

RECORD OF DECISION

Findings of Fact, Conclusion, and City of Virginia Resolution No. **17153** Declaring a Negative Need for an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)

City of Virginia
327 1st Street South, Virginia MN 55792

Northland Office Center Building Deconstruction

Finding of Fact

Pursuant to Minnesota Rules for Historical Places, Minnesota Rules, part 4410.4300, subpart 31, the City of Virginia (City), acting as the Responsible Governmental Unit (RGU), prepared the mandatory Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW) for the proposed Northland Office Center Building Deconstruction.

The EAW is incorporated by reference in this Record of Decision.

The City Council of the City of Virginia authorized the submittal of an EAW to the Minnesota Environmental Quality Board (EQB) on October 3, 2017.

A press release announcing the availability of the EAW for public review and comment was sent to Mesabi Daily News on October 9, 2017.

The EAW was filed with the EQB and notice for its availability for public review and comments was published in the *EQB Monitor* on October 16 2017. A copy of the EAW was sent to all persons on the EQB Distribution List and to persons who requested a copy.

The 30-day public review and comment period for the EAW began on October 16, 2017 and ended on to November 15, 2017.

The City of Virginia maintained all document, and respective updates, at www.virginiamn.us, under the "POPULAR" subheading on the Home Page.

During the 30-day public review and comment period, the City received the attached written comments on the EAW from two regulatory agencies and from one local agency (three total comments). Comments were received from: 1) Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA), 2) Minnesota Historical Society, and 3) Virginia Historical Society.

The City of Virginia acknowledges receipt of the respective comments and contact name to call with any questions. The approved Record of Decision will be submitted to all represented agencies. Their comments and any respective Guidance are summarized below:

MPCA

Ms. Karen Kromar, Planner Principal, Environmental Review Unit, Resource Management and Assistance Division

Acknowledged receipt and review of the EAW; MPCA staff had no comments at this time; and Any applicable MPCA permits for this or future projects would be required.

Minnesota Historical Society

Ms. Sarah Beimers, Manager, government Program and Compliance

Acknowledged receipt and review of the EAW;

Via letter dated 11/16/17, it was recommended that St. Louis County consult with the MN Historical Society before carrying out any project that has a potential to affect a National Register-listed property (namely the Downtown Historic District, US Post Office Building, City Hall).

Virginia Historical Society

Ms. Jeanne Maki President, Virginia Area Historical Society

Acknowledged receipt and review of the EAW;

Via Email dated 11/15/17, it was recommended that St. Louis County incorporate the buildings bricks and other architectural features of deconstructed building to enhance the property into new design and use of property in order to serve as a memory of the city's heritage and history.

Conclusions

The City of Virginia has fulfilled all applicable procedural requirements of law and rule regarding the determination of need for an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the proposed Northland Office Center Building Deconstruction located within the City of Virginia.

The proposed project has been evaluated by the public and the City to determine potential environmental effects. None of the comments received from the public agencies regarding the project cited specific environmental objections. Based on the findings and record in this matter, the City has determined that the proposed project does not have potential for significant environmental effects.

The Project Applicant, St. Louis County, shall adhere to the following Guidance noted above and outlined below, if applicable, as a condition of the proposed Demolition Permit issued by the City of Virginia for this project.

1. The applicant shall be required to provide protective measures to the surrounding buildings, streets, infrastructure and architecture including adequate protection to adjacent historic buildings by consulting historic building owners to identify potential risks, negotiate changes and agree upon protective measures as well as document the condition of the historic buildings prior to adjacent work; implement protective measures at both the deconstruction site and the historic sites; and provide regular monitoring during the deconstruction to identify damage and evaluate the efficacy of protective measures already in place and implement additional corrective steps, if required; and
2. Applicant shall consult with MN Historical Society before carrying out any project that has the potential to affect a National Register-listed property; and
3. Project applicant will incorporate selected portions of the deconstructed building, such as bricks and other architectural features, to enhance the property into new design and use of property in order to serve as a memory of the city's heritage and history.

Based on adherence to the above noted Guidelines, City of Virginia Resolution 17153, which is attached to this Record of Decision, was approved by the City of Virginia City Council on November 28, 2017 declaring a negative need for an EIS.

