

Minutes

The City Council of the City of Leawood, Kansas, met for a Work Session at Council Chamber, 4800 Town Center Drive at 6:00 PM on Monday, June 6, 2022. Mayor Peggy Dunn presided.

Councilmembers Present: Debra Filla, James Azeltine, Chuck Sipple, Andrew Osman, Lisa Harrison, Mary Larson, Jim Rawlings, Julie Cain

Staff Present: Chris Claxton, Parks, Rec & Arts Director; Patty Bennett, City Attorney; Mark Klein, Planning Services Director; Holly York, Cultural Arts Supervisor; Stacie Stromberg, Assistant City Clerk; Mark Tepesch, Info. Services Specialist

Others Present: Anne Blessing, Chair of Leawood Arts Council; Kim Hinkle, Chair of Art in Public Places Initiative (APPI) and Art Selection Committee

Others Present via Zoom: William Nemitoff, Artist

Discuss 75th Anniversary Art Piece

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by Mayor Peggy Dunn.

Mayor Dunn thanked Councilmember Harrison for being the City's liaison to the 75th Anniversary Selection Committee. She asked Kim Hinkle to mention who was involved on the Selection Committee.

Kim Hinkle said that it was made up of herself, Anne Blessing, Burton Dunbar, Rachael Cozad, Bill Gautreaux, Amy Girard, Carol Logan, and Holly York.

Mayor Dunn noted that the artist that's being recommended is present via Zoom. She thanked him for being there.

Councilmember Sipple noted that Councilmember Harrison recommended one art piece for the 75th anniversary, but asked if there was a chance they would see the other two pieces in the city in the future.

Councilmember Harrison said there is a good possibility of that. They had 21 submissions over all.

Councilmember Osman asked about the cost for possibly moving the art piece, if in the future it's determined that the recommended placement location isn't sufficient.

Ms. Claxton estimated that placement would cost between \$50,000 and \$60,000.

Councilmember Harrison discussed that they focused on two locations for placement. Her main goal was to try to get an art piece in the north part of the city. There is hope and possibility to incorporate the other art pieces around the city in the coming years.

Councilmember Sipple inquired as to whether any of the pieces have been constructed yet.

Councilmember Harrison confirmed that they are all blueprints currently.

Mayor Dunn stated that she didn't get that answer from reading the packet.

Ms. Claxton advised that the pieces are in a schematic phase right now. She had worked with their conservator, Paula Hobart, to determine what materials will hold up in Midwest weather. She noted that when an art piece is being commissioned, the artist typically starts from scratch.

Ms. Hinkle advised that this is a planned piece and that the artist is going to have many of these throughout the world. It will not be something that is exclusive to Leawood.

Councilmember Azeltine expressed that he thinks this will be a great piece for photo-taking for families. He asked about security for the piece since it gives people the ability to walk through and possibly climb on it.

Councilmember Harrison confirmed that it is being constructed to be to be touched and interacted with, but noted that security and safety are always going to be concerns in a public park.

Councilmember Osman asked if the sculpture would be visible from the highway if placement ends up being at the park on Lee and Mission.

Mayor Dunn said that it will be very visible.

Councilmember Harrison stated that the corner doesn't look appealing right now, but has great potential with landscaping and finishing the wastewater construction.

Mayor Dunn asked Ms. Claxton if the placement area would be elevated enough to withstand the most horrific rains.

Chris Claxton, Parks and Recreation Art Director, confirmed that they will elevate it. She's been in discussion with David Ley and others about what they need to do to bring that up. Depending on what gets decided this evening, their plan is to move forward with an agreement. Knowing this art piece won't be installed until August of 2023, they have plenty of time to mitigate any issues with elevation. The water that is seen at the location now is just water that's been diverted from the roadway. She noted that they haven't seen any flooding up to this point.

Councilmember Azeltine asked Ms. Claxton if the mitigation expenses have been figured into the cost of the display.

Ms. Claxton stated that it had not been, because it all hinges on the approval of the piece and the location. She discussed that the next step would be to reach an agreement with the artist to coordinate the mitigation somehow.

Councilmember Azeltine asked if Ms. Claxton has any idea about how much it will cost to modify the area.

Ms. Claxton advised that they may be looking at a figure anywhere between \$15,000 and \$20,000. It all depends on what it will entail to raise the ground in the area.

Councilmember Azeltine expressed that it would be nice to have some sort of idea about the expense, because he would hate to see it getting cost-prohibitive.

