

MAY 8, 2019, PROPERTY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES -MAY 81

4:15 p.m. Tour/Council Chamber. Members present: B. Morgan, M. Platteter, M. Reynolds. Others present: A. Christianson 1 and 2, K. Gorseger, J. Grajewski, B. Groothousen, J. Hoover, A. Kenyon.

Tours:

After gathering at CH those assembled traveled to and toured the following buildings:

- At about 4:20 p.m. the former Methodist Church was toured. At least one private party is interested in remodeling the building for housing, although that is without them having done anything but a drive by.
- At about 4:40 p.m. the group toured a couple of vacant buildings along Worden Ave.
- At about 5 p.m. the City officials in the group toured the former armory, then returned to CH.

Call to Order:

Upon returning to City Hall Committee Chair Morgan called the business to order to gather input on the facilities toured, as follows:

Church

Ongoing water damage and other deterioration was observed. There seemed to be agreement that, if this building is to be saved, that effort needs to move forward quickly. The group agreed it would make financial sense for current owner Rusk County to contribute a fair amount (half cost of razing/disposal) to saving the structure rather than bear the entire estimated cost of \$90,000 to raze and dispose of it. A couple private ventures have shown interest in taking it from there. Could City assure County it would not get it back yet again?

Vacant Buildings

Adm. Christianson stated that the buildings toured have offered nothing positive to the downtown for a long time and that he is convinced that unless the City causes that to change that they will be worse a decade from now. He went on to say these buildings project an adverse image for the community, [which has probably only escaped notice because there is so little traffic by them]. A closer inspection yields an even worse image as they have obviously been vandalized and may be the site of illicit activities. They do, nevertheless, appear to be salvageable if they can be acquired at the right price. Adm. Christianson offered the following vision for use of this property.

If these buildings were converted to residential use and their interiors and exteriors upgraded in appearance using monies from TIFD 8 that would eliminate their "blighting influence". If they remained in City ownership that should assure they would be kept up. [While what tax revenue they do produce would be lost if they become tax exempt that might be offset by greater willingness of other downtown property owners to invest in an area that is being better kept and invested in]. The City could then lease the rehabilitated buildings for a nominal amount to an entity like Ladysmith Housing Authority that provides special needs housing. That would allow such entity to lease other housing it controls on the open market and use these proceeds to help meet its ongoing needs.

There seemed to be concurrence that the City should not get into providing social services directly as this is the role of the Rusk Co. DHSS, whose budget is 90% the size of the City budget. While it would be preferable to keep these properties on the tax roll, just how that would be accomplished is uncertain. Maybe NWRPC could make a CDBG rental loan from Ladysmith's housing RLF, which it manages. Such loan would require repayment, even if at zero interest. As such that probably would do little to benefit the housing entity referenced above.

It was noted that the west building once housed a chiropractor named Stockman. The east building once housed a restaurant called "The Beanery".

Armory

Those present toured the former armory where DPW Gorseger explained that Department's vision for converting it to the City's primary "shop". Among changes envisioned would be the following:

- Removal of some interior walls to enlarge storage area.
- Adding one additional large o.h. door in the south wall of the main room to facilitate parking most in season larger equipment there. Floor drains will be added along with better ventilation to get rid of vehicle exhausts. This room will also serve as the mechanic's shop.
- Add two smaller doors in room NE of main room so Water Dept. pickups and trailer mounted equipment (generators, air compressor) can be housed there.
- Restrooms, break area, water and sewer offices would remain in lower north wing of building.
- A driveway will be added on the south end to provide access to ne o.h. door there.
- Former gun range will be converted to a "sign shop" with its ample wall space to hang signs for easy identification.

Signs:

Adm. Christianson advocated again that signage be placed at specific sites along Hwy. 8 east indicating when passersby are entering or leaving the City Limits. While some indicated concurrence a question was raised if city limits signs are allowable on right of way.

Adjourn:

Upon motion by Morgan, which was seconded by Reynolds and carried by voice vote the meeting adjourned at 6:28 p.m.