A copy of this RGU Record of Decision is being provided, within five days, to all persons on the EQB Distribution List, to persons commenting, and to persons who requested a copy.

This Record of Decision will also be available on the City's website.

COUNCIL CHAMBERS

Resolution No. 17153

City of Virginia, Minnesota, November 28, 2017

RESOLUTION ORDERING A NEGATIVE DECLARATION ON THE NEED FOR AN ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT FOR THE CITY OF VIRGINIA ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT WORKSHEET

Resolved by the City Council of the City of Virginia, that

WHEREAS, the City of Virginia ("City") is the Responsible Governmental Unit ("RGU") in the preparation of the Environmental Assessment Worksheet ("EAW") for the Northland Office Center Building Deconstruction ("Project"); and

WHEREAS, the City has submitted a copy of the EAW to all public agencies on the EAW distribution list, publishing EAW availability in the EQB Monitor on October 16, 2017, all of which were done in accordance with applicable State laws, rules, and regulations; and

WHEREAS, the 30-day comment period ended on November 15, 2017, with three public agencies commenting; and

WHEREAS, the City acknowledges the comments from Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, Minnesota Historical Society, and Virginia Historical Society; and

WHEREAS, the City is required to act within 30 days from the end of the review period to issue either a negative declaration or positive declaration on the need for an Environmental Impact Statement ("EIS"); and

WHEREAS, the City finds and determines as follows:

- a. **The completion of an EAW for the Project was mandatory under Minnesota Rules, part 4410.4300, subpart 31, because it involves the demolition of a historical building.**
- b. **None of the comments received from the public agencies regarding the Project cited specific objections to the Project, but the following guidance was provided related to the construction of the Project (collectively, the "Guidance"):**
 1. **The applicant shall be required to provide protective measures to the surrounding buildings, streets, infrastructure and architecture including adequate protection to adjacent historic buildings by consulting historic building owners to identify potential risks, negotiate changes and agree upon protective measures as well as document the condition of the historic buildings prior to adjacent work; implement protective measures at both the deconstruction site and the historic sites; and provide regular monitoring during the deconstruction to identify damage and evaluate the efficacy of protective measures already in place and implement additional corrective steps, if required; and**
 2. **Applicant shall consult with MN Historical Society before carrying out any project that has the potential to affect a National Register-listed property; and**

3. Project applicant will incorporate selected portions of the deconstructed building, such as bricks and other architectural features, to enhance the property into new design and use of property in order to serve as a memory of the city's heritage and history.
- c. **The City has compared the impacts that may reasonably be expected to occur from the Project with the criteria in Minnesota Rules, part 4410.1700, subpart 7 and finds as follows:**
1. **The expected environmental effects of the Project on the environment are minimal and City will continue to monitor to ensure that the Project does not negatively impact adjacent historic properties;**
 2. **There will be no significant cumulative potential effect from the Project in that the deconstruction has not been found to produce any particular environmental effects of concern;**
 3. **No particular mitigation will be required for the Project, except that the City intends to require the applicant to follow the Guidance it received as part of the comments; and**
 4. **The applicant will be required to comply with the City Code of Ordinances and other applicable federal, state, and local laws, rules, regulations, and ordinances in constructing and operating its Project that will have the effect of minimizing potential environmental effects;**
 5. **The Project is not part of a connected or phased action.**

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the City Council of the City of Virginia based on its review of the proposed Project, the comments received, and the collective record of this matter, as follows:

- **The Project, as proposed, does not have a potential for significant environmental effects.**
- **A negative declaration is hereby provided for the need of an EIS for the proposed Project.**
- **The applicant, in constructing the Project, shall adhere to the Guidance noted above as a condition of the permit issued by the City for the Project.**
- **The Mayor and City Administrator are hereby authorized and directed to execute documents, issue responses, and to take any other actions as may be needed to communicate this decision and to otherwise complete this environmental review process.**

ADOPTED by the City Council this 28th day of November , 2017.

Moved by Councillor **Jorgensen** and supported by Councillor **Baribeau** that the above resolution be adopted.

