and the nation. Their three main recommendations were:
 - 1) Balance local control with the Met Council's regional coordinating and planning activities.
 - 2) Focus on coordinating and supporting local planning and naturally occurring growth.
 - 3) The central goal of the transportation system should be to move the most people and goods at the least cost.Crockett recommended that the Met Council give cities flexibility to make their own planning decisions, but also hold cities accountable for the long term costs of their decisions. The Council should also provide an easy and transparent process for local governments to amend their comprehensive plans to respond to new realities.

Nelson stated that cities and counties should be in charge of economic revitalization efforts, and the Met Council should be in charge of coordinating these efforts to make sure they're not stepping over each other, but cities should be in charge of these efforts.

CM Elkins asked for clarification on how the current blueprint makes it difficult to establish preference for safety. Nelson and Crockett stated that safety is an important part of an individual's (or family's) decision to settle somewhere and should not be overlooked in the blueprint.

CM Elkins asked whether the Center had looked at how local zoning controls interfere with the market. Crockett responded that the Center has been very focused on the legislative session, but local zoning controls have not been in any recent studies.

CM Schreiber stated that the Center's recommendations seemed to focus on the Council's relationship with cities, and asked whether they had looked at the Council's relationships with counties. She stated that CTIB is the driver when it comes to transit-related decisions, and they have a model that uses city input. She asked whether the Center is familiar with that model/relationship. Crockett said she is familiar with it from her work as a councilwoman on the City Council in Deephaven, MN, but has not closely examined it.

CM Chavez asked to view the slide for the first recommendation again. He inquired about the spirit of the following phrase from the slide: "...the institution is not structured to be responsive to the concerns of local communities." Nelson stated that the spirit is not to say that the Council is not responsive to communities, but the institutional structure itself was what was being referred to as the Council members are unelected and therefore do not have an obligation to the people as legislatures do to their constituents.

CM Munt thanked Crockett and Nelson for their presentation and said she has read their policy blueprint, much of which she disagrees. She asked if they agree with five of the regional chambers that light rail is key to our economic vitality and whether they support \$25 million for the SWLRT in the bonding bill. Nelson noted that the policy blueprint is about a decade old, and that they do not agree that rail transit is a good investment in most cases, and no they do not support the \$25 million bonding bill for SWLRT.

Chair Haigh thanked Crockett and Nelson for their recommendations, and Crockett thanked the Council for their service.

- Cornerstone Group: Colleen Carey, President
Carey thanked the Council for the opportunity to speak and expressed her gratitude for the support her organization has received from the Council.
Carey's five main recommendations for the Council:
 - make sure the table is set for development and growth in our region
Carey said she believes it is government's job to set the table and create a great, livable place that will attract companies and people. She expressed her strong support of light rail. She gave the example of the Prospect Park project that has to be redeveloped.

--focus on the importance of private/public partnerships in making things happen

Carey stated that as the Council moves through the framework process, they should listen to the business community since they likely have a strong interest in discussing on how growth happens in our region. She said public/private partnerships means looking at new models for how we get things done.

--figure out a way to make it easier to do the right thing

--invest where it matters most

--figure out how to do affordable housing in a new way

Carey recommended having affordable housing as a piece of many different projects, and not necessarily 100% affordable housing.

CM Elkins asked for clarification on Carey's statement that there are funding options which are no longer on the market. Carey stated that there are many investment funds that are no longer investing, from an equity standpoint, in these types of projects. Lenders have changed how they do things, so banks have changed the products and options they offer. She stated that equity has gone away and banks have dramatically changed their lending processes.

CM Smith stated that some of the developers she has worked with on affordable housing have said that some of the programs that are federally funded are the stopping blocks that require the 100% affordability. Carey responded that she could not think of what those programs would be, but she believes there is more than one obstacle.

Chair Haigh asked if the equity investor is a position Carey sees going into the next decade. Carey said she has been talking to other people in other markets who are saying they have been able to address it and there are models for it in other markets.

CM Munt thanked Carey for her work along CCLRT.

