

**JOINT STUDY SESSION  
OF THE UNIVERSITY CITY COUNCIL AND  
THE LOOP SPECIAL BUSINESS DISTRICT BOARD**  
Heman Park Community Center  
975 Pennsylvania Ave.  
**September 23, 2019**

**AGENDA**

Requested by the City Manager

**1. MEETING CALLED TO ORDER**

The Joint Study Session was held at the Heman Park Community Center, on Monday, September 23, 2019. Mayor Terry Crow called the Study Session to order at 5:32 p.m.

In addition to the Mayor, the following members of Council were present:

Councilmember Steven McMahon  
Councilmember Paulette Carr  
Councilmember Jeffrey Hales  
Councilmember Tim Cusick  
Councilmember Stacy Clay  
Councilmember Bwayne Smotherson (Excused)

Board Member Joe Edwards  
Board Member Mike Alter  
Board Member Wendy Harris  
Board Member Steve Stone

Also, in attendance were City Manager, Gregory Rose; City Attorney, John F. Mulligan Jr.

**2. CHANGES TO REGULAR AGENDA**

Mayor Crow informed everyone that both people scheduled to be sworn are not in town and will not be present tonight. Hearing no other changes Mayor Crow turned the meeting over to City Manager Rose.

**3. LOOP SPECIAL BUSINESS DISTRICT OPERATIONS / DISCUSSION**

City Manager Rose stated his role for this meeting would to be a facilitator in trying to get an understanding about the Loop's operations and how might the City assist with those operations. Some changes have occurred in the past 18 months, which may have helped keep some administrative things from falling through the cracks.

There are 2 critical questions to talk about:

1. What are the expectations for the LSB? This forum will allow the Council and the board to work collectively to set the expectations.
2. How do we achieve the expectations?

WHAT:

- Comply with City Codes:
  1. Create/Provide a Strategic Plan to Council
  2. Create/Provide Annual Report
  3. Recommending an Operating Budget
  4. Meetings must be consistent with the laws governing the meeting – State Statute and City Code
  5. Agendas and Minutes – Comply with rules for quasi-public governmental body

HOW:

- City's Assistance (Temporary)
  1. Legal
  2. Finance
  3. Administrative Assistance (Agendas, Minutes, Posting)

**Q: Mr. Rose asked if assistance was needed in this area?**

**Q: Board Member Edwards asked if/and when have the agenda/minutes not been posted in the appropriate legal time?**

A: Mr. Rose stated if the board will continue to be responsible for the agenda/minutes posting; the City could pull back on the item. Mr. Rose stated that he believes perhaps the City Clerk should be involved to ensure that all of the legal requirements are being met. Perhaps the City Attorney should be involved. In the past there was some question about if the meetings fully complied with the law.

A: Board Member Edwards stated there are some things they need to pick up the pace on but the items regarding posting, they have always complied with the requirements of posting the agenda 24 hours in advance if the meeting and the minutes are there and floated around each month.

**Q: Mr. Rose asked who is the keeper of records? If someone asked for a sunshine request; who does that go to? It's kind of rhetorical, but these are the kinds of issues or areas where we have identified some weakness with the LSBDD operations. When a sunshine request was made it wasn't very clear as to who would fulfill such request.**

A: Board Member Edwards stated this is a reasonable request, but he believes that is different from the meeting postings.

Mr. Rose clarified that he is asked if the Board believes this assistance is needed? If not we will move forward.

Board Member Edwards stated it would be great to have a keeper of records connected with City Hall.

- Assistance with legal... dose that make sense?

Mr. Rose stated assistance will be provided in this area.

- Assistance with finance... dose that make sense?

Board Member Edwards stated that they have hired an accounting firm to help bring everything back up to standard. They are working with City Hall to confirm everything

for the past 12 months. He stated that legal is always welcomed. Finance is welcomed too; progress is already being made in this area. They are kind of waiting on the City to put the final pieces together for the report.