Ayes: **Councillor Jorgensen, Baribeau, Paulsen, Littlewolf, Baranzelli, Johnson, Mayor Cuffe, Jr. (7)**

Nays: **None**

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE

November 16, 2017

Ms. Britt See-Benes
City Administrator
City of Virginia
327 First Street South
Virginia, MN 55792-2623

RE: EAW - Northland Office Center Deconstruction
305-307 1st Street South
Virginia, St. Louis County
SHPO Number: 2016-3258

Dear Ms. See-Benes,

Thank you for providing this office with a copy of the Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW) for the above-referenced project. This EAW has been prepared in accordance with Minnesota Administrative Rule 4410.4300 Mandatory EAW Categories, as the proposed partial demolition of a National Register of Historic Places listed property meets the threshold for Subp. 31 *Historical Places*.

It is important for our office to clarify that it is also the responsibility of St. Louis County, as a political subdivision of the State, to consult with our office pursuant to Minnesota Statute 138.665 before carrying out any project that has the potential to affect a National Register-listed property, and to seek ways to avoid and mitigate any adverse effects on said property. Therefore, consultation with our office regarding the County's proposed demolition of a National Register-listed property and subsequent new construction attached to an existing National Register-listed property will need to occur pursuant to this state statute. From our perspective, completion of the EAW does not constitute adequate consultation under M.S. 138.665 and, to date, St. Louis County has not formally initiated consultation with our office regarding the proposed demolition of the Virginia Recreation Building pursuant to state statute.

As the EAW correctly notes, this project involves demolition of the **Virginia Recreation Building**, currently known as the Northland Office Center Building, located at 305-307 1st Street South in downtown Virginia. The building was constructed in 1923 in conjunction with the construction of the adjacent City Hall, utilizing funding from the citizens of St. Louis County and was intended as a memorial to the veterans of World War I. The building has been listed in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) since 1982.

Based upon information presented in the EAW, it is our understanding that the County has spent the past several years evaluating government services space needs and as part of that evaluation consideration was given for potential adaptive reuse of the Virginia Recreation Building. Although representatives of our office did have the opportunity to tour the building in June 2016, we have not had the opportunity to review or consult with either the City or County, or local interested parties, in any meaningful way as it pertains to the appropriateness of any structural assessments or adaptive reuse studies.

The proposed demolition of the Virginia Recreation Building will obviously have direct adverse impacts on this National Register-listed building and has the potential to adversely impact the adjacent Virginia City Hall and Virginia Post Office, properties individually listed in the NRHP, and possibly properties in the adjacent Virginia Commercial Historic District, which is also listed in the NRHP. While the EAW does indicate that protective measures will be implemented for these adjacent historic properties as part of the demolition process, we have not been consulted regarding development of these measures and whether they are treatments appropriate for historic buildings. The EAW does not present any information as it pertains to the demolition of the part of the Virginia Recreation Building which connects to the east exterior wall of Virginia City Hall, and how this will be accomplished during demolition and what the subsequent repair to the City Hall building will be following demolition.

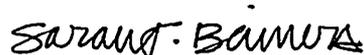
In addition to the proposed demolition, any subsequent construction on the vacant parcel and the parcel across the street which is currently used as surface parking, may have the potential to adversely impact remaining, adjacent historic properties if the construction is not appropriately designed and these properties - their access, use, historic association, and setting – are not considered during the design process.

Prior to demolition of the Virginia Recreation Building, we recommend that the City and County consider preparation of an appropriate level of archival documentation for the building. We recommend utilization of the *Minnesota Historic Property Record Guidelines* (Updated June 2009) which we can e-mail to the County upon request. We recommend that the City and County consult with the Virginia Area Historical Society and the Saint Louis County Historical Society, and perhaps the local veteran's community, regarding appropriate mitigation for the loss of this historic property.

Please note that this comment letter does not address the requirements of Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 and 36CFR800, Procedures of the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation for the protection of historic properties. If this project is considered for federal assistance, or requires a federal permit or license, it should be submitted to our office by the assisting federal agency.

