

SPECIAL CITY COUNCIL MEETING – TIF WORKSHOP

TUESDAY, APRIL 28, 2015 – 6:00 PM

COUNCIL CHAMBERS, CITY HALL

Mayor Connors called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm.

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by City Clerk Waswo.

Roll Call. Present: Mayor Connors, Aldermen Chappell, Kordus, Gelting, Hedlund, Hill, Howell. Arrived Late: Alderman Kupsik. Absent: Alderman Wall. Also present: City Administrator Jordan, City Attorney Draper, City Clerk Waswo.

Comments from the public as allowed by Wis. Stats. §19.84(2), limited to items on this agenda, except for public hearing items. Comments will to be limited to 5 minutes.

Penny Roehrer, 951 South Lake Shore Drive, Lake Geneva is against money being allotted to move the launch from downtown to the Big Foot Beach State Park. She is against rerouting South Lake Shore Drive along Buttons Bay and feels doing so would be environmentally detrimental to the Lake and the Lagoon. The Friends of Big Foot State Park are also against the plan as proposed. She is not in favor of using TIF to fix South Lake Shore Drive and feels the City should be maintaining that as a capital expenditure. She is against the city contributing money to the Traver Hotel and Theatre. She is in favor of finishing the White River Trail, purchasing Hillmoor Golf Course, and burying the power lines. She would like to see more power lines buried along city streets.

Ken Etten, 1109 Wisconsin Street, Lake Geneva is the President of the Friends of the Geneva Theatre and would like the city to purchase the theatre and restore it as a Community Arts Center. The taxes on the property have dropped from over \$30,000 to under \$14,000 and are drawing down the property around it. He stated the Theatre meets the “but for” requirements as it is blight in the downtown Lake Geneva area.

Chris Dillion, W3252 Park Drive, Linn Township, President of Campbell Coyle Real Estate discussed the opportunity for a public private partnership with regard to the Geneva Theatre. The asset is underwater and the owner acquired it for far more than it is worth. They are prepared to work with the Friends of the Geneva Theatre to make sure the property is sustainable. They are proposing a multi-purpose venue that is centered around the arts. This has a potential to serve as an economic driver. He does not see a viable scenario to redevelop the building on a private sector basis without demolishing it. They are looking at this TIF investment as a starting point to acquire the property and then to go out and raise additional funds to complete this project.

JaNelle Powers, 1003 West Main Street, Lake Geneva is in favor of using the TIF for the historic Geneva Theatre and has produced 12 shows at the theatre. She also has a list of 23 additional individual companies that would like to rent space for shows at the theatre.

Chris Buttleman, Owner of House of Music, Lake Geneva is in favor of the Theatre and expressed his interest in doing concerts there in the future.

Shannon Levitt, 223 Skyline Drive, Lake Geneva owns Studio Dance with two locations. They currently do their performances at the High School but would like to use the theatre.

Logan Kudler, 327 Wrigley Drive, Lake Geneva is currently in a production at St. Francis De Sales. He is in support of the theatre and thinks having a community theatre would be a great opportunity for young people in Lake Geneva.

Bethany Suzza, 327 Wrigley Drive, Lake Geneva is in support of historic restoration of the theatre. There is nothing in the downtown like this and considers it a crown jewel. She requested the theatre be at the top of the list.

Casey Schiche, Ridge Road, Lake Geneva is in support of the Theatre and Hillmoor. Care for Lake Geneva and the Geneva Shore Report conducted a survey finding that Hillmoor and the Theatre were to the top two favorites.

Mark Pienkos, 703 S. Lake Shore Drive, Lake Geneva stated he is in favor of purchasing Hillmoor and the Theatre. He appreciates the council for thinking about these two projects.

Hank Sibbing, 1031 West Main Street, Lake Geneva listed his top ten reasons for why Hillmoor should be on the TIF 4 amendment list. He requested the council vote yes to preserve Hillmoor for generations to come.

Garret Gill, Gill Design Inc., 122 N. Second Street, River Falls, WI stated his support of Hillmoor. Preserving and restoring it would make it a tremendous asset to the city. He handed out three different designs and briefly reviewed them.

Ray Ring, 951 South Lake Shore Drive, Unit 6, Lake Geneva expressed his support for the use of TIF funds to purchase the Geneva Theatre. He would like to see indoor art exhibits, Lake Geneva Symphony Orchestra concerts and Badger High School plays. He is a play write with three productions off Broadway. He stated Burlington has the Hayloft, Woodstock has the Opera House, and Elkhorn has a Theatre. He requested the council use the money to purchase the theatre.

Pamela Kudart, N1279 White Pigeon Road, Bloomfield Township stated she looks as the Theatre as an opportunity to have a venue for young people to experience. The building has the potential to be part of the community. She has 6 performance groups of her own and is having a hard time finding places to play. Lake Geneva has a Symphony Orchestra, which not many communities can say. She believes this would be a great community opportunity.

Beverly Leonard, 1504 Dodge Street, resident and business owner conducted her own independent survey with no personal agenda and no bias and provided her results the council.

Harold Johnson, 315 Haskins, Lake Geneva, newest owner of the Breadloaf Book Store spoke about the Friends of the Theatre and the value that the Theatre has in the community. His first experience with theatre was in Nebraska where they performed in an older church, and years later used TIF funds to raise and build their own community theatre. There is value in keeping the theatre in tact downtown and looks forward to seeing it revived. He feels this will benefit all the businesses, tourists and Lake Geneva community and requested council to add the Theatre to the TIF.