Mr. Rose stated he looks at finance from two different perspectives:

1. Are we able to reconcile on a monthly basis, the revenues and expenditures?
2. Do all of the expenditures have all of the backup documentation needed should an audit be required?

These are the areas that some weaknesses have been identified. The City can provide assistance with this area.

Board Member Edwards stated the assistance would be welcomed. Every year there is a dollar amount in the budget for U City's audit. He stated that nothing has ever been found wrong that he is aware of.

Mr. Rose asked once we get through how the board should operate; what other objectives should the LSBSD have? What is the expectation of the LSBSD?

Councilmember Carr stated that all of us want to see the Loop succeed. The LSBSD is the governing or guiding body that helps to make that happen. Aside from complying with the Code, she would like to see a buzz about the Loop. Typically that happens because there are events, street type events that drew people to the Loop. People came not necessarily for eating or shopping but for the fun; because St. Louis loves a party.

She would also like to see some administrative things done, so that the annual report is done and the comprehensive plan is made and updated. Also some kind of substantive treasurers report, more than just a bank balance report.

Councilmember Carr stated as bit of history; University City has long invested in the Loop. Giving money for infrastructure as well as money for events; a good portion of the EDRST goes to the Loop to help it succeed. For whatever reason, be it the recession, following by the construction or other things; we need to focus on bringing the Loop back up and stop making excuses and get the buzz going again.

Mr. Rose reconfirmed the events and financial reports are expectations; Councilmember Carr said yes.

Board Member Alter stated that he thinks about safe streets and security; making sure people who work in or guests that come to the Loop feel safe and comfortable on the streets at all times.

Also a conceptualized marketing plan would be beneficial; something that targets a schedule; something that creates, recreates or emphasizes the identifying piece of the Loop.

Councilmember Cusick stated that he would like to see a comprehensive marketing plan that compares the Loop to other metropolitan areas throughout the St. Louis area. To see what the pros/cons are and what the perceptions are of the Loop, and develop a strategic long term plan. In terms of events, perhaps having spaces rented for events.

There seems to be some vacancies that are noticeable when people drive down Delmar; it seems to be more than in the past.

Councilmember Cusick said he would like to see a full-time Executive Director or Administrator that could work in the University City Delmar Loop portion to be able to put on the events and to carry out the marketing once the comprehensive plan is created. He believes this position should be full time and that responsibilities need to be clearly laid out and defined.

Mr. Rose stated that once we determine what the expectations are; we can then discuss the “how” we accomplish the things that you consider to be important.

Board Member Edwards stated that a timelier vote on the EDRST funding would be helpful in planning for long term bigger events. It would be great to have that part of the budget passed in June.

Mr. Rose said the EDRST funding will be connected to how we achieve the expectations.

Councilmember Carr stated that the books were not straight and was difficult to read this year, that was the problem. And there was some reconciling to be done regarding EDRST. Both partners have to be timely and there have been some problems.

Mr. Rose stated when we get to the financial report portion of the discussion we can determine how often you want the LSBD to provide financial reports to the Mayor and Council.

### **Events:**

**Q: Mr. Rose asked how many and what type of events would we like to have? The more we can drill down and gain clarity, the better it is for everyone.**

A: Board Member Harris stated she would like to see something quarterly. Not all have to be major. She stated that she was new, having only been here one year; she found the spots on Fox2 news to be helpful. The media really help promote the businesses. There are a lot of out-of-town visitors but she is hearing local people say “they didn’t know she was there and that they hadn’t been down in a long time”. They were pleasantly surprised at how nice the Loop is.

Board Member Alter stated that they have wanted more events for many years. Maybe we start with 2 or 3. Currently the Ice Carnival has been a fantastic event, well organized and displays the Loop in a wonderful light. He believes that many members of the board would like to do more events, but that’s hard to do when you don’t know what the budget will be. We don’t know if we will have funding to support 1, 2, or 3 events. There’s no set marketing campaign to promote the events and just as importantly, this is a group of volunteers. Everyone is running and working in their own business but they care about the street and have passion for the street but they need help. The center point for him is how do we execute? The backdrop is not only financial, but it’s people power and security; who pays for that? Getting to a place of doing more events means that we start with today’s conversation and figuring out how we knock off a few of the points or we will be saying 4 events for long, long time and not getting there. He believes we can get there and this is a good first step.