Please contact me at (651) 259-3456 or sarah.beimers@mnhs.org if you have any questions regarding this comment letter or if either the City or County would like to discuss next steps in the consultation process in order to achieve compliance under state statute.

Sincerely,



Sarah J. Beimers, Manager
Government Programs and Compliance

cc: Tony Mancuso, St. Louis County, Property Management Director

November 14, 2017

Britt See-Benes
Administrator
City of Virginia
327 1st Street South
Virginia, MN 55792

Re: Northland Office Center Building Deconstruction Environmental Assessment Worksheet

Dear Britt See-Benes:

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on the Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW) for the Northland Office Center Building Deconstruction project (Project) in the city of Virginia, St. Louis County, Minnesota. The Project consists of deconstruction of the office building. Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) staff has reviewed the EAW and have no comments at this time.

We appreciate the opportunity to review this project. Please provide the notice of decision on the need for an Environmental Impact Statement. Please be aware that this letter does not constitute approval by the MPCA of any or all elements of the Project for the purpose of pending or future permit action(s) by the MPCA. Ultimately, it is the responsibility of the Project proposer to secure any required permits and to comply with any requisite permit conditions. If you have any questions concerning our review of this EAW, please contact me by email at Karen.kromar@state.mn.us or by telephone at 651-757-2508.

Sincerely,



Karen Kromar
Planner Principal
Environmental Review Unit
Resource Management and Assistance Division

KK:bt

cc: Dan Card, MPCA, St. Paul
Patrick Carey, MPCA, St. Paul

Britt See-Benes

From: Pamela LaBine
Sent: Monday, November 20, 2017 4:28 PM
To: Britt See-Benes
Subject: FW: Response to Environmental Assessment Worksheet, Northland Building

[Here you go!](#)

From: Jeanne Maki [<mailto:jeannemaki3@gmail.com>]
Sent: Wednesday, November 15, 2017 5:38 PM
To: Pamela LaBine
Subject: Response to Environmental Assessment Worksheet, Northland Building

To Mayor Cuffe and the City Council:

I am responding to your invitation to comment on the City's Environmental Assessment Worksheet regarding the deconstruction/demolition of the Northland Building, in particular section 14 on page 11 of the Worksheet, which reads:

“14. Historic properties: Describe any historic structures, archeological sites, and/or traditional cultural properties on or in close proximity to the site. Include: 1) historic designations, 2) known artifact areas, and 3) architectural features.”

Comment 1:

There is an engraved cornerstone at First St. South and Third Avenue which was laid in the summer of 1923 during construction of the Virginia Memorial Recreational Building. Beneath it is a time capsule, directed to be placed there by the City Council. There is also a bronze plaque in the main lobby of the Northland, on the right just past the entry. I would urge that you take steps to secure these items and preserve them.

Comment 2:

Several features of the building are interesting architectural features, such as the main entrance railing, the roofs over the entries, and the red bricks themselves. It has been my hope that these remnants of a National Register building could be repurposed, as a memorial.

“Outdoor plaza”, “a townsquare-like space” and “a community gathering place” - Peter Miller's words, quoted by John Myers in the 9/6/2017 Mesabi Daily News - led me to believe that these elements might be used by the County as features in such a place – a roof for a gazebo, brick edging along a sidewalk, and so forth.

But when you look at the architect's rendering of the new building, you see no community gathering place. You see only narrow strips of lawn alongside concrete walkways extending from a barren parking lot, certainly not a townsquare-like space in any way.

I therefore ask the City Council to find other places, parks and public properties, where bricks and other architectural features from the building might be used to enhance the property and serve as a memory of the city's heritage. How about using the bricks to pave downtown pocket parks? Surely a gazebo with a historic roof would be attractive in such a spot. And please, as well, identify a nearby location for a mural of the building's history.

