

On March 20, 2020, City Manager Gregory Rose declared a State of Emergency for the City of University City due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. Due to the ongoing efforts to limit the spread of the COVID-19 virus, the May 24, 2021 meeting will be conducted via videoconference.

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**STUDY SESSION**  
**RPA 2 Steering Committee Discussion**  
VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE  
May 24, 2021  
5:30 p.m.

**AGENDA**

Requested by Councilmembers Bwayne Smotherson and Stacy Clay

**1. MEETING CALLED TO ORDER**

At the Study Session of the City Council of University City held via videoconference, on Monday, May 24, 2021, Mayor Terry Crow called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

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

Councilmember Stacy Clay  
Councilmember Aleta Klein  
Councilmember Steven McMahan  
Councilmember Jeffrey Hales  
Councilmember Tim Cusick  
Councilmember Bwayne Smotherson

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

**2. CHANGES TO REGULAR AGENDA**

Mr. Rose requested that Item I(2); Centennial Commons Gymnasium Interior Painting, be removed from the Agenda.

**3. RPA 2 STEERING COMMITTEE DISCUSSION**

Mr. Rose stated this item was requested by Councilmembers Smotherson and Clay.

Councilmember Smotherson stated this is a proposal to establish the RPA 2 Steering Committee to prepare a 3rd Ward Housing Action Plan and govern the use/leverage of 10 million dollars generated from the 1-170/Olive Redevelopment Project. He then read the following excerpts from their proposal into the record:

*"U City has been provided with a great economic development opportunity to not only redevelop a low-performing commercial portion of the Olive Corridor at I-170 but also to provide funds to help reverse the decline of the adjacent residential areas, substantially the Third Ward."*

*"University City's philosophy of providing equal resources throughout the City has not shielded the residents of the Third Ward from racist State and Federal policies that affected these neighborhoods differently. In reality, many of the City's past policies toward the areas of the city north of Olive Boulevard have actually contributed to the segregation and decline in the Third Ward."*

*"Equitable, not equal, treatment by the City is now required. Now is the time to address the needs of the Third Ward through the successful implementation of the RPA 2 Redevelopment project in an effort to stabilize the Third Ward."*

Councilmember Smotherson stated the reality that this City has put together a TIF allocating 10 million dollars to the Third Ward presents a unique opportunity for Third Ward residents who have lived through these cycles of change to participate on a Steering Committee charged with making recommendations to Council for the preparation and use of a Third Ward Housing Action Plan.

Councilmember Clay stated he recognizes that this is not the first Council with passionate members who have advocated for redevelopment in the Third Ward. So, he views this as an opportunity unlike any other and is optimistic about his colleagues' ability to look at this proposal from an equity lens and move this process forward.

Councilmember Klein stated the definitions of a Steering Committee she encountered like, "they define, prioritize and control projects; provide strategic oversight," and "supports projects from a management level," raised some questions in her mind about whether there was an intent to make this committee different than all of the other City's advisory boards and commissions. So, she would be interested in learning where this Steering Committee falls in the realm of these other entities. Is it the same or is it designed to be something different? Councilmember Smotherson stated this committee should be viewed like any other board or commission, specifically dedicated to making recommendations to Council regarding the actions that should be taken with the 10 million dollars, which in his opinion, should be broader than the mere hammers and nails utilized to repair a house.

Mayor Crow asked Councilmembers Clay and Smotherson if they had written this proposal themselves? Councilmember Smotherson stated the vast majority of the proposal had been written by them. Mayor Crow stated the very first sentence which states, "*Proposal to Establish the RPA 2 Steering Committee to prepare a Third Ward Housing Action Plan and to govern the Use/Leverage of 10 Million Dollars,*" includes language that does not have the same meaning as an entity formed to make recommendations. Councilmember Smotherson agreed and stated that the wording could easily be changed.

Councilmember Clay stated the purpose of tonight's discussion is to ascertain Council's insight about the concept of the proposal. So, he would prefer not to get hung up on terms at this point because the next step will involve consultation with the City Manager to tweak the entire proposal and develop the correct terminology.

Councilmember Cusick stated since this committee appears to have fiscal responsibilities associated with their recommendations to Council, should it be structured somewhat like the EDRST or LSBDB Boards? Councilmember Smotherson stated the final structure will be determined by Council as a whole, so if that's the direction they would like to see this committee go, then it could be modeled that way.

Mayor Crow stated he did not understand the distinction being made.

Councilmember Cusick stated since the committee would be making recommendations on how these funds should be allocated, should its members be required to go through the same vetting process as members of the EDRST or LSBDB Boards?