Mr. Rose asked if and clarified that 4 events are reasonable to do.

1. Ice Carnival
2. Taste of the Loop
3. Loop in Motion

Board Member Edwards reminded everyone that there are many smaller events that get quite of bit of attention and publicity all the time. He stated that he would challenge you to find any other neighborhood in the Metropolitan area that gets as much publicity as our smaller events. Be it the Walk of Fame Induction ceremony, or Loop Arts Fess and the other events that the new executive director is planning for holidays like holidays in the Loop with Santa, Pictures with Pups, Christmas tree lighting or Kwanzaa celebrations. Events like the Afterglow event, Get Looped, Halloween Scavenger Hunt which gets people in the stores and not just on the streets.

Mr. Rose stated there are 2 issues, is it a major event that will need a lot of lead time to plan, like a musical event; something like Loop in Motion, or is it a minor event?

Board Member Edwards suggested a combined event for Loop in Motion and a Taste of the Loop might be the next best event to work on. He would also like people to remember all the events that the individual businesses put on; gallery opening night or musical events that happen anyway.

Board Member Alter agreed that there are events happening in the Loop; the success of Ice Carnival is a backdrop to see what the Loop is capable of. If possible he would like to create another similar event. It seems Loop in Motion would be the natural next event for the fall and it has been proven successful for many years.

Mr. Rose stated that everyone is interested in a thriving Loop and part of what's driving this discussion is that at one time the LSBDD generated about 20% of the sales taxes and today it's about 17%. How do we bring people to the Loop or back to the Loop if they've been here before? Events are one part and another part is making sure it's safe.

Councilmember Carr stated that she sees a difference between an event and a promotion and she has seen a lot of promotions; like Get Looped. Each business is saying you'll get a special deal if you come into the store. An event is something that is happening in the area, and maybe I'll buy something to eat or walk in a shop. This brings a different kind crowd; we want families to come to Loop. We use to have Fair in the Square...what happened to that event?

Board Member Edwards stated that the churches that supported that event over the years dissipated. It was a great event; it brought in 30,000 people and it just went by the wayside. It was hard to keep it up and that was a time when other neighborhoods didn't have events. But there are other events; Tivoli is going to show the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Meet Me in St. Louis and Margaret O'Brien will be there. She's 82 and she was 7 when she got the miniature academy award.

Councilmember Carr said she agreed but you have to buy a ticket for those types of things or for the Pageant. She is looking for an event that will bring people in and re-introduces them to the Loop. She wants to differentiate between a promotion and an event. The businesses do lots of things; Dan Wald is having an attic sale but we need something to get people thinking that the Loop is such a fun place and they're having an event and want to go. St. Louis really does love a party. We need to make it a destination place and not just to have dinner or a movie.

Board Member Stone asked how the smaller events are underwritten? Do we have any idea of what their aggregate cost is? Board Member Edwards stated the Treasurer could get that information. There seems to be some resistance because of the effort that is required and the lack of funding. If funding becomes available; that issue goes away right?

Mr. Rose stated that you could have the same event twice a year. It seems we are looking for events that would be comparable to the Arts Fest that Clayton just recently had. The idea is to really bring people back to the Loop to reenergize it.

**Q: Councilmember Carr asked how was Chalk the Loop received?**

A: Board Member Edwards stated that it's a fairly narrow event, some people come in for it but he's not sure it's a big draw.

Board Member Alter said for events to be successful; they need a champion to support it. Joe does a ton of work for the Ice Carnival; with his personal time commitment, there would be no Ice Carnival. Another local person did Chalk the Loop who made it successful but he was not able to continue the effort, so it fizzled a little bit. We all want events and there's enough talent and effort to do them, but we don't have that narrow minded focus and a budget to allow it to continue. If we decide to do a big event, it can't just be for one year, we need to do it for several years to build an identity; much like the Ice Carnival has done over the years.

