

MINUTES
WOODSTOCK CITY COUNCIL
May 15, 2015
Stage Left Cafe

The Special City Council Workshop of the Woodstock City Council was called to order at 1:00 PM by Mayor Brian Sager on Friday, May 15, 2015 at Stage Left Café. The Agenda for this Special Meeting was posted no less than 48 hours in advance of the meeting and the Media and all Council members were notified of the meeting.

Mayor Sager stated that the purpose of this meeting was to discuss identified items in a Workshop setting and that, should time permit, updates may be given on other projects.

A roll call was taken.

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT: RB Thompson, Maureen Larson, Mark Saladin, Michael Turner, and Mayor Brian Sager

COUNCIL MEMBERS ABSENT: Joseph Starzynski

STAFF PRESENT: City Manager Roscoe Stelford and Human Resources Director Deb Schober.

OTHERS PRESENT: Chief Deputy City Clerk Cindy Smiley

DISCUSSION ITEMS:

1. Pavilion

Mayor Sager noted that the purpose of this agenda item is to discuss the concept of an event pavilion.

M. Turner provided a hand-out as a starting point for the discussion, stating that he was approached this winter by Tom Dougherty with the concept of building an event pavilion. He stated that the concept presented to him was to put the pavilion in Emricson Park, but felt that there were obstacles to placing a large structure in the Park. M. Turner, instead, suggested placing it on the City-owned portion of the former Die Cast site which would be convenient to the Metra site, with the potential to bring people to Woodstock and that the pavilion could serve as a permanent event center to host events. It could be utilized by current events if they choose, but also could attract new events to the City.

M. Turner continued stating that the concept is to provide a large, covered pavilion which could accommodate both large and small events, including festivals and family reunions. He noted that it would be something very nice with a courtyard and fireplaces and that in the winter it could perhaps be a skating rink. He handed out materials providing conceptual ideas, but noted that the pavilion would be professionally designed and built to the City's specifications. It is his feeling that this could be a transformational thing for Woodstock as no other downtown has such a structure.

M. Turner then noted that parking could be an issue and so looked at space for a potential parking garage which could also provide funding. It is his estimate that the cost for the pavilion would be \$1.0 – \$1.5 Million, with the cost for the parking garage estimated to be \$4-5 Million.

Discussion followed of funding the project, including utilizing the TIF, a concession tax, rental fees, and a ticket tax.

Mayor Sager noted that Councilman Turner has an interesting vision which could be very beneficial to Woodstock. He further noted, however, that every vision comes with challenges, one of which, parking, was identified by Mr. Turner. He suggested that Council discuss this project further and, if there is a consensus, move forward with professional guidance.

Discussion followed of various facets of the project, including the impact on the neighborhood, placement of the various features, impact on the train station, the City's parking contract with Metra, and noise abatement. It was noted that the pavilion should be constructed with all infrastructure and amenities in mind. M. Larson suggested constructing the pavilion so that smaller areas could be blocked off for smaller events and also with retractable outer glass walls to allow for all weather contingencies. She also suggested talking with the TAP architects to get their opinion on the project.

Mayor Sager agreed that this project could elevate Woodstock to the next level and that now may be the time to mold the City's portion of this site in the context of today, rather than the plan that was put forth years ago but never developed. He noted, however, that Council must be realistic in its approach and must consider financing. He further noted that the City has a lot on its plate already. He stated that another consideration would be traffic this would bring to the area. Further discussion followed of parking and traffic patterns, including placement of the parking garage to ameliorate traffic and parking concerns.

Mayor Sager urged Council to consider year-round usage rather than just a summer events facility. He noted that year-round usage would help cover the financial obligations created by the project.

Mayor Sager noted that another item to ask when considering this project is whether the City is positioned infrastructure-wise to accommodate gas, electric, and sewer and water for such a facility. In addition, when designing an event venue near the tracks, safety must be taken into consideration. He further noted that the facility could be truly unique and could fit in with the Square with the right architect. He mentioned using the same type of pillars and ironwork that are on the square.

Mayor Sager stated that he is interested in pursuing this project, but wishes to make sure the Council takes everything into consideration.

RB Thompson opened a discussion of the entire area, including the areas owned by the City and by the bank, all parking areas, and other adjacent areas.

