

CITY OF HASTINGS, NEBRASKA
MINUTES OF CITY COUNCIL WORKSESSION
Monday, October 21, 2024

Pursuant to due call and notice thereof, a Worksession Meeting of the City Council of the City of Hastings, Nebraska was conducted at the Hastings Municipal Airport, 3300 W. 12th Street, on October 21, 2024.

The Worksession Meeting was called to order at 5:30 p.m. by Council President Matt Fong with the following members present: Steve Huntley, Jeniffer Beahm, Brad Consbruck, Butch Eley, Joy Huffaker, Marc Rowan, Shawn Hartmann, Matt Fong.

City Officials Present: Mayor Corey Stutte, Mark Funkey, Jesse Oswald, Lori Vorderstrasse, Adam Story, Troy Vorderstrasse, Erik Nielsen, Roger Nash, Jeff Hassenstab, Lee Vrooman, Amy Hafer, Marty Stange, Tony Hermann, Lori Hartman, Chad Bunger, Ember Batelaan, Trent Clark.

Pledge of Allegiance.

Moved by Butch Eley seconded by Shawn Hartmann to adopt the current agenda for the October 21, 2024 City Council Worksession. Roll Call: Ayes: Steve Huntley, Jeniffer Beahm, Brad Consbruck, Butch Eley, Joy Huffaker, Marc Rowan, Shawn Hartmann, Matt Fong. Nays: None. The motion carried.

Official Notice of the Worksession was published in the Hastings Tribune on Friday, October 18, 2024. Pursuant to Nebraska Revised Statute Section 84-1412, the public is advised that a copy of today's agenda and all reproducible written material which will be discussed at today's meeting is available for public review and a current copy of the Nebraska Open Meetings Act is posted and accessible to members of the public.

Citizen Communications.

None.

Discussion of strategic plan for creative district project.

Ember Batelaan, City Planner, indicated they have been working on the Creative District project for the past couple of years and she was back to give an update on where the project is now. She explained that a Creative District is a designated area for cultural and economic development that is overseen by the Nebraska Arts Council and stated there are currently 32 certified Creative Districts in Nebraska. Ms. Batelaan reviewed with Council the boundaries of the proposed Heartbeat Creative District in downtown Hastings. She reviewed the public outreach highlights and spoke about the results of the following online engagement surveys: May 2024 Heartbeat Creative District Survey, August 2024 Hispanic-Focused SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) Analysis and August 2024 Youth-Focused SWOT Analysis. She highlighted that one major opportunity that was mentioned in all the surveys was being adjacent to a major highway and the biggest threat noted was the housing market. Ms. Batelaan spoke about the goals for the six month time frame - develop rules and regulations for creative district and marketing of creative district, goals for 1-3 year time frame - develop artistic/creative projects (sculptures, murals and actual art) and annual events, goals for 3-5 year time frame - develop district cohesiveness (signage) and pedestrian experience. She explained that the strategic plan for the Creative District was submitted last week, so the next steps will be to wait to get notification of certification, use the certification grant (\$10,000) for

marketing aspects and apply for a Creative District Development Grant.

Councilmember Beahm questioned future funding and if they don't receive the grant, where will the funding come from. Ms. Batelaan indicated that the Business Improvement District (BID) and the City are pretty much taking the lead on the project and that there are other grants they can apply for. She told Council that state grants are available and businesses could finance their own projects, so just a lot of different ways it could be funded. Councilmember Beahm asked where the Creative District strategic plan is posted. Ms. Batelaan stated it was located on Engage Hastings.

Councilmember Fong asked how long it would be before they received notification. Ms. Batelaan stated hopefully by the end of the year. Councilmember Huntley asked who approved the certification. Ms. Batelaan stated the Nebraska Arts Council. Councilmember Hartmann questioned how you qualify as a business. Ms. Batelaan indicated the list of businesses came from a worksheet done before she was in her position but it was not too late for a business to qualify.

Councilmember Fong asked about the feedback received so far. Ms. Batelaan stated that people are excited about the Creative District and they want to see it happen and explained that it is just another way to fund improvements that we would like to see in our downtown. Councilmember Huntley questioned the businesses outside the Creative District and how they can get involved. Ms. Batelaan explained there are opportunities for partnerships to work with those businesses and agencies. She stated that the Nebraska Arts Council encouraged them not to spread the Creative District out too much, so that is why they focused on the area they did.

Mark Funkey, Interim City Administrator, thanked Ms. Batelaan for all her work on the Creative District project.

Councilmember Rowan asked why it seemed like we were so late in developing a Creative District. Ms. Batelaan stated the Creative District program was set up by the Nebraska Arts Council around 2022 and that was also when the City submitted their letter of intent, however, different communities work through it at different paces, so it depends on the community, and having changes in leadership within the BID slowed the process. Councilmember Rowan asked if there was forced participation. Ms. Batelaan explained that they were in no way forcing anyone to participate, but if they want to be involved, there are opportunities they can take advantage of.

Councilmember Eley questioned if this in any way would increase BID dues (taxes). Ms. Batelaan indicated it would not and that those taxes were based on property value. Jesse Oswald, City Attorney, confirmed that they were totally separate and the intent of the Creative District is to create a path to be able to apply for more grants.

Moved by Steve Huntley seconded by Shawn Hartmann there being no further business to come before the Council, the meeting was adjourned at 5:51 p.m. Roll Call: Ayes: Steve Huntley, Jeniffer Beahm, Brad Consbruck, Butch Eley, Joy Huffaker, Marc Rowan, Shawn Hartmann, Matt Fong. Nays: None. The motion carried.