Ms. Claxton stated that, right now, they are looking at how to fill the ground in. She expressed that there may be opportunities to take dirt from other places around the city to use for this project, but that can't be done until they understand what they have to do.

Councilmember Azeltine stated that he wouldn't hold her to a set number, but just wanted a rough idea.

Ms. Claxton stated that all of that would typically be in the project and isn't something that would come out of the Public Works or other operating budget.

Councilmember Cain inquired as to whether they will be raising the ground to create a small hill in order to walk through the art piece, or if they would need to construct stairs.

Ms. Claxton stated they would bring the area up to the current grade of Mission and Lee. Their main focus right now is creating landscaping around the piece to hide the wastewater buildings in the background. She said that they may raise up more of the area in the future for community garden purposes.

Councilmember Filla expressed concern about the area being considered a wetland if, by chance, nature got benevolent.

Ms. Claxton stated that they are working on that now. The engineers are doing their job to look for certain perimeters that would determine whether it is considered a wetland or not. She expressed that, in the event it does get designated as such, there are a lot of banks in the Kansas City area that credits could be purchased from.

Councilmember Filla stated that it would be nice to take a look at the post-plan of having a community garden there.

Councilmember Osman asked if there were any plans for parking at or near where the art piece will be placed.

Ms. Claxton stated that the only plans they had thus far have been with regards to parking for the community gardens.

Councilmember Osman expressed that he was concerned because the parking lot in the park is far away and the path of least resistance would be for people to part at Mission Farms, where it is private and overfull already. He stated that he wants to avoid issues in the coming years.

Ms. Claxton agreed and understood the parking concerns and stated that the question would be whether or not City Council wanted to make plans for parking places.

Councilmember Osman stated that he doesn't want to put a parking lot in right now, but was a bit apprehensive about vehicles parking wherever they see fit.

Mayor Dunn introduced the artist, Will Nemitoff, to the discussion.

Mr. Nemitoff introduced himself as being born and raised in Johnson County and attending schools in Leawood before going on to college in Tulane for architecture to pursue large-scale art installations. He addressed the concerns of security and safety of the art piece by telling City Councilmembers about how the piece is being constructed and how well-lit it will be. With regards to the elevation of the piece, he felt it would be a great opportunity for stormwater management. He ran some numbers regarding the cost of shipping the piece from New Orleans and so far, it looks to be between \$12,000 and \$20,000. He expressed his excitement to bring this piece to his hometown.

Mayor Dunn congratulated Mr. Nemitoff and shared her personal belief that the recommended placement is the best option for Leawood because of the lighting.

Ms. Claxton asked if Mr. Nemitoff was fabricating and living in New Orleans, and he verified that to be the case.

Councilmember Filla asked about the number of rods that intertwine on the sculpture and Mr. Nemitoff confirmed that there are 75 on each side currently, to commemorate the 75th anniversary of Leawood.

Councilmember Cain expressed her thrill with the art piece and asked if it is true that the piece has lights that will twinkle.

Mr. Nemitoff confirmed that is what his intentions are and that he works with a great lighting team.

Councilmember Cain expressed that this piece would very likely ultimately be chosen, but echoed others' concerns about the cost of putting this large piece in the proposed place. She stated that there is already a funding shortage for the community gardens, let alone adding public parking or a trail to this piece. She continued by suggesting that there may be better placement opportunities for cost reasons and asked if there was a tipping point for how much money would be too much before they would consider the possibility of placing the piece elsewhere.

Mr. Nemitoff weighed in and said he would like to push for it to be in an easily accessible location.

Mayor Dunn asked if the rods themselves are silver with lights in them and if they are solid metal. Mr. Nemitoff explained that the lights will be at the tips and base, but the rods will be white, powder-coated aluminum.

Councilmember Sipple expressed satisfaction with the piece itself, but severe reservations with the placement of it at the proposed location because of cost, parking, etc. He suggested moving

placement to right outside of City Hall. He further inquired about the piece being a detraction if visible from Interstate 435, due to its overall height and size.

Councilmember Harrison talked about the City Plants that Overland Park incorporated. She stated that it isn't of enough concern for KDOT or the City to require special permission for. She continued that Gezer Park has a lot of symbolism as a location for the piece.

Mayor Dunn stated that having the piece placed at City Hall would not be a good idea because of the size of it, as well as the number of children that will be interested in playing on it.