Board Member Edwards reemphasized the point about security; saying that it is possibly the biggest reason for slower sales in this part of the Loop because of broken glass after the Stockly verdict and it's hard to overcome that, it takes several years. Every decade there's always been something disastrous in the Loop; whether it's tons of kids coming in but it's pretty much solved with the Shell station construction. We have to somehow get the message out to the public and the media that is one of the safest streets in the Midwest.

Councilmember Hales stated he believes there are two issues that need to be addressed; one is the optics/perception that the Loop is inaccessible because of parking and that it's not safe. Both of these are unfounded perceptions, he has no problem parking when he goes to the Loop and he feels perfectly safe.

### **Financials:**

Mr. Rose asked how often Council wanted to receive financial reports and also asked the Board how often they believed they could generate financial reports.

Board Member Edwards stated that the board has just recently voted to require the accounting firm to provide quarterly reports to not only the board but also to the City Clerk, City Hall and any Councilmembers who want to receive them automatically. Monthly reports would cost more money and may not be accurate.

Mr. Rose stated that one issue that has come to light in going through this process of reviewing the LSBDB books is making sure the backup documentation is there; like the invoices. We can look at the bank accounts and see what the expenditures are and check where but there is a weakness with the invoices being attached to the payment.

This might be an area where the City could work with the accounting firm that the LSBDB recently hired to provide assistance. Would there be any resistance or concerns about having the LSBDB's expenditures go through the City's process? The Finance Director has indicated that the impact of the having the LSBDB expenditures/reporting go through the City system would be pretty minimal. If this is something the Board is receptive to, we could easily integrate the systems.

Board Member Edwards stated that he personally thinks would be good.

Board Member Stone stated if it saves the LSBDB money; it would be good.

Councilmember Carr stated that this year in trying to reconcile the books; it has taken a great amount of staff hours. If we maintain the books and not have to go through this process, ultimately it will cost the City less. And the LSBDB will know exactly what they have, what the revenues are and what the expenditures are. The current books were not understandable to her and the finance department spent a lot of time on this issue. She would like to reduce the amount of time spent on trying to reconcile so she believes it's a good thing that we are offering this services to LSBDB.

Mr. Rose believed that this will expedite the release of funds because we can't release funds to the LSBDB until we reconcile the prior year records. This will be helpful from the perspective that you will be able to spend money quicker.

In conclusion:

- Quarterly Reports
- Expenditures through City system

How:

### **Marketing Approach:**

**Q: Should the marketing plan be separate and apart from the strategic plan? Are they two different things or can the marketing plan be tied to the strategic plan?**

Councilmember Carr stated the strategic plan gives a look ahead. The marketing plan should be tailored to the strategic plan, unless you decide the strategic plan no longer fits what you want to do. The marketing itself is how you get the word out. Even if it's uncomfortable; making sure you have the first foot in before somebody else does.

There are several layers to the marketing plan but fundamentally; you need to know where you're going and what you want.

Board Member Edwards stated he sent out RFP's for the strategic plan to 6 or 7 different firms with a return deadline of September 25th; and a review and discussion to be done sometime in October.

Mr. Rose stated for purposes of the Marketing Plan:

- Separate from the Strategic Plan
- Cost
- Coordination

Mr. Rose stated regarding coordination; we discussed 4 key areas of operation; now how do we get these things accomplished?

WHO: LSBDD

1. Events
2. Strategic Plan
3. Marketing Study
4. Financial Report

Board Member Stone stated 3<sup>rd</sup> party help is needed and there is a cost associated with that. It doesn't mean that we're delegating the responsibility to a 3rd party; it would still involve the Board and the City should be involved as well. The funding could come from a variety of places, most likely from EDRST's funding. What kind of money has been allocated for a strategic plan? It seems to be very small and driven by the need to check a box but it sort of handicapped by the pricing on it. He's not sure we will get anything that offers anything profound. Whether the plans or done together or separately, they should be done in a way that produces something meaningful; that either supports some of ideas that were shared during this meeting or expands upon them.

