

Committee of the Whole

December 8, 2015

Present: Mayor Vulich, Council Members McGraw, Rowland, Gassman, Determann, Wilke, O'Neill, Allesee, City Administrator, City Attorney, City Clerk, Press and interested citizens.

1. Referrals from the Planning Commission:

- a. Rezoning Application (former Washington Middle School site & current Jefferson Elementary School) – Jacob Couppee

Planning Intern Jacob Couppee advised the Council that the rezoning application was for reuse of the Washington Middle School building for 50 age restricted residences. He stated that currently the area is zoned R-1C and just south of the area is zoned R-4.

Mr. Ray Mitchell, 1140 Bobetta Court, stated that when Hy-Vee came into the area the City gave them a tax incentive and five Eagle stores left. This did not increase the tax base. He continued in stating that when Wal-Mart came to town Jacks and K-Mart left the City as well as many flower shops. He further stated that there are four apartment buildings Downtown and the City does not need any more rental businesses. He proceeded to state that this is taking money out of someone else's pocket. Mr. Chris Ales, Project Manager, advised that a market study has been performed regarding whether there is a need for additional rental units, and there is.

Councilmember Gassman stated that there are several rental projects in the works and the City will have a lot of places for people to rent. This will affect the current apartment owners. He continued in stating that he does not want to stop the projects; however, would like to find a way to help the present apartment owners. Mr. Mitchell stated that floors have already had to be replaced in a new apartment complex in the City. Mayor Vulich inquired regarding whether there is a grant program for renovation of existing rental stock. City Administrator Kinser stated that annually the City has CDBG funds for housing renovation. She continued in stating that ECIA has said that it is highly unlikely that funding would be available for rental units; however, she would ask them. Mayor Vulich stated that the City needs the new rental units; however, does not want to penalize the existing housing stock. City Administrator Kinser stated that the City has Urban Revitalization and tax abatement. She continued in stating that there are rules; however, there are incentives for people who want to renovate.

Councilmember Rowland stated that the City should look into what programs are available to help renovate older rental properties. Councilmember O'Neill stated that the City has seven housing projects going on. He continued in stating that there are 2,700 people who work in the City and have to drive in every day because there is no place to live. Washington Middle School served the community well; however, never paid taxes. This will produce a tax base even with TIF.

Councilmember Wilke stated that he is not in favor of spot zoning or adding something on so as not to appear as spot zoning. He inquired regarding the use for the existing gym and auditorium. He continued in stating that the middle school and elementary school could have been used as City Hall and Police facility. City Administrator Kinser stated that the gym and auditorium is in the 2018 CIP. She continued in stating that there is still a lot of time for discussion.

M/S, Gassman-O'Neill moved to forward the rezoning application to the next City Council agenda. On roll call, McGraw, Rowland, Gassman, Determann, O'Neill, Allesee – Yes; Wilke – No. Motion carried.

2. Discussion of School Resource Officer Agreement – Kevin Gyrion

Police Chief Kevin Gyrion stated that he was recommending continuation of the SRO Program with two officers. Councilmember O'Neill stated that during collective bargaining officers said that they were stressed and there were not enough people on shifts. He continued in stating that the Chief wants to hire four more officers through the C.O.P.S. Program; however, after the grant is over the City must keep the officers or pay back the grant. He further stated that the two SRO officers should be put back on the streets where they belong. He proceeded to state that Ashford University will close in June and there will be 22 security people out of a job. They could be put in all of the schools. He advised that a decision should be made so that the City could budget to help start paying those people. Chief Gyrion stated that he would allocate the manpower as the Council wished. Councilmember Rowland inquired regarding what a SRO can do as opposed to a trained security officer. Chief Gyrion stated that if an arrest needed to be made they would need to call a police officer. Councilmember Rowland stated that the citizens have said that they want more police officers on the streets. He continued in stating that according to the police staffing study there are 200 cases that remain unassigned due to lack of resources. A franchise fee could be used to put the officers on the streets. Chief Gyrion stated that it is better that a police officer be involved in a young person's life as a SRO instead of when they are an adult.

Councilmember Determann stated that he had requested this item be placed on the agenda because of the budgets for the City and the School District. He continued in stating that the School District should start looking into security and the four schools can work this out together.

Mayor Vulich stated that the Chief is recommending the two SRO's and applying for a C.O.P.S. Grant for four officers. He requested that the City Administrator figure out the cost of the two SRO's plus two officers allocated to the streets and the cost of adding four officers for the streets and keeping the two SRO's in the schools. Chief Gyrion stated that the City has access to the two SRO officers if needed for an emergency.

School Superintendent Deb Olson advised the Council that the two SRO's can go to any of the schools they are needed in and can leave anytime they are needed for emergencies. She stated that their presence helps prevent things from happening and they form relationships with the students. She continued in stating that there are over 5,000 people a day in the buildings. She further stated that there is a feeling of security with the officers in the buildings which may not be true with security officers. The funding for the SRO's is money well spent.

School Board President Eric Gettes advised the Council that the security guards at Ashford are good; however, there are certain skills officers have to help children such as A.L.I.C.E. training. SRO's are proactive regarding crime. He stated that voting citizens have certain expectations and want professionals hired for the community. He requested that the Council give those professionals the ability to make the decisions on how resources are spent. Councilmember Rowland inquired regarding whether parent's perception of an unsafe school district prompts students to move to other districts during opened enrollment. Mr. Gettes stated that parents had not expressed that. He continued in stating that the School District has a program called Thought Exchange where parents have input regarding their concerns. Superintendent Olson stated that persons can go online to Thought Exchange to see the results. Councilmember O'Neill suggested that members of the Council and School Board sit down together to discuss these matters. Mr. Gettes stated that he would welcome the opportunity.

Councilmember McGraw stated that no one has said anything about the \$110,000 that the City receives for the SRO Program. If the SRO Program ends the City will have to make this amount up. Councilmember O'Neill stated that it is not just a money issue. The City needs more officers on the streets.

Mayor Vulich stated that this does not have to be decided tonight. The Council does not have solid numbers to work with. The City Administrator will get the numbers for adding four officers plus keeping the SRO's versus the addition of two new officers plus putting the two SRO's on the street and bring this back to the January 5, 2016 Committee of the Whole meeting.

3. Results of Budget Prioritization – Anita Dalton

City Finance Director Anita Dalton advised the Council that this is a compilation of the worksheets from the pre-budget workshop. The first 16 are ranked by priority. She stated that she did not combine the individual remarks; however, they are added to the report as talking points. She continued in stating that this is for Council's information and will be discussed further during the budget process.

4. Future of Armstrong Curtis Tennis Center- Gregg Obren

Removed from agenda.

5. Mayor & Council Member Updates

Mayor Vulich advised the Council that the next Council meeting will be on December 18, 2015 at 9:30 A.M. He stated that the PSA will be the only item on the Committee of the Whole for discussion.

Councilmember O'Neill stated that there have been two informational meetings about the PSA and the next two will be on Saturday, December 12, 2015 at 10:00 A.M. at the Ericksen Community Center and 9:00 A.M. in Council Chambers.

Councilmember Gassman stated that there was an informational meeting about the PSA on Saturday, December 5, 2015 hosted by Councilmembers Wilke, Rowland and himself.

Councilmember Allesee stated that during her informational meeting regarding the PSA the majority of attendees want the voting percentage at 60%.

Councilmember Determann stated that he had attended a meeting in Des Moines on Wednesday to accept the Pavement Management Award.

M/S, Determann-Wilke moved to adjourn. All in favor.

Respectfully Submitted,

Pat Van Loo
City Clerk