

Elmhurst City Council Meeting
October 21, 2013
7:40 pm – 8:55 pm

14 present; 0 Absent
Public: 28; Staff: 4 ; Police/Fire:3;
Press: 4
Observer: N. Talluto

Mayor Morley called the meeting to order.

Boy Scouts of America Troop 78 of Elmhurst, IL assisted in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

Public Forum

- Gilbert Fisher spoke about his wife of 78 going back to work in order to pay taxes. He asks the city to cut their taxes by stopping buying properties. He further states that the streets and water are no good in the city.
- Claude Pagash asked the TV viewers to get the Elmhurst Independent to view the budget report. He brought up that general obligation bonds are part of that and that the city residents will be paying these for many years. He is concerned about the backyard sewers prohibiting potential buyers from buying homes. He brought up a sidewalk petition that recently did not meet the legal standards. He is concerned that the petition could not even get the elected signatures, which he feels is not right. He hopes that the people look at the treasurer's report for the upcoming budget.
- John Dulles, the owner of a Dry Cleaner across from the upcoming proposed Addison development spoke about his feeling that the development is corrupt and that the current proposal is for 8 stories which is against the will of the people.
- Willis Johnson, spoke about the parking report concluding that there is need for 600 – 700 additional parking spaces. He asks that the council take this into account when deliberating on the height of the parking garage.
- Tamara Brenner reminds the council that there are 227 signatures on a petition requesting a parking garage not exceed 4 stories. She suggests that the residents have legitimate questions and concerns that have not been addressed. She also states that the parking analysis would suggest that there is not a need for the higher parking garage. She requests the council proceed with the four story parking garage on Addison Street.
- Paula Pezza reminds the Elmhurst Taxpayers that General Obligation bonds, which will take many years to pay off, will pay for the parking structure. She also reminds the citizens that this project is the same that was in violation of the OMA in 2012. She raises her concern that the 6-story project continues to be pushed by the council. She feels that the council knows something that the residents don't know.
- Ms. Witzel reiterated her displeasure with a parking garage that exceeds 45 feet.

Announcements

- Ald. York shared that the bike ride was cancelled due to the weather. This will be rescheduled for the spring. Elmhurst also won a Bronze medal for Bicycle Friendly communities.
- Ald. Levin announced the 5th ward townhall meeting on 10/23/13, 6:30pm at Knights of Columbus hall on York rd.

The **Consent Agenda** was passed (14 Ayes, 0 Nays) with removal of the following items: Item 6.7.

Agenda Item Discussion

A. Item 6.7 – Berteau Campus Area Parking (PA&S)

- a. Ald. Bram asked two questions – first, why is the committee moving forward with this change now and second, why is one block different from the other blocks?
- b. Ald. Wagner responded to both as the residents requested these changes.
- c. Ald. York also responded clarifying that a survey was conducted at the request of residents who could not park around the old hospital. The survey results, i.e. the residents requests were largely fulfilled.
- d. Ald. Bram clarified that he is in support of more parking for residents just that he thought it might have been better to wait until the Berteau campus was more solidified in how it will turn out long term with what will happen to the property.
- e. Report passed (14 Ayes, 0 Nays)

Committee Reports

A. 7.1 - Report – Policy regarding the annual requirement for estimated property taxes (F, CA&AS)

- a. Report passed (14 Ayes, 0 Nays)

B. 7.2 – Report – Police pension and firefighters pension fund policy (F, CA&AS)

- a. Ald. York thanked the city staff for their timely cooperation with this complicated subject. He summarized that the topic relates to future obligations of the city police and firefighters pension funds. The IL pension fund is not funded to provide all the benefits that are promised. The mortality table from 1971 will be replaced by the 200 mortality table for assumption purposes. Wage increases will be assumed to be 5% per year. He also states that the City of Elmhurst has historically been very good at making every required payment and is at 70% of its needed funding level. This is better than than Elmhurst’s peers but still not good enough. The current levy is about \$41 per Elmhurst household. He asks for the councils support on the report.
- b. Ald. Levin asked if the report allows for us to catch up financially. Ald. York responded in the affirmative.
- c. Ald. Bram clarifies that the mortality rate is a mandated requirement that leads to some of the increase. He asks why we have chosen to use 20 years to amortize instead of 28 years.
- d. Ald. York answered that 2 years ago the 20-year table was chosen. Now, the council has the option to extend it to 28 years. The committee chose 20 years to lessen the burden on future generations.
- e. Ald. Dunn added that the 20 vs. 28-year decision was a difficult one. Choosing 20 years increases the taxes as it is amortized over less time. The rate of return and the wage adjustment were also highly debated.
- f. Ald. Hipskind thanked the finance committee and city staff for their hard work during the process.
- g. Report passed (14 Ayes, 0 Nays)

