

CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION

Cedar Falls Council Chambers

July 19, 2021

The City Council held a special work session at City Hall at 5:20 p.m. on July 19, 2021, with the following persons in attendance: Mayor Rob Green, Frank Darrah, Kelly Dunn, Simon Harding, Daryl Kruse, Mark Miller, Dave Sires. Staff members attended from all City Departments. Human Rights Commission members and members of the community attended the meeting and teleconferenced in. Absent: Susan deBuhr.

Mayor Green introduced the first item on the agenda, Northern Cedar Falls Drainage.

Mayor Green introduced Director of Public Works Chase Shrage. Mr. Schrage stated at last year's goal setting, City Council had consensus to hear a proposal in regard to Cedar River Drainage, specifically at Island Park. Mr. Schrage introduced Mr. Dennis Pruckler, 2221 Center Street, to present. Mr. Pruckler referenced his slideshow and sources to explain the idea of working with nature to lessen floodwaters and damages. He stated the main issue at Island Park is flooding; Island Park has 2500 feet of riverfront including wetlands which if recreated would be prime wildlife habitat and have soil that removes nitrates (cleans the water). He presented a triple-win proposal for nature-based solutions. He shared maps of the Cedar River from 1887 showing a cutoff channel (Snag Creek) around what is now Island Park which redirected floodwaters; currently there is a cutoff dam there higher than the park. Mr. Pruckler presented a demonstration of water flow and retention with one channel versus two channels and explained how it would alleviate water in the main channel, feed the wetlands, clean the water, and reduce flow downstream; currently floodwater is reaching the blocked channel through adjoining neighborhoods and across Island Park, causing damage that could potentially be avoided. He stated the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) recommends reducing dams to optimal level, optionally converting them to recreational attractions such as kayak runs. He stated river water should be flowing into Snag Creek with Island Park as an access point, flowing through the wetlands and being cleaned, before flowing back into the main channel. He named some potential funding sources. He explained looking at the 500 year flood plan, north of the City the Cedar River historically emptied into Big Woods Creek and re-opening should be considered in future plans.

Mayor Green opened Council discussion. Councilmember Miller stated the project scope is broad; what are the maintenance costs of flooding to Island Park and can they be reduced and lessen burden on Public Works while considering impact of more water to Snag Creek; he questioned if culverts could be considered in the dam. Mr. Pruckler stated Iowa DNR has offered to do studies for free. Councilmember Harding agreed with Mr. Miller and requested Iowa DNR look at it to determine next steps.

Mayor Green requested a consensus to proceed with study and research funding options; Mayor sees a consensus. Councilmember Sires recommended reviewing Waverly's bladder dam as an option.

Mayor Green introduced the second item on the agenda, Human Rights Commission – Joint Meeting.

