



City of Aurora

2nd Floor Council
Chambers
44 East Downer Place
Aurora, Illinois 60505
www.aurora-il.org

Aurora Riverwalk Commission Meeting Minutes

Wednesday
February 21, 2018
6:00 PM

Special Joint Meeting with FoxWalk Overlay District Design Review Committee

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Truax called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

ROLL CALL

The following Riverwalk Commission members were present: Bill Catching, Jeff Palmquist, John Sullivan and Charlie Zine. Ed Barsotti and Mike Saville called in and excused themselves from the meeting. Bob Reuland, John Savage and David Zine were absent.

OTHERS PRESENT

The following Design Review Committee members were present: Clara Diaz, Kevin Ream, Don Truax and Charlie Zine. John Jaros and Bob Reuland were absent.

The following staff members were present: Ed Sieben, Stephane Phifer, Ken Schroth and Ian Wade.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- 18-0137** Approval of the Minutes for the Aurora Riverwalk Commission meeting on June 26, 2014.
A motion was made by Mr. Palmquist, seconded by Mr. Sullivan, that the minutes be approved and filed. The motion carried by voice vote.
- 18-0143** Approval of the Minutes for the Aurora Riverwalk Commission meeting on December 10, 2015.
A motion was made by Mr. Palmquist, seconded by Mr. Sullivan, that the minutes be approved and filed. The motion carried by voice vote.
- 18-0144** Approval of the Minutes for the Aurora Riverwalk Commission meeting on December 15, 2016.
A motion was made by Mr. Palmquist, seconded by Mr. Sullivan, that the minutes be approved and filed. The motion carried by voice vote.

18-0145 Approval of the Minutes for the Aurora Riverwalk Commission meeting on December 14, 2017.

A motion was made by Mr. Palmquist, seconded by Mr. Sullivan, that the minutes be approved and filed. The motion carried by voice vote.

AGENDA

18-0138 Approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness for renovation of Water Street Mall located between Galena Boulevard and Downer Place (City of Aurora - 18-0138 / AU22/3-18.013-FCOA - ES - Ward 2)

I'm Stephane Phifer. I'm going to sort of start off on behalf of Ken Schroth, Public Works Director and Ian Wade, our Project Engineer, so the Design Engineer for the project. Just to give you an overview, and then if you have any specific questions with regard to the design, they would be happy to help you and answer your questions as well. So just to kind of break the project down, one of the first goals of this project and this phase is really just an infrastructure project. There will be some additional embellishments and things that can happen as we move forward, but really what we wanted to do first and foremost, and it is kind of listed out in your memo, is replace all the existing hardscape. There is a lot of dangerous pavement out there, a lot of trip hazards. As you know, we had a very successful Harry Potter fest out there last year and that really opened the eyes to the city as well as the residents that this is really a great place for a venue for more events. However, it made us a little nervous given all of the different pavement types and the different pavement levels out there and so what we really wanted to do first and foremost is make it a safe environment for more events. So that's really the first goal of this project. In the 2018 budget, there was a line item approved setting money aside to come back through and redo Water Street Mall. The second one is really, again, to open it up so there can be more open space, so get rid of some of the impediments to really being able to have more events in the space, so moving around some of the street lights and those types of things, and then making it a lot brighter. So you'll notice that there are a lot of things that we are doing with the lights that I'll go through to really make it a lot more inviting for events and to make it a much more inviting space in general. The next thing is the trees. The trees have been there for quite some time. They are actually at this point a little unhealthy, very unhealthy. There's actually some worry about those themselves being a bit of a hazard, and so really trying to take a look at the landscaping and putting in appropriate landscaping, again, making sure that there is beautification, but really making sure that it can be conducive for events and making the mall more useful. The next element that we are really looking at is to really create more of a unique character, so you'll see the patterns. What we are trying to do with the brick is really create a little bit of a parkway and really kind of close in the space a little bit and make it feel like a street again, so we definitely want to make sure that it is still a pedestrian mall and it is a pedestrian area, but you'll see in the rendering too we really wanted to get back to that quaintness feel of the storefronts on the street and have it be more of a walkable walkway. So you can see that we are trying to add some elements, again, to make it feel more like a walkable pedestrian street putting in the curb return around the landscaped islands, putting in the band of brick to really make it feel like it is a separation of a parkway between those facades and the actual walkway. That's the place where we can have outdoor seating, a place where they can put up the signage and things to really make it feel a little bit more homey. Then you can see the sting of lights above the top that really, again, trying to get more brightness, but also create a sense of place and a sense of quaintness to it. You'll also see we've proposed maybe