M. Larson mentioned that this project would fit into the City's goal of being a destination and feels that the business-owners would be very receptive to the project and the infusion of traffic it would bring. She stated that she feels that this would bring in the young, professional demographic to Woodstock. Mayor Sager agreed, stating there is a need for professional housing closer to the commuter line. M. Turner stated that it is his opinion that the residential and event spaces can successfully co-exist. Discussion followed of how this project could revitalize this area of the city and also make the downtown more vibrant, which also would draw younger professionals to live there. Further discussion followed of traffic patterns and maintaining connectivity between this area and the Square.

In response to a question from Mayor Sager, R. Stelford noted that staff could have further information available, including financial information, within the next 60 days. He stated that staff could also obtain information from an architect concerning this project which would help put the financial information together. He noted that many times, when event venues are owned by a municipality, they are unable to be financial independent. He further noted that they do usually bring in other revenue to the surrounding area. A brief discussion followed of how the pavilion would be booked, with M.

Turner expressing the opinion that it should be controlled by the City but not booked by the City but rather by an experienced professional who is provided with incentives.

Following further discussion of potential upkeep and maintenance of the area, it was the consensus of the Council that this project is worth exploring and to proceed with due diligence necessary to advance this vision and concept. Council requested information on possible financing, including a bond reduction schedule and information from an architect concerning costs and feasibility. It was agreed that this information will tentatively be presented to Council at the 2nd meeting in July.

2. Smoking on the Square

Mayor Sager noted that Council members have been approached by members of the public requesting that smoking be banned on the Square.

Discussion followed with it being noted that smoking is a legal activity and that people have a right to gather on the Square as long as they are not engaging in illegal activities. It was noted that such a ban would be difficult to enforce and also may move the perceived problem further out onto peripheral streets.

Discussion followed of the Ambassador Program and of the use of security cameras on the Square. R. Stelford informed Council that staff is exploring the costs and feasibility of security cameras.

Following further discussion, it was the consensus of Council to not pursue a smoking ban on the Woodstock Square.

3. Marketing/Public Relations

M. Turner gave an update on the activities of Promote Woodstock, stating that after interviewing marketing firms, the firm of A5 was chosen by the group. He noted that this firm has a good track record, is very “up” on social media, and was the unanimous choice of all members of the group.

M. Larson is the day-to-day contact with A-5 and described what the firm has done thus far, stating that the firm will knit together the multitude of wonderful things going on in Woodstock.

M. Larson further noted that the A5 representative, John Harris, is currently meeting with stakeholders and will present a plan to the Promote Woodstock board in two weeks, including campaign ideas.

Discussion followed of the various events in Woodstock and how marketing could aid them. M. Turner and M. Larson both stated that Promote Woodstock and A5 have just scratched the surface of what can be accomplished with this program. M. Turner stated that it is the groups’ desire to come up with an attractive, cohesive message for Woodstock, what is great about Woodstock, and how do we use that to bring people to town.

Discussion followed of how A5 can assist the City in the area of Public Relations. M. Larson stated it is her desire to find out how to take control of the City’s message and image. M. Saladin expressed the desire to have a workshop presented by Mr. Harris to help Council know how to convey the City’s message in certain situations.

It was the consensus of Council that Promote Woodstock present a progress report on this program at the 2nd Council meeting in June.

4. Economic Development Director

Mayor Sager reminded Council that it is within the responsibilities and authorities of the City Manager to hire staff, including the Economic Development Director and asked R. Stelford to discuss the process.

In response, R. Stelford stated that this is a very important position and the Administration is looking to fill it as soon as possible. He noted that the City is already soliciting applications and has, in fact, received several applications, some of which are strong. He further discussed the interview and selection process.

Discussion followed of the compensation package, including goals and incentives. This discussion also included the level and grade of this position and the accompanying salary range. After further discussion, it was the consensus of Council to move this position to a Grade 10 position, as it is a priority position.

Discussion then followed of the type of individual that is desired for this position. M. Turner expressed the opinion that the desired candidate would be professional, driven, and aggressive, noting that the Economic Development Director must sell the City.

RB Thompson exited the meeting at 3:46PM.

Other Discussion Items:

Mayor Sager updated the Council on various development issues.

ADJOURNMENT:

Motion by M. Turner, second by M. Saladin, to adjourn the regular meeting of the City Council to the next regularly scheduled City Council meeting on May 19, 2015 in the Council Chambers at City Hall. Ayes: M. Larson, M. Saladin, M. Turner, and Mayor Sager. Nays: None. Absentees: J. Starzynski and RB Thompson. Abstentions: None. Motion carried.

Meeting adjourned at 4:32PM

Respectfully submitted,

Cindy Smiley
Chief Deputy Clerk