

**COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
MINUTES**

The Community Development Committee of the Willmar City Council met on Monday, December 14, 2020, by means of GoToMeeting.

<i>Present:</i>	Rick Fagerlie	Chair
	Vicki Davis	Council Member
	Shawn Mueske	Council Member
	Kathy Schwantes	Council Member

Others Present

Dave Ramstad, Director of Planning and Development Services
Sarah Swedburg, City Planner
Robert Scott, City Attorney
Shelby Lindrud, West Central Tribune

Item No. 1 Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 5:15 p.m.

Item No. 2 Roll Call

Item No. 3 Discussion Items

- a. Proposed Termination of Tax Abatement Agreement with Rockstep, LLC (For Information Only)

City Attorney Scott presented an overview of the Tax Abatement Agreement between the City and Rockstep, LLC (Rockstep). Mr. Scott then presented a request made by the County for the City to terminate its Agreement between the City and Rockstep. The County and School Board will also be pursuing termination as part of the County's settlement with Rockstep. The original Tax Abatement Agreement was approved by the City of Willmar in 2016, to which all three taxing jurisdictions participated. A 10-year abatement term was approved by the City in return for Rockstep's completion of about \$5 million dollars of improvements on the Uptown Mall property (formerly known as the Kandi Mall). There have been ongoing legal challenges regarding the tax valuation of the Uptown Mall for a number of years and, to date, Rockstep has not received any abatement refunds from the City. Attorney Scott is seeking information and clarifications from the County, and was hopeful to have more information by the December 21st Council Meeting.

Item No. 4 Action Items

- a. Blue Cross Blue Shield Welcoming Resolution Public Art Agreements (Resolutions - 2)

Staff presented an overview and history of the partnership with Blue Cross Blue Shield (BCBS) Healthy Together Willmar. Staff was approached by Wendy Foley, from BCBS, as they are ending their five-year partnership in Willmar. BCBS liked Willmar's Artists on Main Street work and found that the program aligned well with their values as an organization. As a parting gift to the City, BCBS has partnered with Willmar Main Street for the creation of two public art pieces (a mural and a sculpture) that visualize the City's Welcoming Resolution. A total of six applications were received. Staff presented Willmar Main Street's recommendation for the two artists to enter into agreements for the creation and installation of these public art pieces. BCBS donated \$27,000 for this project: \$15,000 for the sculpture artist, \$10,000 for the mural artist, and \$2,000 for administrative/program costs. Staff sought two motions from the Committee for the City to adopt the Resolutions authorizing the Mayor and City Administrator to enter into contracts with Lili Lennox and James Church for the Mural & Sculpture, respectively.

Motion was made by Councilmember Mueske, seconded by Councilmember Schwantes to recommend adoption of the resolution authorizing the Mayor and City Administrator to enter into the "Welcoming

Resolution Mural Artist Service Contract” with Lili Lennox.

The motion passed.

Motion was made by Councilmember Schwantes, seconded by Councilmember Mueske to recommend adoption of the resolution authorizing the Mayor and City Administrator to enter in to the “Welcoming Resolution Sculpture Artist Service Contract” with James Church.

The motion passed.

Item No. 5 Future Agenda Items

None.

Item No. 6 Department Updates

Staff presented updates on the Willmar Comp Plan package and proposed future formation of a Comp Plan Task Force. Progress is being made and staff is hoping that after the first of the year they will be able to request that the task force be formed.

Staff also mentioned that the City Planner will be coordinating with the HRA and the Main Street Board to administer the new Renaissance Zone Storefront Incentive, which will be active after the first of the year, and funded by grants administered by the HRA.

Staff reported that fact sheets are being developed for the Planning Commission that will describe buildings within the Renaissance Zone that staff believe are historically significant to Willmar, so that the Planning Commission may establish an eligibility-list for the new voluntary Heritage-Designation Program. Once the eligibility list is adopted, staff will send those property owners a letter and information on the benefits of the program and how the owner(s) may voluntarily register their property in the Heritage Program. It was also mentioned that in 2022, staff hope to present a proposal to expand the storefront incentive to the Heritage Program.

Staff also mentioned that new software for the City Planner were included in the 2021 budget that would greatly enhance the Planner’s capabilities with 3D modeling and HUB website for public interface with the department and its various initiatives.

Staff reported that data continues to be entered into the new LOGIS Rental Licensing Software purchased earlier this year, and it is about two-thirds completed. The software will automate the Rental Licensing Program, minimize the use of paper, and increase efficiencies in record keeping.

There being no further business to come before the Committee, the meeting was adjourned at 6:15 p.m. by Chair Fagerlie.

Respectfully submitted,



David P. Ramstad, PhD
Director of Planning and Development Services