

CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION MINUTES

January 4, 2011

The City Council of the City of Norman, Cleveland County, State of Oklahoma, met in a Study Session at 5:30 p.m. in the Municipal Building Conference Room on the 4th day of January, 2011, and notice and agenda of the meeting were posted at the Municipal Building at 201 West Gray, and the Norman Public Library at 225 North Webster 48 hours prior to the beginning of the meeting.

PRESENT: Councilmembers Atkins, Butler, Dillingham, Ezzell, Griffith, Kovach, Quinn, and Mayor Pro Tem Cubberley

ABSENT: Mayor Rosenthal

DISCUSSION REGARDING THE PRELIMINARY SITE DESIGN FOR FIRE STATION NO. NINE AND OTHER POSSIBLE MUNICIPAL USES.

Mr. Steve Lewis, City Manager, said in May 2008 the City presented an initiative to the voters to consider a half cent increase in sales tax to be used for public safety improvements and as part of that initiative, funds are set aside for construction and equipping two (2) new fire stations in Norman. He said Fire Station No. 8 located at 36th Avenue N.W. and Tecumseh Road is under construction and close to being completed. Today's discussion is about Fire Station No. 9, the second fire station that was approved through the Public Safety Sales Tax (PSST) increase.

Mr. Lewis said Staff would like to present to Council the concept of what has been envisioned in regards to Fire Station No. 9, and Staff felt a definite improvement will be increased response time(s) in east Norman as well as better fire and first responder coverage in the rapidly growing area around Alameda and 24th Avenue N.E. He said another essential benefit is Fire Station No. 9 will be a "reliever" of two other existing fire stations in Norman's core area that have some of the City's highest call volumes, which will indirectly provide improved services to citizens in the core area.

Mr. Lewis said in October 2008 the City purchased a ten (10) acre tract on Alameda east of 24th Avenue N.E. When the land was originally purchased, it was anticipated that up to five acres would be needed for fire station related purposes, with three of those acres being needed for the actual fire station. Potential uses of the additional five acres identified when the property was purchased included a branch library, recycling center, and a police sub-station, among others. Staff has also discussed the potential for constructing a secondary fueling station for City fleet.

Mr. James Fullingim, Fire Chief, said all potential uses Mr. Lewis mentioned previously are included in the designs presented today. He presented an aerial slide of the existing land reflecting where the future Fire Station No. 9, might be located on the property and other future city facilities to include: police sub-station, branch library, recycling center, fueling station, post office/City customer service center, neighborhood park or other amenity, and parking, detention, and expansion of future facilities. Chief Fullingim said the property is nearly 900 feet deep and 500 feet wide and obviously all the facilities can not be located on the frontage of the property. He said Staff looked at different alternatives and aspects that would facilitate all the potential uses.

Chief Fullingim said there is a single entry point available on the site and it would be constructed off Alameda Street, aligning with Ridge Lake Boulevard, to allow for a traffic signal at full build out. Other parameters affecting the site design include:

- Easement for power lines along western edge of property,
- Need to retain as much existing drainage patterns as possible,
- 12,500 square foot for a new branch library – 6,250 square feet expansion and parking,
- 15,200 square foot fire station with police sub-station – minimize response time from fire station, maximize visibility of engine driver, and parking, and
- Recycling center approximately 110 feet x 130 feet

Chief Fullingim said the square footage for the library was provided by a consultant from a recent study on branch libraries and Utilities Department Staff assisted with the size for the recycling center which is comparable to the current recycling center located at the fairgrounds. He said the sites are fairly realistic expectations of how much area would be covered for the construction of the facilities/projects. He said David Robinson and Jim Kirkpatrick with Kirkpatrick Architecture Studio (KAS), and representatives from Cardinal Engineering are present and can assist with any questions Council might have.

Mr. David Robinson, KAS, provided an overview of the process KAS conducted and explained how some of the decisions were made. He said KAS's task was to provide design solutions which began with looking at what drives the design of this particular site, which was determined to be the topography. He said the site falls about 29 feet from south to north and approximately 16 feet from west to east, with the high point of the property being located on the southwest portion.

