

MINUTES
WOODSTOCK CITY COUNCIL
RETAILERS' FORUM
July 31, 2014
Stage Left Café

A Special Meeting of the Woodstock City Council was called to order 4:30PM by Mayor Brian Sager on Thursday, July 31, 2014 at the Stage Left Café. The purpose of this special meeting is an informal discussion between the Mayor and City Council and the retailers of Woodstock.

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT: Mark Saladin, RB Thompson, Maureen Larson, Julie Dillon, Mike Turner, and Mayor Brian Sager. Joe Starzynski arrived at 4:33PM.

COUNCIL MEMBERS ABSENT: None

STAFF PRESENT: City Manager Roscoe Stelford, Director of Public Works Paul Ruscko, Community and Economic Development Director Cort Carlson, Chief of Police Robert Lowen, Deputy Chief of Police John Lieb, and Economic Development Coordinator Joe Napolitano.

The Mayor and City Council and those present held an informal discussion concerning a number of items.

A discussion was held of the landscaping on the new bump-outs on the Square and the need for improved maintenance and additional plantings.

Discussion ensued concerning the promotion of Woodstock and the use of billboards to bring more people to Woodstock. In addition, some of those present expressed the opinion that additional signage is needed to direct people to the Square, especially from Route 47 and that the signage should be more exciting. The question was asked if funds are budgeted specifically for the promotion of the Square. It was stated that a promotional plan should also be developed.

A discussion was held concerning the expenditure of tax dollars on the Summer in the Park event with some feeling that it could be used for other purposes.

Further discussion of events was held. The statement was made that fewer parades are being held on the Square and the opinion was expressed that better communication is needed to make businesses aware of events to increase participation and sponsorship. In addition, some felt that better communication was needed concerning street and parking closures for events. It was noted that these closures have an impact on the businesses and that with more information they could better plan for staffing, deliveries, etc. The statement was made that when considering an event, the City should ask how it helps the businesses on the Square. It was noted that Record Store Day in April was an event promoted by a local business that brought in a new clientele. It was the opinion that similar events should be considered and coordinated. It was also suggested that promotions could take advantage of events such as the Antique Mall increasing attendance by coordinating with the antique show at the Fairgrounds.

The congestion of Route 47 was discussed, noting that it is a concern. The City reviewed the ongoing efforts to garner State support and encourage expansion of this important thoroughfare.

The atmosphere on the Square was discussed with some feeling that it is deteriorating. One Zero Charlie noted that a transient was living behind their building. It was noted that Benton Street is dark and that, at times, the lights in the Challenger Parking Lot are not on at night, making some employees feel that they are unsafe. Most of those present expressed support for the new cigarette receptacles on the Square, with the opinion being expressed that additional receptacles are needed. Others expressed the opinion that more receptacles will encourage more smoking and suggested that there be “no smoking” on the Square. It was mentioned that more enforcement was needed of the prohibition of smoking within 15 feet of a doorway. The idea of installing surveillance cameras on the Square was discussed. An informal vote was taken by a show of hands with seven attendees in favor, three opposed, and many not voting.

Discussion again turned to how more customers can be brought to the Square. It was suggested that a list of businesses and contact information be available to all and that the businesses should be meeting on a regular basis for better coordination, with those meetings being attended by a representative from the City. The opinion was expressed that stores should be open and have consistent hours, especially on weekends. It was noted that some, but not all, stores are already open on Sunday and that this may require some level of balance to provide the small, family businesses some time off. Some business representatives noted a minimal level of support from local residents, stating that many go to Crystal Lake because of traffic in Woodstock. It was suggested that a Shop Local campaign be implemented.

It was suggested that the City work with the Shah Center to provide seminars for local businesses to help with issues and increase knowledge. It was also suggested that the Community Calendar be provided in a better format with easier access.

It was noted that there is a desire for a comprehensive marketing campaign for the City; but there was some disagreement of whether any marketing efforts should be focused on the Square or whether they should take a City-wide “visit Woodstock” message.

It was suggested that a Committee be established with City coordination to work to address the issues brought forth this evening, with meetings to be held quarterly, an action plan developed, and regular progress reports made.

It was agreed that the City, through the Community and Economic Development Department, would take the lead in disseminating information and organizing future meetings until such time as a formal business partnership can take over.

ADJOURN

Motion by M. Saladin, second by J. Starzynski, to adjourn this special City Council workshop to the next regular City Council meeting on Tuesday, August 5, 2014, at 7:00PM in the Council Chambers at Woodstock City Hall. Ayes: Dillon, Larson, Thompson, Turner, Saladin, Starzynski, and Mayor Sager. Nays: None. Absentees: None. Abstentions: None. Motion carried.

Meeting adjourned at 6:40PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Cindy Smiley
Chief Deputy Clerk