Please, don't stand by and simply watch the building's usable materials be trucked to the landfill. Negotiate with the County to salvage what the City can use. Work with ReVive and the Downtown planning folks to save and repurpose this material for the benefit of the community.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeanne Maki

President, Virginia Area Historical Society

Home address: 9270 Hakkila Road, Angora MN 55703

City of Virginia

Northland Office Center Building Deconstruction
Environmental Assessment Worksheet

LIST OF COMMENT LETTERS RECEIVED

1. Ms. Karen Kromar, MPCA, Planner Principal, Environmental Review Unit, Resource Management and Assistance Division; Letter received November 14, 2017
2. Sarah J. Beimers, Minnesota Historical Society. Letter received November 16, 2017
3. Ms. Jeanne Maki President, Virginia Area Historical Society, E-mail received November 15, 2017.

RESPONSES TO COMMENTS ON THE EAW

1. **Comments by Ms. Karen Kromar, MPCA Planner Principal, Environmental Review Unit, Resource Management and Assistance Division; Letter received November 14, 2017**

Comment 1-1: The commenter stated that the MPCA has reviewed the project and has no comments at this point in time.

Response: No response necessary.

2. **Comments by Sarah J. Beimers, Minnesota Historical Society (MHS). November 16, 2017**

Comment 2-1: completion of the EAW does not constitute adequate consultation under M.S. 138.665 and, to date, St. Louis County has not formally initiated consultation with our office regarding the proposed demolition of the Virginia Recreation Building pursuant to state statute.

Response: Applicant shall be required to consult with MN Historical Society before carrying out any project that has the potential to affect a National Register-listed property prior to permits being issued for construction and/or demolition.

Comment 2-2: The proposed demolition of the Virginia Recreation Building will obviously have direct adverse impacts on this National Register-listed building and has the potential to adversely impact the adjacent Virginia City Hall and Virginia Post Office, properties individually listed in the NRHP, and possibly properties in the adjacent Virginia Commercial Historic District, which is also listed in the NRHP. While the EAW does indicate that protective measures will be implemented for these adjacent historic properties as part of the demolition process, we have not been consulted regarding development of these measures and whether they are treatments appropriate for historic buildings. The EAW does not present any information as it pertains to the demolition of the part of the Virginia Recreation Building which connects to the east exterior wall of Virginia City Hall, and how this will be accomplished during demolition and what the subsequent repair to the City Hall building will be following demolition.

Response: The applicant shall be required to provide protective measures to the surrounding buildings, streets, infrastructure and architecture including adequate protection to adjacent historic buildings by consulting historic building owners to identify potential risks, negotiate changes and agree upon protective measures as well as document the condition of the historic buildings prior to adjacent work; implement protective measures at both the deconstruction site and the historic sites; and provide regular monitoring during the deconstruction to identify damage and evaluate the efficacy of protective measures already in place and implement additional corrective steps, if required.

Comment 2-3: In addition to the proposed demolition, any subsequent construction on the vacant parcel and the parcel across the street which is currently used as surface parking, may have the potential to adversely impact remaining, adjacent historic properties if the construction is not appropriately designed and these properties - their access, use, historic association, and setting - are not considered during the design process.

Response: Project applicant will incorporate selected portions of the deconstructed building, such as bricks and other architectural features, to enhance the property into new design and use of property in order to serve as a memory of the city's heritage and history as part of the design and permitting process.

Comment 2-4: The Minnesota Historical Society (MHS) comment letter states EAW does not address the requirements of Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 and 36CFR800, Procedures of the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation for the protection of historic properties. If this project is considered for federal assistance, or requires a federal permit or license, it should be submitted to our office by the responsible federal agency.

Response: Comment noted.

3. Comments by Ms. Jeanne Maki President, Virginia Area Historical Society Via Email dated November 15, 2017

Comment 3-1: There is an engraved cornerstone at First St. South and Third Avenue which was laid in the summer of 1923 during construction of the Virginia Memorial Recreational Building. Beneath it is a time capsule, directed to be placed there by the City Council. There is also a bronze plaque in the main lobby of the Northland, on the right just past the entry. I would urge that you take steps to secure these items and preserve them

Response: No response necessary.

Comment 3-2: Several features of the building are interesting architectural features, such as the main entrance railing, the roofs over the entries, and the red bricks themselves. It has been my hope that these remnants of a National Register building could be repurposed, as a memorial.

Response: Project applicant will incorporate selected portions of the deconstructed building, such as bricks and other architectural features, to enhance the property into new design and use of property in order to serve as a memory of the city's heritage and history as part of the design and permitting process.

