

**MINUTES OF A STUDY SESSION OF THE PRINCETON CITY COUNCIL  
HELD ON APRIL 1, 2021 4:30 P.M.**

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Mayor Thom Walker called the meeting to order. Council members present were Vicki Hallin, Jenny Gerold, Jules Zimmer and Jeff Reynolds. Staff present, Finance Director Tracy Peters, Public Works Director Bob Gerold, Community Development Manager Stephanie Hillesheim, Police Chief Todd Frederick, Clerk Shawna Jenkins, Wastewater Plant Manager Chris Klinghagen, and Fire Chief Ron Lawrence.

School Superintendent Ben Barton and Architect Von Wold presented the idea of a Fieldhouse. They provided potential estimates and cost impacts, and a possible partnership with the City.

Eric Strandberg said he was one that went and looked at the Fieldhouse in Chisago. A family membership was \$300 and it was heavily used.

Ben Barton stated that one site had batting cages, pickleball and tennis courts. Another thing to remember is tournaments can bring thousands of people to a community. With the Mora facility, the Hospital is a partner as well.

Dr. Greg Schoen with Fairview said there had been some discussion of a wellness center before Covid hit, so they would definitely be supportive of a community health facility.

Walker questioned what would happen if both were on the referendum and one failed. Barton responded that there would be 2 questions. The first would be the district specific needs and the second would include the fieldhouse, with an addition that Question 1 must pass for Question 2 to pass.

Zimmer commented on the parks and how the Residents have shown they like the parks and trails. The City introduced a small franchise fee to help pay for those needs. He feels the Townships should also be involved, as they would be using it as well. He feels it is needed, but the whole community should be involved.

Barton responded that there are a lot of ways to partner on the project. The School District boundaries expand to many townships, and more students are from outside the city limits. If the district went with a referendum, it would be equally funded by the township and city residents.

Hallin mentioned that the referendum was for 49 million, and asked if the new required storm upgrades were included. Wold replied they were not.

Hallin stated that the cost could be even higher with the extreme increase in the cost of wood right now.

Barton asked Ryan Hoffman to speak on the current labor costs. Hoffman responded that they are seeing more bidders on projects, so with that comes competition. Over the last 6 months, large projects came in at 5-10% lower than estimated.

Reynolds asked if they had heard from other fitness type businesses that could be affected. Barton replied that he has spoken with the Fitness Center, and while he cannot speak for them, he knows they are always analyzing their future needs. He has not yet spoken to the Cross Fit facility, but they are pretty specialized and this project would be more community center with walking, so it serves a different need.

J Gerold is looking at the cost to staff and maintain a facility. If this is a community center, how would those costs be paid for. Barton responded that was a great question. There is no plan yet for that, just known that it needed to be discussed and planned for. In the other community sites,

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it seems to be ran by Community Ed. The proposed project would be attached to a school, so he foresees the school custodial staff maintaining and facility.

Zimmer believes a facility like that could really draw people to the community, but asks if there is any data that shows the increase in enrollment and people moving to a city.

Barton said it really does bring people in. Many local establishments ask for a school calendar so they can plan for the big events that bring people to town.

Walker said a community center would be great, but the City could never do that alone for the whole community. A partnership with others would be great.

Zimmer asked what Barton needs from the Council. Barton responded that he can work with his staff and the School Board and McPherson can with staff and the Council. A small work group would be formed to work on details. The school board will need to determine whether that second question would be put on the ballot. As mentioned, discussion would need to be had in regard to the maintenance and staffing.

Zimmer suggested a consensus from the Council. Walker agreed, asked the Council's thought on moving forward. Not making a commitment, but just to move forward with some discussions. Reynolds said he is also in favor of looking at things, but really wants to see the numbers and how it would affect the taxpayers. There is a need, but it has to be something that the community would support. Hallin agreed and would like to see some numbers crunched.

J Gerold agreed that it would be great to have a community center, but she is concerned about the cost.

Walker added that he would like to see some type of budget set up for maintenance that can be reviewed. Then if it is feasible, a work group can begin to look more into everything.

Barton stated that they can start working on an operational budget. They work with Eilers and they thought question 1 would break down to about \$10 per month on a 150k house. Obviously if question 2 was passed, that would be an additional estimated amount that would need to be determined.

Eric Minks asked Dr Schoen if he thought Fairview may be interested. Schoen said he thinks the concept is appropriate and would love to see a community center. He will bring it back to Fairview outreach to see if they may be interested in partnering on the project.

J Gerold wondered about the old Shopko Building. Wold replied that they did look at that building but it would not be very suitable with all the columns in the building and the property is quite expensive.

Peters asked if there had been any discussion on having a community pool. Barton said they have not discussed that much, as there doesn't seem to be as much interest in a pool. The school pool is used through community ed, and there are some open swimming hours as well. Wold said they had looked at whether a pool could be linked up to the current plan. However, in community discussions, a pool came back as a lower requirement. Hillesheim added that there is a pool at the Princeton Fitness Center as well.

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Dawn Bourdeaux stated that she knows Barton and Czech will work together to get some numbers together. She would like to see some tentative dates for a work group. Barton said replied that there is a current work group for long range planning. He does know that whatever the plan ends up being, it would have to be decided on by end of July, or the beginning of August.

Reynolds asked about the 2013 referendum and what kind of impact is still having on residents. He asked how long that bond was for. Czech will check, but she believes that was a 25-year bond. She added that there are some coming off in a couple years. Barton said it is his understanding that the Schools Tax portion has gone down a bit. Czech said it has, and added that there has been some growth in the tax base, so it is a good time to be considering this.

Hallin questioned if there could be some grants available if this was a community project. Hillesheim said there would be, but she is not sure how it would work with the school going out for bonding on it.

Barton asked Wold approximately how much the project in Question 2 would cost over the estimated \$49 million for the original project asked about on Question 1. Wold thought it would be approximately \$15 million, but would depend on what the project includes.

Walker suggested ending the meeting so everyone has some time to think on the proposal.

**Adjournment**

HALLIN MOVED TO ADJOURN THE STUDY SESSION AT 6:03. REYNOLDS SECONDED THE MOTION. MEETING ADJOURNED

Respectfully Submitted,

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Shawna Jenkins Tadych  
City Clerk

ATTEST:

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Thom Walker, Mayor