some awnings and some other building façade improvements. Again, those are for future elements, but it really opens up that there are all kinds of opportunities in order to really make the whole space a lot more inviting. So that's sort of our overarching goals. Then I'm going to go over just the specifics of the layout itself. There are a number of landscaped islands that would be introduced, whereas, right now out on the mall it is really more just the individual trees and then there is brick that go around the base of the trees. We're actually proposing, actually introducing, landscaped islands, again, to try to make it feel like it is a little more of a quaint streetscape. We would be introducing a landscaped island similar to the ones that are on the Galena end of the Water Street Mall at the Downer Place Water Street Mall. We also think that this will actually be a nice viewpoint into the mall, as well as provide for a nice view of City Hall to have some landscaping out front. Then we are proposing to replace the trees that are along what's the Alderman's office building with a full landscaped island that would be big enough to have the 2 street lights and then landscaping in the middle. Again, you see that line of brick. That is the same brick that's throughout the downtown, so that is keeping a consistent look and feel with the Riverwalk. We do want to make it connect to Mundy Park. Right now if you look out there, it really is just a straight line. You've just got a line in the grass that delineates from Mundy Park into Water Street Mall. The idea was really to connect the two and make them feel like all one space, so bringing that brick with an archway into Mundy Park really draws your eye and draws the attention into Mundy Park itself and then doing the same thing with coming out. We are also extending that green area into Water Street Mall slightly, again, to try to have a better transition between Mundy Park and Water Street, so that's this area here. So there would still be the line of brick, but adding, sort of extending that green space. Then we are looking at doing a much larger landscaped island that's actually against the Annex that you are in right now. If you've ever taken a look at City Hall, the Annex building does not look quite as nice as the original building, so what we are trying to do here is really soften that façade a little bit, so this is a fairly extensive island that would block some of the façade of the building and we are actually looking at the potential of putting in a green wall, so having landscaping with a trellis that goes all the way up the side of the building, again, in order to create that sense of space, create some unique spaces as you're walking through the site, but there are also things that are on the exterior, so that again, we are really opening it up for events, but still making it an appealing destination when there are not events going on. Again, this is large enough to put in trees, landscaping and shrubs to have it be a lot more of an extensive landscaping that's there now. As you go down, again the same idea, taking out the impediments as you go down so we can use the entire site for events and then putting in another landscaped island on the very north end, again, replacing those trees with a full landscaped island against the building, which is 1 S. Broadway. Then you can see where the brick comes in and then curves back through. When I talk about the little parkway, what that does is this area between the building and the brick really kind of creates its own sense of a sidewalk, even though it is not truly a change in grade, but it creates a sense of a sidewalk out in front of those buildings that they can use and really feel like they are part of their façade. The rest of the balance of that is just proposed to be a standard concrete. Again, we are really looking to make it a simple space that's very conducive to events, but also adding those little pieces of flair so there is a sense of space as it goes through the site. So that kind of walks you through the improvements themselves. As far as timing, as I said we did get money in the budget for 2018 using TIF dollars to come in and do this project, but the goal is to have it ready because we have Harry Potter Fest again coming up the first week in June. So we are on a very tight schedule, so that's the reason we appreciate your time tonight in doing this special meeting to review the plans because we do want to get it out to bid so we can have it ready and open for business before the Harry Potter Fest in June. So happy to answer any questions. If there are more technical questions,

obviously, the Engineers can do that as well.

Mr. Sullivan said I have a couple of questions from looking at this and reading up on it. So the ribbon pavers are going to be just like 16 inches?

Ms. Phifer said it is the same that we have in the sidewalks.

Mr. Sullivan said and those curbs aren't going to be real tall as a trip hazard or anything like that?

Ms. Phifer said we are very concerned about that. We're still figuring out exactly what the height of the curbs are going to be, but if it isn't a full high curb, we're actually looking at putting in some ornamental fencing, some knee high fencing, so again so that we are not having a trip hazard and to maybe keep people out of the landscaping itself.

