

JANUARY 10, 2018, PROPERTY COMMITTEE MINUTES

10 a.m. Council Chamber. Members present: M. Hraban, B. Morgan, M. Platteter. Others present: A. Albarado, A. Christianson 1 and 2, K. Gorseger, A. Hraban, A. Kenyon, M. Smart, T. Zeisler.

Call to Order:

Committee Chair M. Hraban called the meeting to order and presided.

Farmer's Market:

Local farmer's market manager M. Smart opened commentary on benefits of farmer's markets and why vendors who attend the local market feel a new location away from the RR line is advisable. Her comments included the following:

- This area's economy has always benefited from agriculture.
- The market is a huge customer draw.
- Travelers and part time residents who frequent the area on their way to weekend retreats or summer cabins stop back regularly and are key customers.
- Ladysmith Farmer's Market vendors are glad Gordy's is here and feels the two are complimentary.
- The Market has been a stable part of our community for 28 years.
- The market follows food safety rules.

A lively discussion followed wherein the following comments were among those offered:

- The farmer's market is a positive for the community.
- TIF #8 dollars are quite limited as they will be needed to rebuild downtown infrastructure.
- The City has done a lot for the market in the past; printed brochures; moved tables; and, put up the fence between our market and rail line.
- The market should have relocated adjacent to the Connections food pantry some years ago. [Apparently a grant to finance this was not awarded.]
- The rail display is another important attraction with a couple very dedicated promoters.
- To move to a privately-owned site would require more money to acquire or lease it. If leased a costly move might be necessary at some point.
- Other cities use farmer's markets as centerpieces of commercial and other revitalization efforts.
- A farmer's market pavilion should be well done; an attraction in and of itself.
- Much has been invested in the Main Street effort. Any new pavilion should be downtown to build on that effort.
- Significant amounts of money have been invested in other attractions (plow museum, amphitheater) that the community is hoping will draw people here. The Market has been doing that for years with very modest assistance. The current pavilion was not built as a farmer's market pavilion.
- Locating Eau Claire's farm market in Phoenix Park was intentional; it is seen as its major drawing card.
- If the big cities like Eau Claire and Madison see farmer's markets as key facilities, why don't we?
- Locating our market at the proposed site should be expected to draw customers over onto Miner Ave.
- 75% of farmer's markets are in downtowns.
- It is understandable why the local market wants to relocate given the increasing rail traffic.
- Restrooms at the courthouse/government center should be accessible to the market, which isn't the case at other potential locations except the fairgrounds.
- Spot checks on two random Wednesdays during the past season indicated over 100 open parking stalls in the "gateway" parking lot or within one block of it.

While most present seemed to concur with the notion that a new location is needed, or didn't say anything to indicate they felt otherwise, a central part of the discussion involved location options. The following were among sites advocated:

- NW corner of 8 and 27, which is privately owned, but has high traffic counts.
- Lot east of H&H Haulers, which is privately owned and has fairly low traffic counts.
- Miner Ave., where adjacent businesses might be blocked and there likely wouldn't be room for both vendors and customer's vehicles.
- Connections parking lot would have nearby restroom access.
- SW corner of W. 3rd and Miner, which would require razing the old church.

Mrs. Smart noted that, over the years, these and other sites have been considered, adding that the Market's Board of Directors has made a decision that they prefer the so-called "gateway" parking lot site. The original development plan for that site which shows a pavilion there, the space for which has been marked out on the pavement since the lot was built. That being the case, Ladysmith Market vendors would like to use the "gateway" parking lot site this season on a trial basis, even if it means using "easy up" tents. LCIDC has been asked to make a \$4,000 contribution to underwrite this trial, although it is uncertain at this time whether that request will be granted.

Mr. Albarado observed that it is more important to get new tax base on a couple of the aforementioned prime lots than to put the Farmer's Market on them. He added that an earlier attempt to move the Market to the "gateway" lot was hampered by concerns about costs for on-site restroom facilities that had been proposed.

Motion was made by A. Hraban, seconded by Platteter and carried by voice vote to recommend to the Council that it authorize the Farmer's Market to use the "gateway" lot on a trial basis without a shelter for the 2018 season.

Other:

It was reported that both Goffin's 66 and D&M Home Care properties have been sold.

Adjourn:

The meeting adjourned at about 11:45 a.m.