Mr. Robinson said drainage has some natural flows and should be maintained as much as possible because of associated costs of retaining walls etc., and is also a strong point from a "green" aspect. He said because of the property's topography, space is needed between the buildings, driveways, and lots in order to transition the grade, either through walls, hills, or other devices. He said the driveway being aligned with Ridge Lake Boulevard will make the southwest portion of the property a little unusable for constructing buildings. Mr. Robinson said as the drive comes into the property it will need to turn east in order to carve out some space.

Mr. Robinson highlighted three design schemes.

Initial Scheme/Conceptual Site Plan-A.3

The library is located on the east end of the property and the fire station/police sub-station on the west. The library was turned on its north/south axis in order to minimize the topography change along the building, but is bad for the north sunlight that is preferred in a library and for solar gain. The recycling center is located on the north side of the back portion of the property and the fire station driveway is located on the south side of the station. The pros include a possible location for a future neighborhood park or other amenity on the front west portion; the slope of the fire station drive has been minimized by positioning it on a relatively flat portion of the site; the view for the fire apparatus driver has been maximized by placing the station high up on the hill; the back portion of the property can remain as native as possible preserving the drainage patterns; and locating the recycling center on the north end of the site will allow it to be screened by the topography. One con of the site plan is the farthest edge of a future parking lot is 400 feet from the front door(s) of the post office and/or recycling center.

Initial Scheme/Conceptual Site Plan-B.3

The library is located on the north side of the back portion of the property which helps to maximize the north sunlight and minimize the grade change. The downside of this library location is the library will be about 850 feet from the driveway off Alameda Street and would be difficult to see from the street. The recycling center is located on the east front end of the property and could be screened with berm if necessary, but may require an appropriate design to make it more attractive. Additional pros include an area for future neighborhood park or other amenity on the front west portion. The traffic in front of the fire station bays has been eliminated and the view for the fire apparatus driver has been maximized by placing the fire station/police sub-station high up the hill. The back portion of the property can remain as native as possible preserving the drainage patterns.

Initial Scheme/Conceptual Site Plan C.2

The fire station/police sub-station is located on the east front portion of the property, the lowest point. Cons include the severity of the grade(s) would likely necessitate the drive to have a valley across it. This would cause water drainage to drain towards and/or around the fire station/police sub-station and it would be difficult to have aprons relatively flat. There is little room to transition to existing grades at the property line and the topography of the site would greatly limit the driver's view of westbound cars on Alameda Street until the driver was at the intersection. Pros include an area for a possible neighborhood park or other amenity; thermal gain is minimized and day/sunlight is maximized with the location of the library on its east/west axis; and the back north area of the property can remain as native as possible preserving the existing drainage patterns.

Mr. Robinson said KAS refined the site plans after receiving City Staff comments of placing the library along Alameda Street, moving the parking to the north side, and locating the recycling center on the south side of the north end of the property as much as possible. Those changes resulted in the following proposals:

Conceptual Site Plan A.4

The library is located on the east end of the property, the fire station/police sub-station on the west, recycling center on the southern most portion of the north side of the property, and a future fueling station to the west of the recycling center. The site plan aligns the drive with Ridge Lake Boulevard to allow for a traffic signal at full build-out, allows a possible neighborhood park or other amenity, and allows the north area to remain as native as possible so as to preserve the existing drainage patterns. Placing the fire station/police sub-station high up the hill maximizes the view for the fire apparatus driver, and the recycling center on the north end of the site can be screened by the topography. Because of the topography, the library will need to be multi-level, buried in the ground on the east side, or require severe grading. One of the cons on this site plan is that the future parking is on the west side of the main drive, which is not preferred. Once a site plan is chosen, the City will need to meet with KAS to obtain more defined dimensions of easement on the east side of the property.

Conceptual Site Plan A.5

This site plan is virtually the same as Plan A.4, but the future public parking is now located on the north side of the main drive and to the west side of the library. The main drive is somewhat straightened out which begins to compress the land around the fire station/police sub-station.

