



### **Minnesota Ballpark Authority Work Session – March 21, 2008**

Chair Cramer called the work session for the Minnesota Ballpark Authority to order at 1:00 PM. The roll was taken. Commissioner John Wade was absent. Kathleen Lamb, Legal Counsel, was present.

#### **1. Overview from the State Auditor's Office on the Annual Audit**

State Auditor's Office - Dianne Syverson, Randy Vogt, Mike Hance

Mr. Vogt said that the purpose of this meeting is to discuss the new statements on auditing standards (SAS). There are several SAS's that affect the Audit that they will conduct and they are issued by the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants. Mr. Vogt reviewed the SAS's that would be discussed and said that the objective of those is for the Auditors to get a better understanding of the MBA's interim control structure. Mr. Vogt referred to an entrance meeting letter that described the audit process.

Mr. Vogt said that the Auditor's office has already discussed several items with Mr. Kenney and Ms. Livermore. The first item that was covered was whether or not the MBA was a component unit of Hennepin County and the outcome of that was that the MBA was not. They also reviewed the fund structure of using a general fund and a capital projects fund and a trust account. Mr. Vogt asked if the MBA planned to use an 18 month or two year presentation. Ms. Livermore said that in her discussions with the MBA Board and staff, the preference would be to do a two year presentation. Mr. Vogt asked if there were other significant items that the MBA Board wanted to communicate to the State Auditor's office. The MBA Board members said that they were ready to proceed with the audit.

#### **2. District Enhancements**

Mr. Kenney referred to a map of the ballpark site and area around it and to a sheet showing a list of current and potential activities that could enhance the ballpark project and the surrounding area. The first item referred to the ABC Ramps which are owned by MnDOT and operated by the City of Minneapolis. Mr. Kenney noted that item 2b on the document calls for special event parking. He said that when initial discussions about developing a site for a new ballpark were taking place, the Twins had contemplated building their own structured parking north of the 7<sup>th</sup> Street Bridge. This would have been expensive and could have precluded potential development in that area. By reaching an agreement with MnDOT and the City of Minneapolis, the Twins have

been able to take care of quite a bit of their program parking within the existing A ramp. The ABC Ramps Working Group will also have specialized parking in the A Ramp with this improvement for Target Center events and holiday shoppers. Mr. Kenney noted item 3 on the activities sheet which is the pedestrian walkway from the A Ramp to the ballpark. He said that this is currently not in the base design of the ballpark but the ABC Working Group is trying to secure funding to have that built so there is a direct connection from the ballpark site to the Ramp. This would get parkers to and from that parking facility without having to cross 7<sup>th</sup> Street. Mr. Kenney noted that in addition to this skyway connecting to the ballpark, it will also get patrons of the A Ramp to the street level. Commissioner Sykora asked if the Twins or the MBA would be expected to pay for any of these improvements. Mr. Kenney said that if MnDOT is successful in securing funding for the skyway connection, there will be discussions about who would be responsible for the design, construction, operation and maintenance of the skyway. This could be an opportunity for the Twins to participate in terms of a contribution. In terms of the MBA's role, Mr. Kenney said that operations and maintenance is not one of our charges. However, if the funding is secured for the skyway, there will need to be more discussions about how the agreements are put together and that will be brought back before the MBA Board for approval.

Mr. Kenney said that the next item on the activities sheet is related to City infrastructure improvements. The reconstruction of 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue is currently scheduled for reconstruction in 2009, however there is some utility work that the Twins need to do there so there are discussions going on with the City of Minneapolis about moving the 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue reconstruction project up to 2008 so that the road will not have to be torn up two years in a row. There is also an opportunity at this location for enhancements beyond the City's basic road reconstruction, since this will be a key gateway from Washington Avenue and the North Loop Neighborhood to the ballpark. Mr. Kenney said that other major City investments that are taking place around the ballpark include the extension of the Cedar Lake Trail which runs through the ballpark, a survey of the neighborhood around the ballpark to improve the curb cuts and make them wider for accessibility purposes, and the one block segment of 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue at Washington that will be reconstructed. Mr. Kenney said that there is potential down the road to enhance that 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue area as a corridor from Washington Avenue to the ballpark.

Mr. Kenney said Hennepin County is pursuing several upgrades to the HERC facility. The County has engaged the University of Minnesota School of Design to help them come up with ways to make this building more environmentally friendly. They are exploring a list of possible projects for completion by the opening of the ballpark. Mr. Kenney said that there is potential to work with Hennepin County to create a gateway to the ballpark district from the Near North Side and improve the pedestrian feel along the HERC property.

