

**City Council Public Hearing
January 17, 2023
Council Chambers
6:00 PM**

COUNCILORS PRESENT

Councilor Beaudoin
Councilor Berlin
Councilor de Geofroy
Councilor Desrochers (remote)
Councilor Fontneau
Councilor Gilman
Councilor Gray
Councilor Hailey
Councilor Hamann
Councilor Larochelle
Councilor Malone
Deputy Mayor Lachapelle
Mayor Callaghan

OTHERS PRESENT

Blaine Cox, City Manager
Katie Ambrose, Deputy City Manager
Terence O'Rourke, City Attorney
Tom Kaczynski, resident
Susan Rice, resident
Deborah Lamoreux, resident
Mike Scala, Director of Economic Development

Minutes

1. Call to Order

Mayor Callaghan called the City Council Public Hearing to order at 6:00 PM. He announced that Councilor Desrochers was connecting to the meeting remotely via Microsoft Teams. He asked if it was reasonably impractical for Councilor Desrochers to attend the meeting in person. She confirmed that it was reasonably impractical to attend in person. Mayor Callaghan asked if Councilor Desrochers was connecting to the meeting alone. She stated that her minor daughter was with her in the room.

Councilor Beaudoin led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Deputy City Clerk Cassie Givara took a roll call attendance. All Councilors were present.

2. Amendment to Chapter 275 of the General Ordinances of the City of Rochester Regarding the Location and Boundaries of Zoning Districts (*addendum A*)

Tom Kaczynski, resident, asked for more details on the potential uses for the parcels in question and questioned the rezoning from industrial to residential.

Susan Rice, resident, asked how the proposal originated and detailed the timeline of Council's non-public meetings regarding land and the process that was followed.

Deborah Lamoreux, resident, questioned the reasoning behind the proposed zoning change.

City Manager Blaine Cox said there had been two public input emails received; one from Geraldine Lark titled “Zoning Change at former DPW site on Old Dover Road” and the second from Ray Varney titled “Rezoning.”

Mike Scala, Director of Economic Development, clarified that there has been nothing signed and there is no active contract on this property. He said that the City had originally started considering the zoning change when the Department of Public works was moving out of their old facility and these parcels would become available. He stated that most of the surrounding area is residential and if the change is approved, it will not affect the existing businesses but rather future development.

Councilor Fontneau said that, in addition to the three City-owned parcels, there are three privately owned parcels that are included in the proposed zoning change. He asked if the owners of these three parcels had been contacted. Director Scala said there are two owners, one of whom owns two of the parcels. They have each been sent notices and Director Scala said that he has spoken to one of them directly. He stated that the property owner he spoke to had not voiced any concerns over the proposed change.

Councilor Fontneau asked if the assessing department had weighed in on how the zoning change would affect the tax assessment of these parcels. Director Scala said that the current zoning designation of light industrial is assessed at \$38 - \$43 per square foot. If the land is rezoned to R-2, any development with greater than 10 units is assessed at \$69 per square foot. However, he was uncertain if land without development in these zones is assessed similarly and stated he could follow up with the assessing department.

Councilor Fontneau said his understanding was that the industrial uses of the existing businesses in this area would be grandfathered. He asked what would happen if one of these businesses wanted to expand; would they need a variance to do so. Councilor Fontneau also asked, if one of the existing businesses were to move, and a different business were to buy the property, would that use then potentially be nonconforming because it is not residential. Director Scala said he would consult with the planning department and get this information.

Councilor Beaudoin referenced the comments made during public input by Mr. Kaczynski regarding potential environmental hazards at the old DPW site and asked if there is a potential that City could be responsible for any remediation. Director Scala said there had already been a Phase 1 and Phase 2 conducted; Phase 2 came back remarkably clean with results at the minimum acceptable levels. Director Scala said he would need to review if the City would bear any responsibility for future contamination.

Councilor de Geofroy referenced comments made during public input concerning strain on City services resultant from the development of residential units. He asked if the increased tax income collected from these units would balance out the demand on City services. Director Scala said it would be difficult to project the level of demand on City services, but acknowledged that the higher assessment does help to offset these additional costs.

Councilor Desrochers asked Director Scala to give an overview of how this proposed zoning change occurred. He said that in 2019, the City Manager started asking staff to consider the future of the parcels where DPW was located as they neared completion of the new facility.

Director Scala spoke about the great need for housing in the area and said he had originally envisioned a mixed-use property, with commercial on the first level and residential above. He said he has been in contact with several parties interested in the land for multiple uses, however he said that he felt the use in greatest need for Rochester is housing. He emphasized that there is a need for workers at local businesses, but there is difficulty finding a place for these individuals to live within Rochester. Director Scala said that developing housing on a property that had been City-owned for decades and in turn adding it to the tax rolls, while fulfilling some of this need for housing, would be the most beneficial use of the parcels. In order to affect this change, the current industrial zoning of the area would need to be changed to residential.

Councilor Fontneau stated that he had served on the Planning Board when the most recent rezoning changes had occurred. At that time, the former Director of Economic Development had presented to the board the importance of finding Industrial Land in the City. She had indicated that the ratio of industrial to residential land in Rochester was unbalanced; with industrial space running low and manufacturers looking to relocate to the City unable to locate adequate land available. Councilor Fontneau asked if the City was still in this position of needing more industrial land, or if the issue had been corrected. Director Scala acknowledged that the timeframe referenced by Councilor Fontneau had seen an approximate 95/5 split between residential and industrial land in the City. Industrial land has increased tremendously over the past couple decades and is approximately a 70/30 split currently, which is very close to the recommended ratio. He reported that the City has 100 acres of land zoned industrial, and there are several privately owned plots zoned industrial as well.

Mayor Callaghan said that the ratio of industrial to residential which had been discussed did not include Sig Sauer, Prep Partners, LDI, and several others. He asked Director Scala to give some stats on the size of both Sig and Prep Partners. Director Scala summarized the amounts of industrial square footage contained between these manufacturers and their future plans for expansion of their manufacturing space.

4. Adjournment

Mayor Callaghan **ADJOURNED** the City Council Public Hearing at 6:34 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Cassie Givara
Deputy City Clerk