C. 7.3 – Report – Addison avenue parking/mixed use structure 135-149 N. Addison Avenue – Structure Height (COW)

- a. This report is to authorize a public hearing on the Addison Street development.
- b. Mayor Morley summarizes that this report was deferred to this meeting from last given the parking study in the last meeting. This report asks for conditional use for a 65 foot structure along with setbacks.
- c. Ald. Levin motions to change 65 feet to 55 feet in two areas in the report. This would also change the side-yard variation from 27 to 20 feet. Ald. Polomsky seconds the motion. Ald. Levin clarifies the reason for the motion is because there are many residents and councilmen that feel 45 feet is the right height and others that feel 65 feet is right. The consultants report could be read supporting the 65-foot structure. By going to 55 feet, we add another 120 spaces and about \$1.5 MM in cost. This is a compromise proposal that Ald. Levin offers.
- d. Ald. Polomsky feels this is a difficult decision as the council is being asked to plan for an uncertain future. Increased sales tax revenue, which parking would support, helps to take the burden off property tax. Encouraging growth is important but that growth may be slowing given a TIF district is coming to a close. When a clear answer doesn't present itself, thoughtful decisions must be made and this may be a situation for a compromise.
- e. Ald. Bram spoke about the parking study. He is concerned that some assumptions were made that shouldn't be – namely that all 8 sites are developed in the future. This may not be so. The big issue is current taxpayers paying for something that may not be used for many years to come. He supports the parking deck to enable redevelopment in the future. Ald. Bram supports staying with 45 feet as he does not see a need to burden taxpayers with more than this. Additionally, general obligation bonds would be needed to pay for this. He feels that there are higher priorities in the city than adding another parking story.
- f. Ald. Deuter reminds the council of what a 45 ft. structure gets the city – new parking, \$15MM investment, support of a great downtown.
- g. Ald. Mulliner does not support the 45 ft or 55 ft structure. Our economic engine is a huge asset for the City. Roadblocks should be removed, not added and this is a once in a lifetime opportunity to remove a parking roadblock that prevents business owners from considering opening businesses in Elmhurst.
- h. Ald. Leader states that while 227 people have signed a petition, 44,000 have not. Time moves quickly and the future will be here before we know it.
- i. Ald. Gutenkauf states that the compromise motion is a false compromise. She states that we do not have a parking problem, we have a parking management problem. Originally, in 2008, 6 stories were struck from the original memo because the city council could not enter into a contract that would circumvent the zoning process. 4 stories have been ok all along until now, we are looking at 6 stories. It is unclear to her why 6 stories are now being pushed. She cannot support the motion to go to 5 stories.
- j. Ald. Dunn felt the parking study was timely. He signed the report a month ago supporting 4 stories with the option to increase in the future. The report shows him that in 2 – 5 years, there will be a parking issue. He does feel that 6 stories will be needed in the future, but it is unclear when that future will be. He feels that the cost to build the 6 stories now is much more attractive financially than adding in the future.

- k. Ald. Wagner feels that there is a fiduciary responsibility to build 6 stories now versus adding in the future.
- l. Ald. Healy clarifies that tonight is not a decision to build a 45 ft, 55 ft, or 65 ft building. Rather, it is just to ask Zoning committee to deliberate on what is possible or allowable. The compromise will eliminate 65 ft tonight and he is not willing to do that tonight. He recommends the council does not support the motion for this reason.
- m. Ald. Bram asks for clarity on the report.
- n. Mayor Morley clarifies that the report is for a 65 foot structure.
- o. Ald. Mulliner wants to reiterate that there is no behind the scenes dealing. This is not the case. There are a number of opportunities in the Addison area for development and anyone can see that by walking around.
- p. Ald. York states that going to 65 ft allows for thinking outside the box. One of the ideas was to have the structure hold some storm water. He supports moving this project forward. He supports building upfront versus adding on later.
- q. Ald. Kennedy echoes Ald. Mulliners comments. He states the cost in the other parking decks to add on later. It is economically straightforward in support of 65 ft.
- r. Ald. Deuter appreciates the comments on economics. However, there is not a clear need for the parking in the future and the city does not have the funds to support the larger structure.
- s. Ald. Levin believes that it would be disingenuous for the council to not pick a specific height tonight.
- t. Ald. Gutenkauf asks what happens next because the building is not designed. What is the timeline for this? She feels that it is silly to have the report without a timeline.
- u. City Manager Grabowski does not have a timeline as they would need to talk to the architect and developer. His best estimate would be the report to Zoning and Planning by the end of this year, out of committee by early next year.
- v. Ald. Bram clarifies that the past parking garages were not mistakes, but that they were intended to allow for extra levels to be added. He agrees holistically that sales revenue is a large driver of our revenue but that it comes from many areas, not just downtown.
- w. The motion to amend from 65 feet to 55 feet fails. (2 Ayes, 12 Nays Bram, Hipskind, York, Healy, Honquist, Kennedy, Mulliner, Wagner, Gutenkauf, Deuter, Dunn, Leader)
- x. Ald. Gutenkauf states that a 65 foot structure does not support the city plan for a “small town character”.
- y. Ald. Polomsky states that the next vote is simply to pass the report to Zoning. It is not to make a final decision on the height of the building.
- z. Ald. Deuter states that the additional development is significant and therefore will be a long time in the future. The parking will not be needed for this anytime soon. She is concerned with moving this forward as quickly as possible.
- aa. Ald. Bram supports the council making clear its intentions for what exact height the council wants, versus saying “no more than 65 feet” given there are not other option other than 45 feet.
- bb. Ald. Levin agrees with Ald. Bram and that the public must know what they are getting.

cc. The report (65 foot structure) passes (11 Ayes, 3 Nays Gutenkauf, Deuter, Bram).

Reports and Recommendations of Appointed and Elected Officials

- Mayor Morley reiterated congratulations to the bike task force on the Bronze award. The Lukemia and Lymphoma Walk occurred last weekend and was a great event. The society had nothing but good things to say for the support from the City. The committee of the whole will convene following this meeting to discuss the budget.
- City Manager Grabowski announced that the replacement for the Public Works director will go live this week.
- Ald. Healy wanted to clarify about the petition to block the SSA. It did in fact get completed and successfully blocked for the sidewalk funding.

Other Business

- None

Adjournment

Meeting was adjourned at 9:38 pm.