CITY OF VIRGINIA
PUBLIC HEARING
Tuesday, October 3, 2017
6:00 p.m.
Virginia City Hall
327 1st Street South, Virginia, MN

The Public Hearing of the City Council in the City of Virginia, Minnesota was called to order by Mayor Cuffe, Jr. at 6:02 p.m. in the Council Chambers, City Hall.

Present: Councillor Paulsen, Johnson, Jorgensen, Littlewolf, Baranzelli
Mayor Cuffe, Jr. (7)

Absent: None

Mayor Cuffe Jr. called the Public Hearing to order at 6:02 p.m. to consider a Petition Request from the abutting land owners to vacate the 300 block of 1st Street South in accordance with Minnesota State Statute 412.851.

PUBLIC HEARING

Carolyn Dinneen stated she supported the vacation after the plan had been explained to her in detail. Although change is hard it is not wrong.

David Stromberg told the Council this would be one of the most important decisions their public service career. He was insulted by hearing the 300-block navigation would be a hardship and pointed out how quickly everyone adjusted to the new Highway 53 route. He stated that voting “no” will not save the building, instead the City will lose a multimillion dollar project. He urged the Council to move forward with the vacation.

Terry Holcomb agreed with the vacation and stated that she would not want to see this built in another area.

Rhonda Rudy Harvey stated that she supports working together for revitalization.

Cheryl Olivanti stated that she was not in support of the street vacation. She believed a public forum should have been held before the County finalized a plan that required a street vacation. She stated that she supports small business owners and revitalization and that if it came down to the facility not being in Virginia then she would agree to vacate the street. She expressed that there is too much of the City that relies on the County for the services and the jobs they provide.

April Tatur, owner of the T-Square building on Chestnut Street, asked the County to reconsider her building as an option for their additional square footage needs.

Les Peterson voiced his support of the vacation and keeping the facility in Virginia.

Stacy Sundquist felt this could not be turned down due to an inconvenience of a traffic reroute.

Melody Martin supported the vacation and pointed out that many come into town from the country for appointments and make a day of it with errands and shopping.

Jeff Collie came forward to support this vacation and compared it to the prior threat of the Virginia School combining with Mt. Iron School, everyone stood up against it. He urged the Council to approve the vacation.

Carrie Waschke Collie questioned how we got to this point today and why would we risk losing 180 jobs. She stated that these 180 employees participate in our community and have kids in our schools and asked how we would replace 180 jobs in this community.

Allison Collins urged the Council to keep business in the downtown area, don't turn it away.

Anne Bier stated that the County wants to build bigger than what they have land for. She stated that they are telling us to approve the vacation or will move to a different location. She urged the Council to vote NO.

Phil Troutwine stated that he supported the vacation and that he felt that this is a pretty small sacrifice to keep over 100 people employed in Virginia. He asked why the City can't use this an incentive to improve Chestnut Street.

Don Schieble, a former Chestnut Street merchant, stated that he supports the vacation and asked how the City would revitalize the downtown if the County did move and the City lost 170 employees who shop and use the services of the downtown. He stated that if you don't go along with this then everyone suffers.

Mary McReynolds came forward to state she does not support the vacation. McReynolds stated that the County should consider alternatives such as removing one lane of parking and building across 3rd Street South or using the large parcel of land the County had a First Right of Refusal on located near the Finntown Flyway. She asked the Council to stop and ask the County to work on a proactive process for a win-win situation.

Linda Esala, stated that she was supportive of the street vacation and stated that the new facility will increase public safety and pedestrian safety in the area.

Mayor Cuffe read the full Notice of Public Hearing.

Councillor Baribeau also noted that a petition with 52 businesses who are in support of the vacation of the 300 Block of 1st Street South and 13 businesses who are against it. He stated that the County had 14 meetings since 2009. Baribeau stated that they presented their plans in 2009 and since that time, changes have happened. The County has planned for future expansion to accommodate the rise of special needs. The facility is not only for Social Services, it will also house the Veteran's Office, County Auditor, County Assessor and Environmental Department. Baribeau pointed out that the facility has an estimated 8,000 visits per month.

