

MINUTES OF THE AUGUST 15, 2022, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MEETING

5:15 p.m. Council Chamber. Members present: A. Christianson Sr., N. Johnson. Others present: Al Christianson Jr. , R. Grotzinger, S. Moore.

Call to Order:

Chair A. Christianson Sr. called the meeting to order.

Worden Ave. Lots:

The City is awaiting Thompson Excavating's schedule for the former Flambeauland Laundromat to be razed. More time has been allotted to remove the tin ceiling from the former Barb's Flowerland, as additional sections of it were revealed when newer ceiling was removed.

Façade Assistance:

What was previously called the façade assistance program has been tentatively renamed the Business Renovation Program. Adm. Christianson reviewed some minor revisions made pursuant to input at a previous meeting. The most significant change is that the revised program will be available within all TIF districts and their respective halo zones, which cover a considerable portion of the City. Another proposed change is that interior improvements alone are no longer allowed, unless they are in concert with exterior improvements. The original program, used by many Wisconsin Main Street communities, was intended to make very visible exterior upgrades in keeping with original design features of assisted buildings.

Mrs. Moore asked if her Carriage House property on the NE corner of E. 4th and Worden is eligible. This is uncertain as it is for "commercial" properties, which that property may not be, at least at present. To qualify as commercial it would probably need to be a bed and breakfast establishment and have a handicap accessible restroom, which it does not at this time. She is not currently interested in using it as an "AirBNB".

Sledding Hills:

Those present support the concept of having a place in the City to sled as a free winter activity. It is hoped that the PW Dept. might find time to brush out some sled paths between the trees along the E. 4th St. hillside between Adams and Washington Avenues. Another option is to use excavation spoils from future street projects to create a longer/higher man-made hill on the north end of the former elementary school property. The intent would be to finish it with grass so that it can be kept mowed and nice appearing. Street construction plans could potentially identify the area as approved for disposal of clean fill provided, however, that any contractor placing it there would have to shape it.

Wetland Overlooks:

A history of the wetland walkway in the Falge Park area was handed out. It was mentioned that, perhaps, small wooden decks with wood railings and seats could be built and placed at the three entrances to the wetland, where sidewalks end and the wetland begins. Where barriers erected to keep people off seem to be routinely knocked over and lend to an unkept appearance. There was discussion of whether any of the walkway might be in condition to be salvaged and put on barrel floats rather than posts. Those present feel the barrels would lend to an unstable deck, but favor installation of the three decks at the entrances. Motion was made by Christianson, seconded by Johnson and carried by voice vote to recommend to the Park Board that it pursue these three decks in its 2023 budget request.

Housing Projects:

Adm. Christianson reported that although they are new in their positions, WHEDA officials will review Ladysmith's request for financing assistance with the elementary school housing project and see if they can recommend to the City how to pursue it further.

Al Sr. reported that the County Property Committee hopes to meet soon with MCHS representatives in regard to facilitating efforts to reuse rather than raze the current hospital.

A good question was raised whether doing more than one of the three housing projects under consideration might result in more units than there is a market for. It was noted, in response, that although market impacts of the recent pandemic are an unknown, that the 2014 WEDC housing needs study, updated in 2019, indicated a need by 2025 for 90 units of workforce housing and 65 units of elderly housing in categories ranging from independent living, through assisted living through memory care. That is a total of 155 units. The proposed project along the river on the south side of the City involves 40 units, the former elementary school project involves another 40 units, and the proposed hospital conversion project involves from 60-80 units depending on size mix ranging from studio apartments through 1, 2 and 3 bedroom units. That is a total of 140-160.

It was noted in response to a question that the former elementary school has cost the City about \$30,000 annually to operate, which has been partially offset by \$12,000 in rent revenue. This will become an issue when major upgrades to the boiler system, the roof or other needs arise.

Downtown Activities Support:

It was noted that while the Ladysmith Main Street program was in operation, the City made \$20,000 annual contributions in support through TIFD #8. The Chamber of Commerce has now taken on some of those activities, including sponsoring car shows and live music, and has need for about half the previous amount, or \$10,000 annually. Those present have all attended these events and believe they are positive for the downtown. Motion was made by Christianson, seconded by Johnson and carried by voice vote to recommend Council approval of a \$10,000 annual commitment for years 2023-2027 from TIFD #8 or TIFD #15.

Sue Moore advised she is working to set up a group of 4-6 ladies who will, between them, hopefully become a downtown garden club of sorts and be able to take care of downtown flower plantings to help keep up appearances. She also noted some frustration with getting anything done since Mr. Albarado left as he had led tourism efforts for quite some time.

Others present expressed support for opening the Visitor Center on Saturday mornings on a trial basis for 2023. A question was raised whether and to what extent the number of stops at the Center are currently monitored. What days are busiest and what times of day. The staff has reported that most folks make contact on Thursdays and Fridays so they are prepared in advance for weekend visits.

Adjourn:

The meeting was adjourned at 6:37 p.m.