Mayor Green introduced HRC Chairperson Susan Langan and Vice Chairperson Eashaan Vajpeyi. Mayor Green introduced the first HRC topic, Complaint Process. Ms. Langan introduced the members of the HRC. She stated the HRC has undergone two trainings with the Iowa Civil Rights Commission (ICRC) for the complaint process, an overview and a more specific training to assist citizens completing the claim form; she stressed the importance of HRC members knowing the correct questions to ask and also getting word out that the HRC exists. Councilmember Dunn questioned where the complaint form is obtained; Ms. Langan responded either City Human Resources Manager Toni Babcock or the ICRC website. Councilmember Dunn asked if citizens reach out to Councilmembers or City staff will they be put in touch with HRC; Ms. Langan responded yes. Ms. Langan stated some members of the HRC are confident in helping citizens complete the form; Mayor Green asked if the goal is for all members to be able to do so; Ms. Langan responded yes, and training will continue. Mayor asked if the claim goes straight to ICRC is there follow-up with the HRC; Mr. Vajpeyi stated once the ICRC has they claim, they make the determination; the HRC is only involved as the initial entity for claims. Councilmember Miller asked if probable cause is found, does the ICRC inform the HRC; Ms. Langan responded no but stated the HRC could potentially be involved in the process and would also be dependent on how much the complainant shared with the HRC. Ms. Langan stated the ICRC can provide the HRC with general information on complaints in the area. Councilmember Harding asked if the HRC is more supportive than investigative in its current role, how is that being presented to the community? Ms. Langan responded that HRC members have ties to various groups in the community and the HRC has social media platforms. Councilmember Dunn asked if the HRC has contact information on the City website; Director of Finance and Business Operations Jennifer Rodenbeck responded yes, links to HRC member contact information and the ICRC are on the City website. Mayor Green introduced the second HRC topic, Listening Post for Public Safety Complaints. Mr. Vajpeyi explained the HRC goal to engage with citizens and give them a place to air concerns about Public Safety staff in an informal setting where citizens can feel heard and seen within non-judgmental, appropriate boundaries; the HRC will not decide what does or doesn't constitute a claim in this role. Councilmember Harding asked about confidentiality; Mr. Vajpeyi stated he'd advise commission members to let the citizen set the sharing boundary. Councilmember Dunn asked how information from HRC or ICRC about complaints is shared with City Council; Mr. Vajpeyi replied that formal complaints will be forwarded to Council whereas informal listening post complaints will likely be a report by number or type of complaint, not yet determined. He stated that information from ICRC will come to Council in work sessions and suggested the HRC give more

status updates to Council. Councilmember Dunn asked if there is confidentiality specific to Public Safety officers; City Administrator Ron Gaines replied yes, under state code §80F, and confidentiality is based on severity of the complaint; Mayor Green stated it ties to protection for the officer. Councilmember Darrah asked if the listening post is a work in progress; Mr. Vajpeyi stated yes, from the last HRC meeting. Councilmember Harding suggested Council may want to discuss having a full-time Human Rights person on City staff; he suggested the HRC recommend ways Council can assist with resolving complaints. Ms. Langan stated that in the new supportive role, general situational data can be provided to council. Mayor Green introduced the third HRC topic, Spearhead Communication on Racial Equity Issues. Ms. Langan stated the topic goes with the listening post and sharing information with Council and the community about the HRC's role. She stated the HRC extends invitations to its trainings while following new Iowa regulations on trainings. She stated the HRC utilizes a video series at meetings to facilitate discussion and invites Council to watch and join the discussions. She stated the HRC had a table at the Juneteenth Cedar Falls Farmer's Market and will collaborate with Cedar Falls High School at a table for Waterloo's Pride Fest in August. She stated the HRC has dedicated Facebook and Twitter pages currently sharing community events. Councilmembers Miller and Harding recommended updates to the City website's HRC page, a link to file a complaint and a contact for a dedicated City Human Rights staff, which is not a current position. Ms. Langan agreed with Councilmember Darrah's earlier comment that having a specific process will be important. HRC member Mario Basurto asked about minorities in the City and if there were communication tools in place for those that do not speak English as a first language; he stated there are challenges meeting only once a month. Councilmember Dunn stated the Cedar Falls Racial Equity Task Force (RETF) has demographic data to be shared; she asked if interpretation services are available to the HRC. Director Rodenbeck stated not currently. Mr. Vajpeyi suggested seeking training for working with individuals for whom English is a second language; Councilmember Dunn stressed the importance of preventing communication breakdowns due to language barriers. Mr. Basurto stated the HRC's role is to make sure claims are forwarded appropriately. Councilmember Harding asked if more frequent meetings are needed, how is that changed; Staff Liaison Toni Babcock stated the by-laws would need to be updated. Mayor Green introduced the fourth HRC topic, Invitation to HRC Training. Ms. Langan states that trainings have been covered speaking about other topics.

There being no further discussion, Mayor Green adjourned the meeting at 6:55 p.m.

Minutes by Katie Terhune, Administrative Assistant