

City of Columbus
Regular City Council Meeting
Closed Meeting Format
MN Statute Section 13D.05, subd. 3(c)
08.10.2022

The 08.10.2022 meeting of the City of Columbus City Council was closed to the public at 7:39 p.m. by Mayor Jesse Preiner at City Hall to discuss negotiations for acquisition of right-of-way for the West Freeway Drive project. Present were Councilmembers Robert Busch (via teleconference), Janet Hegland, Shelly Logren and Sue Wagamon; City Administrator Elizabeth Mursko, City Attorney Bill Griffith (via teleconference), City Engineer Kevin Bittner, Public Communication Coordinator Connor Keith and Public Works Director Jim Windingstad.

17. (North) West Freeway Drive – PROW Acquisition

Griffith shared that the City has had two meetings with Bluhm Brothers about the land the City needs to acquire for the West Freeway Drive project. The City's value of the land and Bluhm Brothers' is vastly different. Griffith said the prior owner of the Bluhm Brothers' property had their land appraised a couple years ago, when the county was acquiring land, which valued their parcel at \$4 per square foot. Since then, Griffith said property values as a whole have dropped and this particular property features both wetland and developable land to further influence its value.

A map provided by Bolton and Menk broke the land into four different parts. An orange section, representing 5,439 square feet of upland area, has already been acquired by the City in a permanent slope easement. A green section, representing 1,331 square feet of upland area, is upland area the City would need to acquire. A blue section, representing 819 square feet of wetland, is included in the easement. Finally, a pink section, which represents 9,447 square feet of wetland the City would need to acquire.

Griffith said the typical value of wetland is between \$0.50 and \$1 per square foot, while the City valued the upland at \$3.12 per square feet in its most recent acquisition for a similar easement for the southwest sewer project. The City's most recent offer to Bluhm Brothers was \$11,237.97 plus 10 percent of full value for fee interest and \$2,500, which is half the appraisal reimbursement, for a final total of \$14,895. The Bluhm Brothers countered the City's offer and requested \$2 per square foot, totaling \$34,218.

Griffith said the City could employ a quick-take, condemnation approach which would require 90 days following 30 days' notice of right-of-way acquisition, but the City would still have to negotiate land values. Griffith recommended accepting Bluhm Brothers' final offer of \$34,218 because the City would pay at least that much pursuing the quick-take or eminent domain.

Wagamon asked where the purchasing money would come from. Mursko said it would be added to the project's \$500,000 shortfall. Griffith asked if the project was yet underway. Bittner said this right-of-way acquisition and the permitting process were the last major things before going out to bid.

Motion by Wagamon to accept the counteroffer by Bluhm Brothers for the City to acquire the public right of way required to relocate (North) West Freeway Drive at the dollar amount of \$34,218. Seconded by Hegland. Logren – aye; Wagamon – aye; Hegland – aye; Busch – aye; Preiner – aye. Motion carries.

Griffith said a resolution authorizing the transaction will be brought forth at the next City Council meeting.

Motion by Preiner to adjourn. Seconded by Wagamon. Roll call vote: Logren – aye; Wagamon – aye; Hegland – aye; Busch – aye; Preiner – aye. Motion carries.

Meeting adjourned at 7:49 p.m.