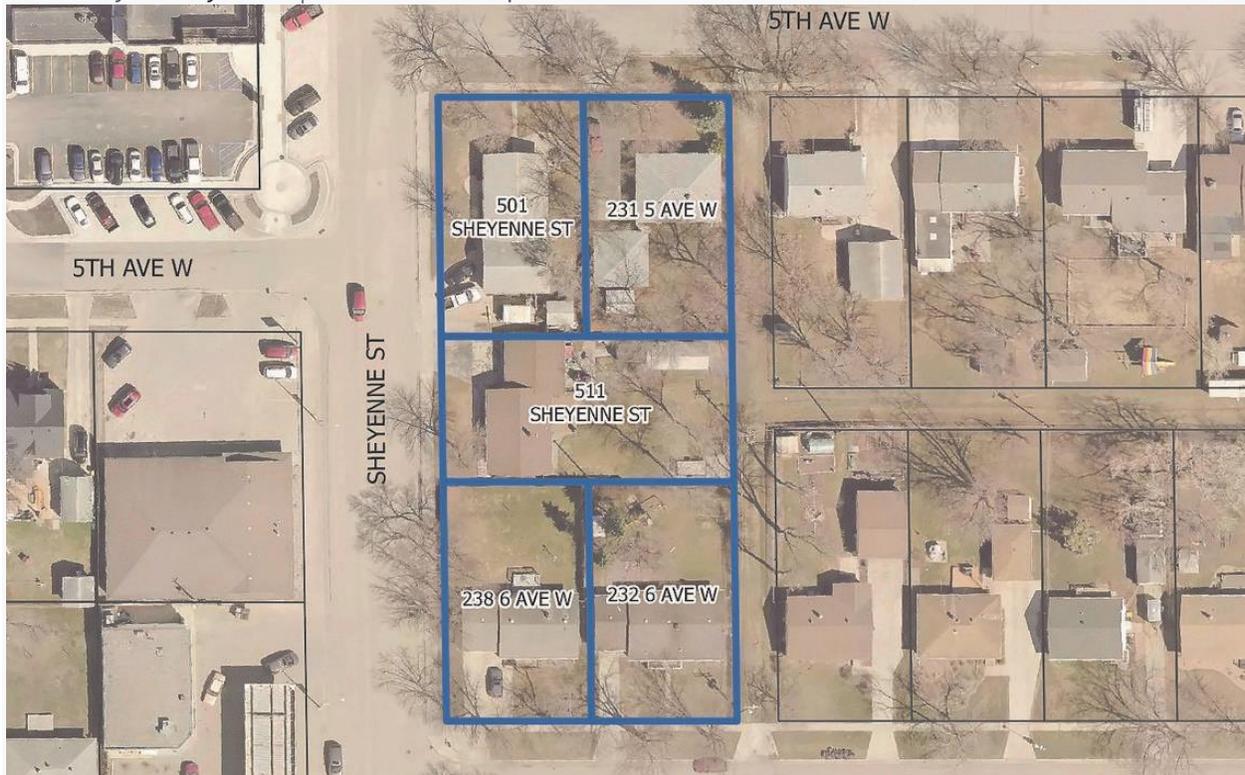


WEST FARGO

West Fargo purchase of homes on Sheyenne Street to be reconsidered

Mandy George said since the project was approved, she has heard from many residents who were upset by what they saw as a lack of transparency by the commission, recent zoom meetings of the commission did not work for public input and appraisals were not done. Some resident also argued city staff were wrongly proponents of the project.

Written By: Wendy Reuer | Jan 15th 2021 - 1pm.



These five homes near Sheyenne Street will be purchased by the city as a future development incentive. Special to the Pioneer.

WEST FARGO —The City of West Fargo's plan to buy five houses along Sheyenne Street as a future economic development incentive may be put on hold.

West Fargo Commissioner Mandy George said Friday, Jan. 15, that she plans to ask her fellow commissioners to reconsider the motion to move forward with the purchase at the meeting on Jan. 18.

George made the initial motion last month to purchase the five homes for a total cost of \$1.15 million, or about \$230,000 for each home. In addition to the purchase price, clearing the land and other costs puts the city at an all-in price of \$1.45 million. Razing the homes would then provide a 42,000-square-foot property the city would use as a parking lot during the 2021 reconstruction of Sheyenne Street before selling it to a developer and using it as an incentive for development.

Because the commission directed staff to begin negotiating sale contracts, in order to stop the process, a commissioner who voted in favor of the project must make the motion to do so, which includes George and Commissioners Brad Olson and Eric Gjerdevig.

Gjerdevig said he supported the purchase because it spurs economic development in a way that is much more cost efficient than other city tools such as tax finance districts.

Gjerdevig explained his decision and support for the project, [here](#).

Mayor Bernie Dardis said George's motion to reconsider the project would essentially "start the clock over."

"After the motion to reconsider, it will be as if the first motion never happened," he said.

Residents have spoken out against the purchase, including more than 60 residents that signed [a letter to the city](#) in protest authored by Brad Schmidt.

Following the project's approval, George said she has heard from many residents upset by what they saw as a lack of transparency by the commission, recent Zoom meetings of the commission did not work for public input, and that appraisals were not done. Some residents also argued city staff were wrongly proponents of the project.

"Some people think staff made the decision, they did not," Dardis said. "Three of the five commissioners made this decision."

"There have been no secrets, no hidden agendas, nothing like that," Commissioner Brad Olson said.

Part of the proposed plan is that all five property owners agree to sell their homes and each home will receive the same price, despite the five homes having different asking prices ranging from \$150,000 to \$196,000. The five property owners approached the city together, meeting with two city commissioners, and city staff negotiated the price down to \$1.15 million, or about \$230,000

per house plus closing costs. In addition to the purchase price, clearing the land and other costs put the city in at an all-in price of \$1.45 million. Razing the homes would then provide a 42,000-square-foot property the city would use as a parking lot during the 2021 reconstruction of Sheyenne Street project before selling it to a developer and using it as an incentive for development.

The City Commission meeting will be held at 5:30 p.m., Monday, Jan. 18.

As of Friday, the meeting is slated to be held virtually, according to the City's website. However, the meeting may be held in person, although the commission chambers have a current capacity limit of 25.

<https://www.inforum.com/west-fargo/6842735-West-Fargo-purchase-of-homes-on-Sheyenne-Street-to-be-reconsidered>