

Minutes of the REGULAR MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Wednesday, September 15, 2021

Committee Members Present:

Atlas-Ingebretson, Chamblis, Cummings, Fredson, Gonzalez, Johnson, Lee, Lilligren, Lindstrom, Muse, Sterner, Vento, Wulff, Zeran, Zelle

Committee Members Absent:

Barber, Ferguson

CALL TO ORDER

A quorum being present, Chair Zelle called the regular meeting of the Council's Committee of the Whole to order at 4:02 p.m. on Wednesday, September 15, 2021 on the following roll call vote:

Aye: 15 Atlas-Ingebretson, Chamblis, Cummings, Fredson, Gonzalez, Johnson, Lee, Lilligren, Lindstrom, Muse, Sterner, Vento, Wulff, Zeran, Zelle

Nay: 0

Absent: 2 Barber, Ferguson

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Council Members did not have any comments or changes to the agenda.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

It was moved by Sterner, seconded by Chamblis to approve the minutes of the August 18, 2021 regular meeting of the Committee of the Whole. **Motion carried** on the following roll call:

Aye: 15 Atlas-Ingebretson, Chamblis, Cummings, Fredson, Gonzalez, Johnson, Lee, Lilligren, Lindstrom, Muse, Sterner, Vento, Wulff, Zeran, Zelle

Nay: 0

Absent: 2 Barber, Ferguson

INFORMATION

1. Police Work Group Update

Council Member Chamblis gave an update on the work of the Metro Transit Police Work Group as Chair of the Work Group. Council Member Chamblis began by asking Council Members to share their priorities and what they would like to accomplish with the Police Work Group. Council Member themes were: use of force, interaction with youth, officer training, data collection, safety, stations, platforms, unenforced rules, lines of communication between Council and Metro Transit Police Department reporting structure, working with public safety professionals who can share best practices, physical and mental support for officers, resources that benefit all communities as well as pressures that support resources being sent to other communities, and standard reporting documents.

Council Member Fredson shared his priorities as a member of the Police Work Group, which included addressing the perception and reality that transit and LRT lines in particular are unsafe, as well as the perception that police are more of a

threat than an ally. He added that he would like the work group to look into the internal review process for use of force. Council members discussed reviewing police training and discipline practices in similar agencies across the country. Council Member Johnson asked for a clarification about the name Police Work Group, rather than something such as “public safety work group.” Council Member Vento asked the Council to keep in mind that the system cannot be sustained if people lose confidence. Council Member Vento also asked about the vacancies within Metro Transit, and if they are linked to the perceptions of public safety. Council Member Atlas-Ingebretson asked Council members to consider the use of the word comfortable and what it means for individuals of different races.

Michelle Fure, Manager, Public Involvement, gave a brief review of the final Citizens League report. The themes in the final report were the perception vs. reality of safety, passenger behavior impacts safety, more riders leads to a feeling of safety, safety is more than enforcement, and the presence of an authority figure leads to a greater sense of safety. The Citizens League recommendations were: to conduct review of other cities transit systems to understand their best practices, how they’re addressing perceptions of safety vs realities of safety, and to learn from jurisdictions that have robust transit systems in place; to continue community engagement efforts; and that Metro Transit could invest in and implement suggested strategies that would lead to an increased sense of safety among the ridership.

2. Residential Development in 2020

Joel Nyhus, Researcher, Community Development gave a presentation of residential development trends based on the 2020 Building Permit Survey findings. 2020 showed a net change of 19,262 housing units. This included new construction, conversions, other additions, demolitions, and other losses. The average net change in new development from 2010-2020 is 12,900 added units each year. This is slightly less than the average of 14,600 units added from 2000-2010. The largest type of added housing in 2020 was multifamily units (more than five units), followed by single-family homes, and townhomes. In 2020 Minneapolis was the jurisdiction with largest number of added units, followed by St. Paul. The damage from the 2020 civil unrest was not captured in the 2020 Building Permit Survey unless the residence was demolished or newly permitted. The majority of property damage from the civil unrest occurred at commercial or mixed-use properties. COVID-19 also impacted construction. There was a building standstill in early 2020, though activity increased later in the year. There was also an increase in the price of building materials, as well as supply chain delays and labor shortages which impacted the rate of building. Initial 2021 building data signals a full rebound in multifamily construction in the Twin Cities. The takeaways from the presentation were that demand for housing remains strong in the Twin Cities; multifamily remains the predominate housing type, but fewer age-restricted units were added in 2020; and despite the COVID-19 pandemic pausing housing construction briefly, the number of units added to region’s housing stock in 2020 was on par with recent years. Early 2021 data signals strong construction activity is expected.

Council Member Cummings inquired about the recent wildfires and if they may have had an impact on both lumber prices and residential development. Nyhus did not have any information about this possible connection. Council Member Sterner asked for more information about single family homes with rooms being rented out, accessory dwelling units (ADUs), and mobile and manufactured homes.

3. Affordable Housing Development Trends and Regional Housing Policy

Krysten Ryba-Tures, Senior Researcher, Community Development, and Tara Beard, Manager, Livable Communities, gave an update on affordable housing development trends and regional housing policy. Ryba-Tures began with an overview of housing metrics in the Twin Cities. Based on the 16-county metro MSP/WI statistical housing area, the area median income (AMI) for a family of four is \$103,400. 21 jurisdictions have median incomes of less than 60% AMI. Ryba-Tures also clarified that this discussion would be limited to housing unit production, though there are other important issues that

affect housing affordability. The Council defines affordable units as at or below 60% AMI. With the Housing Policy Plan, more detailed levels of affordability were added. The two jurisdictions with the largest number of affordable housing units added were Minneapolis and St. Paul. A key issue in affordable housing is the depth of affordable housing. The region's greatest need is affordable housing at or below 30% AMI; very little housing is being built at or below 30% AMI. To address this issue, the Council can do several things: position LHIA to fund more 30% AMI units, understand the tradeoffs of funding more units versus deeply affordable units, better understand barriers to more applications for 30% AMI units, and continue to work with HRA to align efforts. A second key issue is affordable homeownership. The Twin Cities' racial inequities in homeownership are the largest in United States, longstanding, and persistent. To address homeownership issues, the Council can: engage in the LHIA Homeownership Pilot; use disaggregated data to better target affordable homeownership investments; continue to provide technical assistance to local governments to support affordable homeownership; and continue to partner with the HRA on ways to create homeownership opportunities for voucher holders.

Council Member Wulff asked about the demographics of the population that is below 30% AMI. Ryba-Tures offered to create a fact sheet for Council Members answering the question. Council Members had questions and comments about the shortage of production and the loss of housing in the naturally occurring affordable housing rates, wages and income, and the sector of two-to-four-unit housing.

Comments from chat:

Ryba-Tures, Krysten: I just want to share some research by Minnesota Housing Partnership that speaks to wages and what households can afford, this particular sheet focuses on Dakota County, but it gives a snapshot <https://www.mhponline.org/images/stories/docs/research/Dakota-County-Rental-Spotlight.pdf>

Ryba-Tures, Krysten: A few other locations are available, but not full regional stats here: <https://www.mhponline.org/publications/rentalsnapshots>

ADJOURNMENT

Business completed; the meeting adjourned at 6:10 p.m.

Bridget Toskey
Recording Secretary