Councilmember Kovach said there is parking for the police sub-station on Site Plan A.4, but he did not see any parking for the police sub-station on Site Plan A.5, and Mr. Robinson said Site Plan A.5, reflects the parking for the police sub-station will be located on the east side of the main drive. Councilmember Kovach asked if both Site Plans A.4 and A.5 would allow for expansions to be built up rather than out and would it change the footprint of the branch library or interfere/affect visibility for the fire station/police sub-station. Mr. Robinson said the floor prints shown is as if the library is only one level, but did not feel a vertical library expansion would hinder the visibility of the fire station/police sub-station because of the difference in the grade levels. Chief Fullingim said one important issue to remember is these are preliminary concepts that would work and the site plans presented reflect a 12,500 square foot, single story library. He said when the City gets to the point where the library will actually be designed, it would be determined at that time whether the library should be multi-level, single story, built up, or built out, etc.

Councilmember Kovach asked if the exit design would be large enough to allow fire trucks to pass through, specifically whether it is large enough to allow another vehicle to exit at the same time as a fire truck and Chief Fullingim said yes, that KAS took this issue into consideration when designing the exit. He said the drive has a median and is wider on the west side to allow for this scenario.

Councilmember Griffith asked if the recycling center and fueling station could be located in a more accessible location, such as switching the locations for the proposed neighborhood park area and the recycling center/fueling stations. Mr. Robinson said he did initially consider designing the park on the back side of the property but learned there were other neighborhood parks near that location. Mr. Lewis said the two City parks near the area are Royal Oaks and Summit Lakes and Staff felt both parks are appropriately sized. He said Staff determined the area on the front west portion of the site would be a more suitable location and reiterated this proposed area is probably more of a "placeholder" at this stage. He did not want to give Council the impression that a new park would *definitely* be built in the location because it is not in the Park Master Plan at this time. Chief Fullingim said the design simply reflects a proposed park as a "placeholder" to indicate there is room for a future park if warranted.

Councilmember Butler asked if Staff felt strongly about placing the recycling center and fueling station in the back rather than in the front and Mr. Lewis said there were many competing values to weigh. He said Staff felt very strongly about having the library up front and the idea of placing the recycling center in the back was more of a security issue, should non-recyclables be dropped off at the site. Councilmember Butler agreed the library

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should be up front along Alameda Street, but felt additional security issues might come into play with the placement of a recycling center on the back side. She said that the proposed recycling center location will be screened by the topography and trees and may become a personal safety issue for some citizens.

Chief Fullingim said the proposed development allows for a lot of activity in the area and felt it would take a bold character to do anything out of the ordinary, especially when located so close, approximately 200 feet, from the fire station/police sub-station. Councilmember Cubberley said the City may also get objections from the neighbors if a recycling center is placed towards the front on the southwest side because of trash blowing, etc., causing it to be unsightly at times. He agreed the proposed library location was a good idea and felt the surrounding neighborhoods would like the option of being able to walk to the library rather than driving.

Mr. Ken Komiske, Director of Utilities, said Staff felt the recycling center could be phased and/or moved as the construction of the library is done. Councilmember Cubberley agreed and said a gate could also be installed at the recycling center to control night access, etc.

Councilmember Butler felt options for future public meeting places and future transit, i.e., bus for library etc., needed to be considered when designing the site(s).

Councilmember Kovach asked Staff about various funds that can be used on this site, specifically how will the funds be used and/or divided when the site will have "cross uses" and Mr. Lewis said the site was purchased using half PSST funds and half from the General Fund. He said recent Staff discussions roughly stated that five acres could be assigned to public safety expenses, but as the planning process begins moving forward, Staff will need to consider what portion(s) is assigned to public safety and what portion(s) is assigned to non-public safety.

Mayor Pro Tem Cubberley thanked Staff and KAS for the presentation and said it is exciting to see the initial planning for Fire Station No. 9. He said the plans are definitely preliminary and felt a lot more will enter into the final configuration.

Items submitted for the record

1. Memorandum dated December 28, 2010, from James Fullingim, Fire Chief, to Honorable Mayor and City Council
2. Proposed Conceptual Site Plan A.4 dated December 20, 2010
3. Proposed Conceptual Site Plan A.5 dated December 20, 2010
4. PowerPoint presentation entitled "City of Norman, Site Planning for Alameda Site," presented January 4, 2011, from Kirkpatrick Architecture Studio

The meeting adjourned at 6:05 p.m.

ATTEST:

City Clerk

Mayor