Mr. Rose stated that 2 options have been discussed;

1. Hiring a 3<sup>rd</sup> Party
2. Hiring Executive Director

How we deal with these issues may vary. How we deal with it on a temporary basis and how you deal with them on permanent bases might be vastly different. It seems that initially, these are items you desire to move forward with sooner rather than later; there was consensus in the room. With that in mind, we're likely look at temporary bases. Once the proposals are received, someone will need to go through them, do their due diligence to make a recommendation to LSBDD.

**Q: Councilmember Carr asked Mr. Rose to explain how the strategic plan is going to be paid for? Council did put in it the budget, but people may not understand how it's going to work.**

A: Mr. Rose said that was correct. The strategic plan will cost between 15-25 thousand dollars which has been allocated out of the fund balance for the LSBDD. We believe fund balance is close to 150 thousand dollars.



**Q: Councilmember Clay asked Mr. Rose share a bit about the current staffing configuration; understanding there is currently an Executive Director with an allocated portion of time for the “West Loop”. What is that person’s capacity?**

A: Mr. Rose stated that today’s structure is that of a 3<sup>rd</sup> Party scenario. The LSBSD has created an MOU with the East Community Important District (ECID). The ECID has an Executive Director, the LSBSD contracted with ECID for certain services that the Director would perform for the LSBSD. The MOU is very clear as what responsibilities that individual has.

**Q: Councilmember Clay asked if financial reporting and events were a part of those responsibilities?**

A: Mr. Rose stated that he believed events are included but he’s not sure about financial reporting. Perhaps not the number of events that are being proposed now, or the complexity or number of events discussed tonight. It’s a very different definition of events.

Board Member Stone said he thoughts regarding 3<sup>rd</sup> Party help, would be a group that could work with Joe, Michael or Dan Wald, the guys that have been working this street for a long time and a person working on events to develop more of a vision than a plan. He sees the person we have now as somebody who can jump in and make recommendations, like Joe would, but as somebody who implement the plan. We might benefit from some visionary younger people who are in the marketing world, who could introduce new ideas. Perhaps the check if the Loop in Motion event or a fair is the right thing, we could get input from their perspective. The Director is someone who works to make sure these events are a success.

Board Member Edwards stated the goal at one time was to have a Director as well as a Deputy Director for whole Delmar Loop, so that someone is in town year round and is well versed in what’s going on. The hope was to have one unified Loop Director and not two.

Mr. Rose said he wanted to clarify the LSBSD does not have an Executive Director.

Councilmember Carr stated that was correct.

Board Member Edwards stated that legally that is correct but that the person is doing everything for both parts.

Mr. Rose said the from a practical sense, the structure in place today is more of a 3<sup>rd</sup> Party, where you contract with East CID for services.

Mr. Rose said in conclusion, all of these items are important. A 3<sup>rd</sup> Party is the most reasonable approach for getting this accomplished at lease on a short term bases. To summarize:

- Are you looking for fresh people or are you comfortable with the arrangement that exist with MOU?

Councilmember Carr stated that her perspective she understands that we’ve asked Ms. L’Ecuyer to consider doing some other things and that she will discuss with the East Loop. We share a street but we are two separate governing entities; we should

coordinate and collaborate but we have very different needs. She would like to see an Executive Director; a CID is being looked at but what if that doesn't happen? Right now we have the LSDB, which we like because businesses have some input. There are too many things that are not being done and it's not fair to push it off on the City.

Mr. Rose stated that he wanted to be clear about what role the City would have; legal, financial assistances and administrative support.

- Questions remain regarding what the 3<sup>rd</sup> Party should look like.
- On a permanent bases, there's a desire to have a separate Executive Director

#### 4. Adjournment

Mayor Crow thanked everyone for coming and adjourned the Joint Study Session meeting at 6:12 p.m.

LaRette Reese  
City Clerk