Mr. Sullivan said I guess two other things that struck me was if these are going to be 4 by 4 cutouts of the pavers, then in counting them going across you're going to have the two light poles right here and then at the other end you are over 300 feet without anything more than your hanging lights. Is that really what you want to do? Then secondly on those hanging lights, it said from the second stories of the buildings, but it was drawn at the ceiling line of the first stories.

Ms. Phifer said we haven't completely determined where the level of the lights are going to be. We are going to have to look at the buildings and see where it is the most appropriate place to connect those, but it will be somewhere in the second story level is what we are intending. The brightness of these lights is actually fairly extensive, so we're actually worried with having the overhead that if we put too many other light fixtures in there we were actually going to make it almost too bright. Then the other concern was really making sure that we were having a clear span area in order to set up tents and the like. So we did limit the number of light fixtures that are there. We do have the ability to go back in and add more, so if we do find that we need to do that there is the electrical and everything there so that we can do that.

Mr. Sullivan said so to make it more of a draw with more lights.

Ms. Phifer said yes, and these can be programmed with color too so we can do so really fun things with that as well.

Mr. Truax said that must mean that they are LED lights?

Ms. Phifer said yes.

Mr. Palmquist said is the scoring pattern locked in that ridged geometry or will there be some variety when you do the final (inaudible), whether it's where the Mundy Park opens up or along this wall or is it planned just to keep that square throughout?

Ms. Phifer said there still the ability to make changes to the grid pattern. We haven't 100% finalized that. We are open to suggestions. We are looking for it to be 5 by 5, which is in keeping with what is at RiverEdge Park, so we were really trying to mirror that installation because we think that turned out pretty nice. But as far as where those final cuts go is certainly that we can still take and put it on if there are comments.

Mr. Palmquist said any chance you could throw the asphalt path in Mundy as an alternate?

Ms. Phifer said we are coming a little bit into the park. So Mundy Park, because that is a good question, hopefully you are aware the Fox Valley Music Foundation is going into the old Salvation Army building and they actually do want to do some modifications to Mundy Park. They are actually intending on putting an overhead door facing out onto the park so that they can do events. So we will be working with them to follow up and do improvements to Mundy Park to make it more conducive as well.

Mr. Palmquist said that was my point. Thank you. It is going to be a nice facelift here and then it is very abrupt and not the best way, so that really sounds great.

Ms. Phifer said yes and we are definitely going to have to rework some landscaping. We may have to do some grading, but first we wanted to see really what their vision was for the site and then we are going to come back through and do that.

Mr. Palmquist said well I can see how this could be an easy (inaudible).

Mr. Truax said I did walk Mundy Park and it is in pretty bad shape. Is there any plan to replace it all, not just the first 10 feet?

Ms. Phifer said at this point, the dollars that we have, because there is a substantial amount of work that needs to happen for safety reasons in Water Street Mall itself, this is what we have budgeted for this year. We are working, actually, to do a landscape plan for both Mundy Park and this site and so we'll get costs for both of them and then we'll see what kind of dollars we have left. So if we don't have enough money in 2018 to do those improvements, the plan is to be able to ask for that money in 2019 so we can follow up fairly quickly with that.

Mr. Truax said and you'll come back to all of us when you have a plan?

Ms. Phifer said yes.

Mr. Zine said are the planted areas just regular gardens or are they rain gardens? How do we deal with drainage there?

Mr. Schroth said that's a good question. Because of the basements associated with every single building, we're not able to make them rain gardens, so they are just elevated planting beds. As far as drainage, we've got a storm sewer on Downer that can be extended up and then a storm sewer on Galena that's going to be extended south to put in some yard type drains throughout that concrete.

Mr. Zine said that's part of the plan?

Mr. Schroth said yes.

Mr. Zine said what about the other alley by the Nichols-Bielman Building? Is that like a placeholder for now?

Ms. Phifer said again, I think we're going to look at both of these sort of accessory parks. The reason I kind of mentioned, right now there is a light pole that's right in the center of this pathway coming through, so we showed removing that. We actually see the ability to possibly put a stage here and treat that back end as sort of the back of

house and be able to have a whole event space in front of here, but again, I think we are going to come back and look at both of these sort of accessory parks and see how we can enhance those as well.