Mr. Kenney noted two Ballpark Project related items on the activity sheet. The first is the conversion of 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue North from 3<sup>rd</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> Street. It is currently a one way street but 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue has been closed at 7<sup>th</sup> Street to make enough space for the ballpark so this is mitigation for that closure. There is a walking tour of Minneapolis that is being developed and this segment has been identified as one of the walking corridors through the ballpark site. Because 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue has been closed as a through street there is an opportunity to narrow the lane and create a wider pedestrian and bicycle path north of 7<sup>th</sup> Street. There is also an opportunity for Cedar Lake Bike Trail users to come up from the bike trail and utilize bike parking and go to the games.

Mr. Kenney then referred to the 2010 priorities not yet funded segment of the activities sheet. First on that list is the extension of the pedestrian plaza bridge from 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue to up 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue North. Mr. Kenney said that this is the highest unfunded priority for the ballpark project. He said

that as earlier infrastructure project bid packages are closed out, the project contingency fund may have some money available but we will need to look for partners to help fund the bridge extension. Mr. Kenney said that Public Art and district gateways are also unfunded priorities. He noted that Washington and 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue would be an interesting place for a district gateway. The City is looking at creating a new Washington Avenue and this would be an interesting area to mark as the start of a district. Other potential unfunded improvements are at 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Streets. Hennepin Avenue is a major corridor and many people coming to the ballpark will be coming down these streets. Mr. Kenney said that enhancing the sidewalks with things like banners and decorative lighting would be useful here. The last potential unfunded enhancement is 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue at Washington. The City's typical road reconstruction does not include streetscape enhancements so this would be an area to consider.

Mr. Kenney said that the last item noted on the activity sheet is the broader category of what could be developed after 2010. There is potential to create strong connections to new development north of the 5<sup>th</sup> Street bridge and south of the 7<sup>th</sup> Street bridge. These will be good things to consider when the Central Corridor opens in 2014 and there will be a need to ensure that the capacity is there to handle these additional rail lines. Chair Cramer said that one of the areas of focus of the 2010 Partners group is the enhancement of that LRT connection point. Mr. Ballentine said that Hennepin County concurs with that too.

Commissioner Sykora asked what the highest priority is other than the 6<sup>th</sup> Street Plaza connection. Mr. Kenney said that it depends on the budget and in finding partners but connections from Hennepin Avenue into the site are important particularly at 7<sup>th</sup> Street because that is likely to be where a lot of the pedestrian traffic will come from. Chair Cramer asked when we would know more about what is left in the infrastructure budget. Mr. Kenney said that he thought that we would know more about that in early summer. When that happens we will be able to begin to program some of that funding and have further discussion with others about participation related to the extension of the bridge. Commissioner Sykora said that if the ramp were extended another block that would be a real asset to the flow of downtown and that would be a good thing to get done early. Chair Cramer said that hopefully the infrastructure budget can accommodate that and it seems like the consensus would be to go ahead and do that if the funds are available in the budget. Commissioner Campbell said that if the City is going to reconstruct 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue it would make sense to do it early and prepare it for whatever amenities might come later. Mr. Kenney said that has been the nature of the discussions so far. Chair Cramer said that the MBA could play a key role in setting the pattern for streetscape enhancements so that there is some coherence to what the district looks like. He said that he would like to bring an action item to the Board at our April meeting about seeding a fund to begin streetscape work. He said that doing this now will hopefully bring others to the table to do the same.

### **3. MBA Strategic Planning**

Mr. Kenney said that in November 2007, the MBA Board met in our first work session. At that meeting we talked about developing a mission and vision for our organization in 2008. Chair Cramer noted that Commissioner Vekich has knowledge and interest in this discussion. He asked Commissioner Vekich if he had any comments to frame our discussion today. Commissioner Vekich said that we have only one chance to get this right and this project is about more than just building the ballpark; the district around the ballpark needs to be considered too. He said that his initial thoughts as we begin to frame a discussion around our mission and vision are that the MBA needs to be accountable for this project. Looking at the impact this ballpark will have on the area around it and what it will be 50 years from now requires in-depth thinking and discussion among all interested parties. The MBA serving as a coordinator for all parties coming to the table

to plan this right is an important role for us to play. This will be important in developing a sustainable design that will last a century. Commissioner Vekich said that we should ask ourselves the question does the MBA provide the vision for doing this or is the MBA a catalyst to bring everyone together to get to that vision. Chair Cramer said that he is not sure the MBA can create the vision for the future but quite sure that it can be the catalyst to bring everyone together to get to that vision.

Commissioner Vekich said that in considering a vision and a mission for an organization, the vision is about looking out 40 to 50 years and what we would like to see for the ballpark and surrounding district. The mission is the engager to getting to the vision and can change over time as we get closer to the vision. He said that the mission will then drive four or five broad strategies. Chair Cramer said that our mission could be the catalytic role towards the broader vision for what the ballpark itself can induce and strategies could include building the ballpark right, using our limited resources in a way that leverages other investment and being a convener of these discussions.

Commissioner Vekich requested that MBA staff draft a statement for the MBA Board to review.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:30 p.m.