Councilmember McMahon stated he understands the concept, which everyone supports, and he even thinks there is support to allow residents within the Third Ward to have the lion's share of input. But when you propose something that suggests that only two members of Council should appoint every member on a committee that might be in existence for over six years and includes the implementation and monitoring of a project encompassing 10 million dollars, he believes there is a need to discuss the terminology and specifics before you get too far down the road. He then asked the following questions:

**Q. Will this Steering Committee have the ability to expend funds like the LSBDB or is it just an advisory committee like the City's other boards and commissions?**

**Q. What will the committee's role be concerning monitoring this project over a potential six-year period?**

Councilmember Clay stated although he does think the lion's share of representation from the Third Ward is critically important, he does think that Councilmember McMahon makes a fair point related to the structuring of appointments and cross-ward representation; although, their intent was to include a staff liaison component to the committee. He stated he did not necessarily envision the committee spending money like the LSBD but does think it would be more akin to the EDRST, where the allocation is made via a recommendation to Council for approval.

Councilmember Clay stated their proposal was offered as a discussion point and if his colleagues feel as though something different should happen then they are both open to that conversation.

Councilmember Smotherson stated the committee would not be controlling the funds, just making recommendations and monitoring the use of it. He stated he certainly understands that the City Manager will be in charge of all funds received for this purpose, and the role of the Steering Committee will be similar to that of Council; being apprised of how those funds are being used.

Councilmember McMahon stated if the committee's role is limited to making sure the City is spending this money on things approved by Council, then that's acceptable. But the language in the proposal states, "*The Steering Committee would continue to function through the Housing Action Plan implementation, including monitoring the appropriate use of the \$10 million funds.*"

Councilmember Smotherson stated "*monitoring the appropriate use,*" simply means making sure the funds are being used appropriately for the Third Ward.

Councilmember McMahon stated this proposal talks about establishing a committee to implement and monitor a Third Ward Housing Action Plan. Has some plan already been established?

Councilmember Smotherson stated the Committee's role will be to assist in developing a Housing Action Plan that will be presented to Council for approval.

Councilmember Hales stated he thinks everyone appreciates the need to fix issues in the Third Ward, as well as the desire to have inclusion and as much public engagement as possible from the residents who live there. But fundamentally, this committee's structure is very different than the other boards and commissions in that it seeks to have oversight of City funds; its members are appointed exclusively by members of Council from the Third Ward; it includes those same members as participants on the committee and offers little or no consideration to the inclusion of residents outside of the Third Ward. All of which raises several questions in his mind:

**Q. Will the members of Council participating on this committee be voting members?**

**Q. What influence would a member of Council have over a committee that has been appointed solely by those members who also live in the Third Ward?**

**Q. Is there a reason or belief that someone outside of the Third Ward would not have a similar interest in addressing these needs?**

**Q. When you're proposing that a Steering Committee be established to implement a 10-million-dollar housing plan that only two members of Council can make an appointment to; regardless of the fact that their recommendations will be brought before the entire Council, who will be held accountable?**

Councilmember Hales stated except for Councilmember Klein, every member of Council has gone through this entire process together, and there was no daylight between anyone about what the issues were and what Council needed to do to hopefully make improvements in the Third Ward. Council started this plan together and he would like to see every member finish it together. So, with

that goal in mind, and with a great deal of respect for Councilmembers Clay and Smotherson, this proposal seems like a big departure from the typical advisory boards and commissions, which have never been comprised of such an insularly group that has been narrowly determined by a minute group of Council members. In his opinion, agreeing to do so, would mean abdicating your fiscal responsibility as an elected official.

Councilmember Hales stated Council has one shot to get this right, and when the money is gone, it's gone. And when all is said and done, he can't imagine how he or any other member of this Council that has been prohibited from even making an appointment to this committee, could explain to their constituents why they agreed to allow such a proposal to move forward.

Councilmember Clay stated as it stands, he does not think the proposal is necessarily an abdication of his colleagues' responsibilities because everything will flow back to the entire Council. But it does sound like there are some concerns about the appointment process. He stated for him, it is about having vast representation, however, he is open to a different process and would like to take a moment to figure out a structure that works for everyone.

Councilmember Smotherson stated there will absolutely be a member of staff selected by the City Manager to act as a liaison on this committee. And while he understands the points that have been made and agrees that there has never been a committee structured like the one they're proposing, there has also never been this type of unique opportunity for the Third Ward. So, he hopes everyone understands that they are not trying to minimize anyone's responsibility because in every case all final decisions will be made by the entire body.

