

Committee of the Whole
March 28, 2017

Present: Mayor Vulich, Council Members Gassman, Seeley, McGraw, Allesee, Odor, Connell and O'Neill, City Administrator, City Attorney, City Clerk, Press and interested citizens.

1. Barge – Matt Brooke

Mr. Curt Beason, attorney for the Rhythm City Casino, stated that the casino had gotten its start in Clinton, Iowa as the Mississippi Belle II. Rhythm City Casino is now land-based and when it came time to decide what to do with the barge we thought of Clinton. He continued in stating that the barge would be offered as a donation. There has been a lot of value put into it. He further stated that the City Administrator has done due diligence in obtaining estimates on the expenses. He proceeded to state that the City of Davenport has received proposals from developers; however, decided to take another approach.

Councilmember Allesee thanked Mr. Beason for the offer. Mr. Beason stated that there are \$2 to \$3 Million worth of assets; however, there would be relocation costs. Councilmember Seeley inquired regarding other partners who have shown interest. Mr. Beason stated that Chad Pregracke of Living Lands and Waters would like to have the barge but understands the reasons of the Kehl family. Councilmember Connell inquired regarding the timeline to move the barge. Mr. Beason stated that the barge must be moved from the Davenport riverfront by March 31st. Councilmember McGraw inquired regarding whether the barge is sprinkled. Mr. Beason stated that it is sprinkled. Councilmember Seeley inquired regard the square footage. City Administrator Brooke stated that it is 30,450 square feet. Councilmember Seeley inquired regarding any restrictions. Mr. Beason stated that there are none.

Councilmember O'Neill thanked the Kehl family. He stated that this may be a \$2 to \$3 Million asset; however, it will cost the City \$400,000 to get it here and there is no plan for what the City would do with it. Also, if this is a City investment, where would the funding come from. Councilmember Connell stated that the key is to publicize this and perhaps get a partnership with a plan. If there is no plan in place, there can be no decision tonight. We need the help of the CVB and Chamber to find interested parties.

City Administrator Brooke stated that with the help of the City Engineer there is an estimated cost of \$163,000 to bring gas and sewer to the barge. The structure was used as a pass-through, so he was unsure of the cost of renovation. He continued in stating that in his communication to the Council he did not recommend pursuing this. We have two weeks to solicit information from the community and can bring it back to the April 11th Committee of the Whole.

Councilmember O'Neill suggested that City Attorney Patrick O'Connell take a look at the City's contract with the Candlelight to see if there are any issues.

Councilmember Seeley thanked the Kehls. He stated that it would be good if a private business shows interest and we can get the barge here. It is not in the City's best interest to hold on to it. We must make sure it compliments riverfront and does not impede the Candlelight.

City Administrator Brooke stated that the City has discussed adding more boat slips and parking. Also, if it is turned into a conference center there is no transportation from the hotels.

Councilmember Seeley inquired regarding the price to get the barge to Clinton. City Administrator Brooke stated that it would cost \$100,000 to get it to Clinton. He continued in stating that he had received a bid from Newt Marine.

Mayor Vulich advised those present the City is looking for partners to bring the Rhythm City Barge to Clinton and any interested parties can contact the City Administrator.

Councilmember O'Neill inquired regarding where the American Queen would tie up. Mayor Vulich stated that that would need to be put on hold.

This item will return to the April 11, 2017 Committee of the Whole.

2. Liens on Property – Matt Brooke/Jeff Chapman

City Administrator Brooke stated that the City would like to focus on city-owned properties and properties with liens owned by individuals. He continued in stating that currently the City budgets \$300,000 for mowing. We want to identify what the property is and the end state will show all properties in the City, their status, and the process needed to sell the properties. He further stated that there is a person living near the 30th Avenue North boat ramp who would like to put a dog run on the adjacent property. The City could sell the property to the resident for \$100; however, would need to solicit bids first. He proceeded to state that there needs to be a process to sell empty lots between two houses. Also, for residents who owe liens on their property they would be given the option of signing a contract to make repairs to their property in the amount of the liens and they would be forgiven; however, if the repairs are not made the liens are put back on. This way the property is put back on the tax rolls. All of this would be brought to the Council on a case-by-case basis.

City Attorney O'Connell stated that he would like to review the process; however, nothing comes to mind as a legal barrier.

Councilmember Seeley stated that when a person purchases a property a lien search should be performed. He continued in stating that those liens are taxpayer money. Battalion Chief Jeff Chapman stated that it also costs the taxpayers to maintain the properties. City Administrator Brooke stated by making repairs in the amount of the liens it makes the property habitable and puts it back on the tax rolls, if not the house must be torn down and then the City has another property to mow. Councilmember Seeley stated that the majority of vacant lots are only important to the neighbors. Mayor Vulich stated that the Iowa League of Cities came up with a method for getting rid of vacant lots to neighbors. City Attorney O'Connell stated that Cities are restricted in the transfer of real estate. They must attempt to get fair market value.

Councilmember Connell stated that the problem with a property that has a house on it is to determine that the improvements are being done properly and to work with the Assessor's Office to get it back on the tax rolls. Councilmember Seeley stated that he felt that was taking money from everyone and giving it to one person. Councilmember Gassman stated that there are other rehab programs which require the person to live in the residence for five years. City Attorney O'Connell stated that there are some cities that make repairs and then sell or auction off small lots afterward. Some cities auction off three or four lots at a time. Mayor Vulich stated that the City has a lot of different properties which have liens. He requested that the City Administrator research how to get rid of useless lots, which houses have a certificate of occupancy, and come up with a plan for each category.

3. Mayor & Council Updates

Councilmember O'Neill stated that he would hold his Public Forum at the Ericksen Center on Saturday from 9:30 AM to 11:00 AM. He further stated that he would hold his radio show on Thursday.

Mayor Vulich advised that Wednesday is Highway 30 Day at the Capitol.

M/S, Gassman-Seeley moved to adjourn. All in favor.

Respectfully Submitted,

Pat Van Loo
City Clerk