CM Elkins stated that the last time he spoke with a developer he was told that banks were requiring unprecedented levels of equity for loans for multi-family housing.

Chair Haigh thanked Carey for her presentation.

Panel

- Repa Mekha, Executive Director, Nexus Community Partners; CET member of the CoO Policy Board
- Asad Aliweyd, Executive Director, New American Academy
- Rick Cardenas, Executive Director, Advocating Change Together
- Anne White, District Councils Collaborative Governing Council

Repa Mekha is the Chair of the Community Engagement Team on the Corridors of Opportunity Policy Board. Corridors of Opportunity is a Metropolitan Council led board that works on creating vibrant, sustainable, healthy communities using our region's emerging transit way system as a focus, as well as promoting affordable housing, access to jobs, economic development, entrepreneurship, and environmental preservation. The project is funded by a HUD grant and a Living Cities grant. The Corridors of

Opportunity includes a community engagement component, which is led by three community-based organizations: The Alliance for Metropolitan Stability, The Minnesota Center for Neighborhood Organizing, and Nexus Community Partners. Two of the seven activities in the strategy are about the re-granting of \$750,000 to community-based organizations to support engagement, specifically toward under-represented communities around transit corridor planning, decision-making, and benefits.

Asad Aliweyd is the Executive Director of the New American Academy, which was established to serve the needs, issues, and challenges of the ever growing immigrant population in the southwestern suburbs. The NAA has been reaching out and connecting its members while helping them adjust to their new lives, new language, and new social institutions in American society. The NAA received a grant from the Corridors of Opportunity, which has made it possible for them to operate. They have held several meetings to educate the immigrant and low income population in the Southwest area on the SWLRT project. Aliweyd asked that the Metropolitan Council become a leader in community engagement for the low income and immigrant communities.

Rick Cardenas is the co-director of Advocating Change Together, whose goal is to increase participation of persons with disabilities in the decision making bodies of the metro area. Advocating Change Together provides leadership training to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Cardenas stated the CCLRT will open many new opportunities to individuals with disabilities, many of whom are transit dependent. The Corridors of Opportunity has given ACT a chance to speak with various organizations and persons with disabilities along the CCLRT. Cardenas urged the Metropolitan Council to consider persons of color, immigrants, and persons with disabilities when creating their regional framework.

Anne White is on the District Councils Collaborative Governing Council which is a collaborative that is comprised of all the district councils and neighborhood organizations in St. Paul and Minneapolis along the Central Corridor line. The Council was established in 2006 to ensure the voices of the people in the neighborhoods along the line would be heard as the planning for CCLRT moved forward and to keep the neighborhoods informed. White stated that she hoped the invitation to address the Met Council signaled the Met Council's recognition of the importance of setting new goals and developing new processes for community engagement. To do so effectively, White recommended making a plan to develop standards and strategies and include communities in drafting new goals and suggested processes. White stated their recommendation for the 2040 plan is that it should highlight the importance of developing more robust and inclusive community engagement processes, it should stress the importance of equitable outcomes, and it should cite examples of successful community engagement. Her organization also recommended setting up a joint Met Council community engagement working group to develop a set of principles, priorities, and best practices and

desired outcomes for community engagement. To be successful, the working group should have equal representation of Met Council members and community members, a jointly-developed charter, a work plan, and operating procedures. She also recommended re-structuring the community and business advisory committees to more fully engage the communities.

CM Munt stated that when asking questions about equity, she usually asks herself “who benefits?” and “who decides?” and asked the panel what other questions the Council should be asking when putting an equity lens on decision making.

Mekha answered that the other question should be about sustainability and how do we ensure that those benefits are anchored.

Cardenas stated that “who aren’t we asking?” should also be a question.

Chair Haigh thanked the panelists for their input.