Mayor Crow stated since this is not his first rodeo, he recognizes that when you create an entity like the one being proposed, the mere act of being appointed automatically generates momentum. And what happens if Council decides to go in a different direction, is that these individuals become deflated, feel as though they've wasted their time, and that Council had no intentions of listening to their suggestions. So, how this group is structured will be incredibly important. That said, he is extremely uncomfortable with allowing only two members to make all of the appointments: with two members of Council being members of the Steering Committee, and all of the appointees being from the Third Ward.

Mayor Crow stated he also is not in agreement with this statement, *"The primary purpose for inviting a commercial redevelopment project of the magnitude of Olive/ I-170 (RPA1), was to promote the revitalization of the Third Ward housing stock by providing seed money for its improvement.* Because the primary purpose of this development was to revitalize the entire City. He stated what he recalls is that Council recognized the intersection of Olive/1-170 was in need of economic development, and one of the benefits of that economic development plan was that it included a specific component for revitalizing the Third Ward. He stated the entire community will be asked to live by the language included in this proposal and he does not believe anyone would agree; in any shape, form, or fashion that the primary purpose for this commercial redevelopment project was to promote the revitalization of the Third Ward housing stock.

Mayor Crow stated while he has and will continue to commend all of his colleagues who have been a part of this process for conducting themselves in an honorable and professional manner, at some point, there has to be a balance between how the money is spent and who should be involved. He stated he certainly has no qualms about listening to everyone's viewpoint because at the end of the day, he believes everyone has the City's best interest at heart, and as a result, all of the issues will be resolved. But he has no intention of giving up his right to appoint someone to this Steering Committee

Councilmember Klein stated she does think input by the Third Ward should be significant since it will be important to understand what residents want and incorporate that into the plan. However, since these entities do not implement the ideas or details necessary to formulate a solid economic development plan, she does have a concern about the proposal's suggestion that the Steering Committee take on this task.

And from what she's read, there does not seem to be any significant input from professionals who are skilled in organizing, garnering input from communities, and drafting that information into policies and programs that the Commissions or Boards are then asked to tweak to meet their specifications. Councilmember Klein stated it simply does not make sense to expect a committee of volunteers to implement a 10-million-dollar housing plan.

Councilmember Smotherson stated Councilmember Klein is absolutely right, and although it may not have been clearly expressed in the proposal, one aspect of the committee's charge will be to engage professionals to assist them with developing a plan.

Councilmember Smotherson stated he has been involved in this process from the very beginning when meetings were held on Saturday mornings at Bread Co. So, he would respectfully say that the original impetus behind this development was to establish a way to fund the stabilization of the Third Ward. He stated it only blossomed into a redevelopment project for the entire City after it was turned over to Council. But the bottom line is that the proposal is merely a template they drafted to effectuate this discussion and ensure that the Third Ward is adequately represented in the process.

Councilmember Clay asked if everyone would be amenable to the presumption that typically there are seven members on the City's boards and commissions, and that the predominant members on this seven-member Steering Committee should be from the Third Ward?

Mayor Crow stated he does not have a problem with the number of residents from the Third Ward. And if each member of Council has a voice in the population of this committee he could easily commit to this request.

Councilmember Hales stated he has no reservations about the Steering Committee being weighted towards the Third Ward, but he would also like to be afforded the opportunity to participate in the appointments.

He stated while he does not want to pick a fight, he does take issue with the document presented to Council because, in his opinion, it is a proposal; not a conversation starter, which in his mind, represents a departure from how Council has always conducted these types of discussions. Councilmember Hales stated he appreciates the thought that went into this document but wishes that it had been presented more along the lines of this is where we are; here's where we think we need to go, or here are the things we think are important, rather than in the form of a proposal that Council was given no opportunity to discuss beforehand. He stated one of the strengths of this Council is that out of those kinds of conversations; no matter whose idea it is, concepts are fully developed and typically lead to a robust plan of action.

Councilmember Smotherson stated both he and Councilmember Clay believed that the best approach would be to provide Council with a complete and professional document, but they are certainly open to suggestions. He stated the next hurdle seems to be with whether the two members of Council from the Third Ward should be a part of this committee. And while neither of them believed they should be a voting member; they did think it would be unfair to designate only one member since this was a very significant Third Ward project.

Councilmember Cusick stated although page 3, states, *"Most of the \$10 million should be dedicated exclusively to housing programs and projects,"* and that *"The Steering Committee would continue to function through the Housing Action Plan implementation, including monitoring the appropriate use of the 10-million-dollar fund,"* it does not outline how much of the money should go towards residential projects and how much should go to economic development. In fact, it does not even mention economic development. So, who will be responsible for making these types of decisions?