Councillor Jorgensen stated he has deep respect for historic buildings and those who keep them in proper shape and that he wished everyone had that attitude. He stated that he believes that the Northland Building has gone well beyond its useful life and that he worries how the downtown would suffer if we lost 180 employees working in the area. He stated that he may respect everyone's decision but he may not agree with them. Jorgenson further stated that he doesn't think that we need to have disrespect and that if we can't come together to move forward that we won't have a City.

Moved by Councillor Johnson and supported by Councillor Baribeau to close the Public Hearing at

6:52 p.m. Motion Carried.

SPECIAL MEETING

VIRGINIA CITY COUNCIL

CITY OF VIRGINIA, MINNESOTA, October 3, 2017

The Special Meeting of the City Council in the City of Virginia, Minnesota was called to order by Mayor Cuffe, Jr. at 6:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers, City Hall.

Present: Councillor Paulsen, Johnson, Jorgensen, Littlewolf, Baranzelli
Mayor Cuffe, Jr. (7)

Absent: None

Mayor Cuffe, Jr. led the Pledge of Allegiance.

The Special Meeting was called to consider a petition request from abutting land owners to vacate the 300 Block of 1st Street South between 3rd Avenue and 4th Avenue. This vacation is being requested by St. Louis County in order build a new St. Louis County Government Services Center.

Mayor Cuffe, Jr. recessed the special meeting at 6:01 p.m.

Moved by Councillor Jorgensen and supported by Councillor Baranzelli to re-convene the Special Meeting at 6:53 p.m. Motion Carried.

Councillor Johnson noted in the beginning he had received feedback that no one wanted this street closed, however in the last few weeks this has changed. He did feel that everyone was not getting the same information at the same time over the last six months concerning this vacation. Moving forward he wants this to be a lesson learned that public information meetings are held before the process. The numbers that are now in support are overwhelming and he is very impressed with the public involvement concerning the vacation.

Councillor Littlewolf stated that this has been challenging and feels the information has not been transparent. She stated that in order for us to make wise, visionary and creative decisions, transparency is needed. Littlewolf said that she hears only the fear of the loss of jobs if the County were to relocate their facility, however she didn't hear how the street vacation would benefit anyone. Littlewolf stated that she took Commissioner Nelson at his word when he said the facility would not be moved out of the central location of Virginia and then the newspapers announced the County was not committed to Virginia as a location. She expressed that she had hoped for a better creative solution.

Councillor Baranzelli stated he will be supporting this vacation and does not want to see this facility be built elsewhere.

Councillor Paulsen stated that she agreed with Councillor Littlewolf regarding the need for transparent information and had believed Commissioner Nelson, but then saw the County was considering other locations. Paulsen stated that at first she had received negative feedback from residents on the problems this street vacation would cause for school busing, funeral parking and residential parking but now that the County is

considering relocating the facility if the street is not vacated, it changes everything. Paulsen said that she is about truth and will be excited to see what the economic impact will look like with this development.

Mayor Cuffe opened the meeting to public comment.

Les Peterson stated he never believed that the City would have turned the County down on the street vacation for this project.

Mayor Cuffe Jr. stated that he has had the opportunity to sit in all the meetings regarding this development and believes the County followed the proper process to keep the City informed. He stated that he also believes Commissioner Nelson was truthful with the City, however there are six other County Commissioners on that board in respect to the passing a resolution on recruitment of property. The County has decided on this plan that requires the street to be vacated based on the services they were going to provide. Regardless if this is a tax paying or non-tax paying development, these are much needed services for all types of people in our community. Cuffe stated that he felt this is for the greater good, for future of our children, community, and economic development.

Moved by Councillor Jorgensen and supported by Councillor Baribeau to adopt Resolution No. 17126 approving the vacation of the 300 Block of 1st Street South between 3rd Avenue and 4th Avenue.

Ayes: Councillor Baribeau, Paulsen, Jorgensen, Johnson, Baranzelli, Mayor Cuffe, Jr. (6)

Nays: Councillor Littlewolf (1)

Resolution adopted.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:20 p.m.