Councilmember Osman stated that he doesn't like the idea of the piece being at Gezer Park because having it at Lee Boulevard and Mission keeps it at the center of the city.

Mayor Dunn stated that Gezer Park is the most beautiful park in Leawood and she doesn't feel like it needs any improvements right now, but agreed that the placement of the piece needs to be economically feasible.

Kim Hinkle, Vice Chair of Leawood Arts Council, commented about the committee's thought process on location and how they narrowed it down. She expressed that Gezer Park and another location they discussed are meant for smaller scale art pieces. She went on to say that the corner of Mission and Lee Boulevard is in need of improvement and how perfect an art piece of this size would be to have there. She discussed the symbolism behind the location as well.

Councilmember Cain agreed with Ms. Hinkle and reminded the Councilmembers that the Committee was given two sites to choose from when creating plans for the art piece. She expressed pause about placing the sculpture at Lee Boulevard and Mission Road simply because of how close it would be to the wastewater treatment plant and the highway and how that would look in photographs.

Councilmember Azeltine asked if having an art piece that is internally lit and the long-term care for it was figured out in the maintenance of it.

Ms. Hinkle confirmed that it had been. The LED lights that are going to be used are very long-lasting, up to 15 years, and thus will not require extensive maintenance.

Councilmember Filla asked Mayor Dunn about the possibility of federal funds that the City may have available for use for maintenance.

Mayor Dunn stated that they have not had a work session to discuss that, but she didn't think it would be an option.

Councilmember Filla expressed the importance for funds to be dispersed accordingly for the community garden.

Councilmember Sipple stated that he would like to discuss and come to an agreement on a location for the piece.

Mayor Dunn asked the other Councilmembers if they felt the need for discussion of the location.

Councilmember Azeltine stated that he was okay with the location, but echoed Councilmember Cain's earlier concern of the mitigation costs for having it placed at that location.

Councilmember Sipple expressed his opposition of the proposed location of the piece.

Councilmember Osman stated that he would ideally like it near City Hall at the roundabout, but he is okay with the proposed location.

Councilmember Harrison expressed approval of the proposed location.

Councilmember Cain stated that she isn't sold on the location due to unknown costs, but hoped they could make it work.

Councilmember Larson expressed her satisfaction with the proposed location.

Councilmember Rawlings stated that he is okay with the location.

Councilmember Filla gave her approval of the location.

Mayor Dunn asked Ms. Claxton how long it would take to find out the cost of raising and improving the area where the art piece is to be installed.

Ms. Claxton stated that she will move forward with finding out, but could not confirm how long it might take. She asked Mr. Nemitoff to confirm the timeframe of fabrication and installation of the sculpture.

Mr. Nemitoff said that he would like to have one year from the time the contract is signed to the final date of installation.

Councilmember Azeltine stated his reasoning for bringing up the site issue and cost of mitigation. They've had projects in the past that everyone was in favor of, but then they were up against a deadline. He used Gezer Park as an example.

Mayor Dunn mentioned that she thought they got the wrong estimate originally and that caused a significant delay.

Ms. Claxton agreed and stated that there hadn't been a good understanding by the architect for that project.

Councilmember Azeltine asked if the City would want to spend \$2 million on what Gezer Park is today. He feels that it was a bargain and that there wouldn't even be a question between spending \$1 million or \$2 million. He considers the fulfillment and placement of the 75th Anniversary art piece to bring about the same consensus from residents of Leawood.

Mayor Dunn agreed.

Councilmember Harrison expressed being a part of a lot of anniversaries and that the Leawood Foundation would appreciate a boost to the funding for the site location for this art project. She added that they could come up with a number of ways to raise funds.

Councilmember Cain proposed letting people buy branches of the sculpture as a donation to fund the project.

Councilmember Sipple asked if it would make better sense to look at the logical footprint of what it would be like to improve the corner at Lee Boulevard and Mission Road while simultaneously creating the space for the community garden and parking.

Ms. Claxton mentioned that they had not taken the extra step of involving the design consultant this far, but they had one two years ago and she stated that she would be happy to share that with the Councilmembers again. She stated that there are some budgets with Public Art and Impact Fee monies.

Mayor Dunn asked if Mr. Nemitoff had any questions or comments.

Mr. Nemitoff expressed his excitement to work with the City of Leawood on this project to get one of his own art pieces placed in his hometown.

Mayor Dunn thanked the Selection Committee for their work on this project.

Meeting was adjourned at 7:07 p.m.