Councilmember Clay stated if his understanding is correct, the additional 5 million dollars, which is not in the purview of this committee, will be dedicated to economic development.

Mr. Rose stated that is correct, \$5 million of the 15 million dollars will go towards the Olive Boulevard Corridor.

Councilmember Cusick asked if any economic decisions associated with the Olive Boulevard Corridor would be separate from this proposal? Councilmember Clay stated that they would be.

Mr. Rose stated the Redevelopment Agreement also identifies that the \$5 million could be used for the Relocation Assistance Program. So, if Council determines that this aspect of housing falls under the realm of economic development, then it could be included in the \$5 million.

Councilmember Clay stated it sounds like everyone agrees that a predominant number of members on the committee should be from the Third Ward. And while he's not sure if this is the correct scenario, Mayor Crow, Councilmembers Hales, Smotherson, and himself will each appoint a member from the Third Ward, and Councilmembers Klein, McMahon, and Cusick would appoint a member from their wards.

Councilmember Klein stated an idea she received from several people in the Third Ward that she thought was a great suggestion, is for Council to consider establishing a community development organization to gather input from the entire Ward, promote mass engagement, and ensure that everyone in the Third Ward feels included.

Councilmember Clay stated he appreciates the idea and does not necessarily view that concept as being mutually exclusive from a Steering Committee because conceivably you could have both.

Councilmember McMahon stated perhaps a number greater than seven members would make more sense to ensure representation from every Ward. He stated the rationale for his suggestion is that he does not think anyone can guarantee that the Third Ward's Housing Action Plan won't have some type of impact on the First and Second Wards. And should it start to affect other areas of the City those impacted residents should have an opportunity to offer their perspective. He stated there should be a diversity of thought so that no one feels overlooked in the process.

Councilmember McMahon stated it sounds like the language on page 3 is talking about how the Steering Committee will spend existing tax revenues; "Non-housing related neighborhood infrastructure, amenities, and safety needs should be funded from existing tax revenues and additional tax revenue generated by the Olive/I-170 TIF Project." However, since his understanding is that infrastructure will be a part of the development plan, is this language suggesting that Council toss that out? And under what authority would the Steering Committee have an obligation to review and recommend how the City spends its general tax revenue?

Councilmember Hales stated although he actually has someone from the Third Ward in mind for his appointment, he does not think the balance of representation is nearly as important as participation by residents in the Third Ward. Especially because the preliminary assessment of needs in the Third Ward was initiated at the 2018 meetings held at the Community Center.

He stated another thing is that Mr. Rose has hired an Assistant City Manager who is scheduled to start today that has a fairly significant background in housing and housing programs. So, he would suggest taking a short pause to provide Ms. Smith with an opportunity to provide her thoughts on this topic.

Councilmember Cusick stated in light of the comments regarding the need for professional expertise, and a desire to hear recommendations from members of staff, he was not quite clear on whether the way forward would entail a Steering Committee or if there was room to explore other options?

Councilmember Smotherson informed Councilmember Cusick that no final decision had been made. He then asked Mr. Rose if he would provide him with a copy of the Assistant City Manager's housing background and experience.

Mr. Mulligan stated since the premise is that the \$10 million is available for housing programs, what he would like to mention is that there are legal constraints on the expenditure of funds generated from this project. Under Missouri law certain dedicated taxes like fire, parks, and stormwater, can only be used for certain purposes, and these funds fall within that same category. He stated his understanding is that to achieve the \$10 million there is a need to use certain dedicated sales taxes, which would probably mean pulling money from the General Fund or another source. So, the bottom line is that there may not necessarily be 10 million dollars for a housing program.

Mr. Rose concurred with Mr. Mulligan and stated although there may not be \$10 million available exclusively for housing programs, it could still be used for the Third Ward so that it meets the obligation Council has established.

Mr. Rose stated staff is in the process of scheduling a retreat for Council, and if it is acceptable, this is the type of discussion he would like to add to the list of topics so that staff can have an opportunity to provide input. He stated for major issues like this, his normal approach is to first obtain guiding principles from Council, allow staff to develop a program, and then conduct community outreach to garner their opinions about the program.

Mr. Rose stated he would be happy to share Ms. Smith's background with everyone because as Council may recall, he is interested in creating a housing program for the entire City by augmenting the funds it would otherwise give to the Third Ward.

#### **4. ADJOURNMENT**

Mayor Crow thanked everyone for their participation and adjourned the Study Session at 6:29 p.m.

LaRette Reese  
City Clerk