Mr. Sullivan said the blend in from Mundy Park, that's going to be at grade level? It's not going to have a curb around it, correct?

Ms. Phifer said correct.

Mr. Sullivan said and then some of the refuge through there, I've seen some big dumpsters getting hauled to Galena and stuff. Where are they going to end up at?

Ms. Phifer said that's a very good question. The city actually, recently, closed on the building that does still have the dumpsters out there, so we are actually looking at having a program. We are actually looking at a pilot program for all of the downtown to see if we can have a little more coordinated effort on refuse collection. However, this would sort of be our pilot. We definitely want to have it not have those dumpsters on Water Street is the goal. That's one of the other reasons I kind of talked about the aesthetic reasons why we are putting in this island on Downer and Water Street, but the other big reason is to try to deter traffic from going in there. Right now we have the bollards that don't really work. We are actually getting rid of the bollards. So there will still be the ability on the southern half of this drawing on the east side of the street to still get vehicles in here, because we do need to still get vehicles in there for both life safety and for setting up events. We would not intend for this to be something that would be a regular occurrence. The other thing that we've talked about, and already had conversations with the Mayor's office about, is that once we do this very large investment, we don't want anybody parking on this site. So the city employees and the contractors and all the people who are right now using it as a parking lot are going to need to be told that that's not an option because we are going to put in all this new great concrete and we don't want people driving on it.

Mr. Zine said are you going to keep the Zagster station there?

Ms. Phifer said yes, at this point yes.

Mr. Truax said I did walk the mall tonight. I noticed a couple things and I'm just curious. One, it looks like there is a cable running from City Hall to the Alderman's office. The pictures don't show it. Are you going to put it down?

Mr. Schroth said that's a good question. We have to identify what that cable is and maybe can put it underground or maybe can abandon it altogether because I thought it had to do with Internet connectivity years ago, and I think they are directly connected to our fiber in another way. We'll research that. It is a good question.

Mr. Truax said the other thing I noticed is the situation with several of the buildings. I know we are not dealing with the buildings, but I noticed there are a couple abandoned fire escapes on a couple of buildings and also a ladder that goes from the roof to the second floor and stops. Is there anything outside of design review, which this is really not anything to do with design review, that we can do to improve that look?

Ms. Phifer said so just a sneak peak, we are working on coming up with a new sort of district, the International Marketplace District. If you saw in the Downtown Master Plan, it called for really looking at Water Street and Broadway and creating an International Marketplace District. We are in the very beginning stages of coming up

with some different ideas for how to treat the aesthetics for that area and we would be coming through Design Review Committee to sort of get an approval on a package of what would that whole area look like. We are also hoping that we might potentially be able to do the same kind of light treatment once we can show what it looks like possibly over all of Broadway. So there are some other things that we're kind of doing a pilot here, but yes, I think there is a lot more we can do with the buildings. There is a lot more we can do with signage and awnings. We are going to be looking to come back with a whole package for the Design Review Committee to consider with regard to an aesthetic for the whole corridor here.

Mr. Truax said first of all, I'd like to thank you for doing this. This is really going to improve dramatically the look of the Water Street Mall and I think that's great. I hope we can continue as you talked about to do a lot of the other things that sort of improve more than just the Water Street Mall, but also the buildings and the parks and walkways. Thank you very much.

Mr. Sieben said this is a FoxWalk COA, so this would be basically, I guess, an endorsement or any comments for approval from the Committee.

Mr. Truax said is there a motion to approve the COA?

MOTION OF APPROVAL WAS MADE BY: Bill Catching

MOTION SECONDED BY: Kevin Ream

AYES: Bill Catching, Jeff Palmquist, John Sullivan, Charlie Zine, Clara Diaz, Kevin Ream, Don Truax

NAYS: None

A motion was made by Mr. Catching, seconded by Mr. Ream, that this agenda item be approved. The motion carried by voice vote.

PENDING

ANNOUNCEMENTS

ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Mr. Zine, seconded by Mrs. Diaz, that the meeting be adjourned. The motion carried by voice vote. Mr. Truax adjourned the meeting at 6:25 p.m.

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