- NAIOP-Commercial Real Estate Development Association: Frank Dutke, President and CEO of United Properties

Dutke thanked the Met Council for the opportunity to speak. NAIOP is a development association that consists of over 700 members in the Twin Cities, including developers, owners, and service providers to the real estate industry. The real estate industry is in the overbuilt phase of their cycle, meaning the supply of buildings greatly exceeds the demand. This also means that development of new office, industrial, and retail space is not economically feasible. At this time, the cost of rent does not support the cost of new construction. Dutke stated that the industry is in recovery, but the outlook is that it will be a very slow and modest recovery and the next development cycle is not in sight. Many factors are negatively impacting the industry, including high construction costs, weak job creation, and population demographics that are not favorable.

Dutke’s recommendations for the 2040 framework included efficiency in government, streamlining, and cost reduction. Livable communities should attract and retain workers, and private and public organizations should increase collaboration to find optimal cost effective solutions.

Minimal Impact Design Standards (MIDS) task force was funded by the legislature a few years ago to create storm water regulations for municipalities and watershed districts to adopt. There are 40 individuals on this task force, 38 from government and 2 from the private sector.

Dutke recommended flexibility in regulations to increase the number of possible development projects. Dutke asked the Metropolitan Council to make an effort to understand the market conditions that drive the commercial real estate industry and understand the impact that those market conditions have on decisions to invest.

CM Rummel asked Dutke for an example of increasing flexibility in regulations. Dutke stated that regulations for storm water retention require a minimum level of retention, but they do not take into account the conditions of the soil.

CM Đoàn asked Dutke whether the Council should be planning for fewer period trips with the increase in employers allowing workers to work from home and/or allowing for more flexible work schedules due to increased mobile technology. Dutke stated that yes, in his opinion the market shift will translate into fewer workers commuting during regular rush hour times. CM Elkins stated that storm water is primarily a federal mandate and regulations may be interpreted differently by various cities. He asked whether there was anything Dutke thought the Met Council could do to help out with that. Dutke stated that he believes it is primarily the way municipalities interpret the regulations and the MIDS task force will be working on that.

- Minnesota State Council on Disability: Joan Willshire, Executive Director Willshire stated that people with disabilities currently make up 20% of the national population, so we should anticipate adding 200,000 people with disabilities by the year 2030; 52% of people over the age of 65 have a disability. People with disabilities share many characteristics with the aging community, so both communities will benefit from the specialized services that are being developed. 27.8% of people with disabilities are employed, compared to 70.4% of people without a disability. Transportation is one of the keys to gaining employment. Willshire recommended increasing development of light rail and commuter systems, maintaining accessible bus systems, increasing funding and fleet sizes for Metro Mobility, and develop a one stop call system. She stressed the importance of developing affordable, accessible housing along the transit corridors, as well as developing more accessible green areas.

Panel

- Kevin Lindsey, Commissioner, Minnesota Department of Human Rights
- Ilean Her, Executive Director, Council on Asian-Pacific Minnesotans
- Donovan Bailey, Chair, Council on Black Minnesotans
- Hector Garcia, Executive Director, Chicano Latino Affairs Council

Commissioner Lindsey expressed his appreciation for the opportunity to address the Metropolitan Council and thanked the Council for listening to the other Councils on color and disability.

Bailey recommended having a multicultural mission and emphasis and intentionality. He also recommended respecting the various cultures in metro neighborhoods as projects are planned and executed.

Garcia stated that minorities make up 15% of the state's population, of which Latinos make up 5%. He stressed the importance of bridging the gap between the marginalized populations, establishing partnerships, and tapping into resources.

Her provided the Council with an educational DVD that highlights the changing demographics in Minnesota and the practices of Muslim, Hmong, Buddhism,

and Hindu religions. She also shared a book created by Asian-American youth, as well as the State of Asian-Pacific Minnesotans booklet which is a compilation of data from the census 2010 and the most recent American survey. Her stated that there is at least one Asian-Pacific person in every county in Minnesota.

CM Munt asked the panel what the Met Council can do to create opportunities for everyone to prosper.

Garcia stated that it is important to make legislatures and government entities aware of the opportunities and benefits that immigrant and minority communities can bring to the table.

OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

Business completed, the meeting adjourned at 5:47PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Emily Randleman
Recording Secretary