Tom Hartz, 1051 Lake Geneva Blvd, is in favor of the White River Trail, burying the power lines, and demolishing the Traver Hotel. It is easy to say no to Big Foot Beach as then you don't have to come up with anything. He suggested looking at all the possibilities for the beach. He thinks the theatre is a great idea that will draw spectacular events. The building is a mess and agrees that it is underwater. The City has assessed it at \$560,000 and it is currently listed at almost \$1 million, which does not add up. He has a problem with the ownership of the theatre as a 501c3 is nonprofit; meaning it will not make money and will not be sustainable for the city to own it. He stated it might make sense for a private investor if the city can help with renovations.

Terry O'Neill, 954 George Street, Lake Geneva feels the city should acquire Hillmoor. He does not care how it is used, but feels securing the land for the city would be a huge benefit.

Richard Malmin, N1991 South Lakeshore Drive, Lake Geneva in not in favor of moving the boat launch. He stated the city feels the revenue generated is not worth the congestion in the area. However, a new Pavilion was just built in Flat Iron Park, increasing congestion. He stated the boat launch argument is only a justification for a new road project in the state park. He stated the DNR's plan is highly criticized as it will be an environmental disaster.

Discussion and Recommendations on Project Plan Amendment for TID #4

Alderman Chappell stated because of the input from the newspaper and meeting minutes she has revised her opinion on the boat launch. Environmentally it does seem to be an issue. She feels the city should create a more efficient way to move boats along at the downtown launch. She also stated the city should update signage and sidewalks.

Mayor Connors stated the boat launch relocation discussion started about a year ago as the shoreline has eroded up to the road. Unless something is done to shoreline, the road will wash away. The city went to the DNR about the issue

and they stated they have larger plans for the park and would like it to be more accessible. They came up with a number of plans that are meant to garner public information.

Alderman Kordus agrees and feels the boat launch should be scratched from the list. Alderman Hill also agrees, and does not feel it is worth the hassle to change the TIF boundaries for this project. She questioned what the answer is for the shoreline as they will have to work something out with the DNR. Alderman Hedlund stated if the city is going to be charged to spend the money to fix the road on a continual basis, he is inclined to have the city abandon the road. He does not feel roads are designed to be a viewscape unless designated as rustic roads. He would like to see the boat launch taken from downtown but is not sure how to get that done. Alderman Howell stated given the time restraints, this item should be scratched from the list. Mayor Connors stated the consensus is to remove this item from the list.

The council was in favor of burying the overhead lines.

Mayor Connors stated the Traver Hotel is in Federal Bankruptcy Court but is in favor of the city establishing a grant to help a developer tear it down and redevelop the property. He does not feel there is a public purpose for acquiring the property as it is too small. There was discussion and consensus on setting aside \$100,000 for a tear down grant as it does qualify as blight. Mr. Draper confirmed that grant monies can be taken from TIF funds.

The White River Trail has had a stewardship grant for a number of years, which was extended, however the state has not contacted the city to see if it wanted to extend it again. The city would like to purchase the 60 acres of land in the floodplain to connect to city property on Sheridan Springs Road. There is currently an accepted offer to purchase the property that is waiting on contingencies. The city would need to negotiate with the new owner to purchase the land. This fits the “but for” and the consensus was to include the White River Trail.

Downtown signage was discussed. The inconsistencies of signage have been noticed by other organizations. The council would like to uniform the signs as there are about 7 different styles.

The parking garage was discussed and removed from the list. Mayor Connors stated the public has spoken on this item, as much as there is a need for parking. There was agreement that a parking garage would not be revisited. It was pointed out that people will have nowhere to park if the theatre is renovated.

The alley improvements would encourage shared compactors versus each having a dumpster. It would clean up the back alleys and allow stores to be accessible to the public from the back. There was discussion on different ways to be creative, such as developing a grant program to clean up the business district. It was noted that there would have to be a buy in from each block. The consensus was to keep the item on the list.

Alderman Kupsik arrived at 7:52pm.

Hill/Kordus motion to allow Alderman Kupsik to join the meeting. Unanimously carried.

The Geneva Theatre discussion was focused on earmarking funds for a grant. The council was not in favor of the city owning the theatre but liked the idea of a grant for a developer’s agreement or public private partnership. It fits the “but for” and is considered a blighted area. It was noted that the building is not deemed as historical property due to the brinks on the front being added when it was remodeled. The consensus was to keep the item on the list as a grant with an amount to be determined.

City Attorney Draper stated escrow for maintenance is allowable. With all the projects being added to the list the amount would have to be cut back. The maintenance would go towards items that have been built with TIF funds. There was discussion on the timeframe for when the maintenance funds could be used and if it could be stretched out over a couple years. If the funds are not used they would go back to the taxing entities. The council was in favor of keeping the item on the list.

Alderman Chappell stated constructing sidewalks was her suggestion. There are a lot of areas where the sidewalks are not connecting. She understands it is the property owner’s responsibility but feels the city should pitch in for safety reasons. Mr. Jordan stated sidewalks can become very political and feels it important to have sidewalks incorporated in developer’s agreements. Mr. Hedlund and Ms. Hill do not think it belongs in the TIF but should be a capital project.

Mr. Kordus agreed as it becomes a maintenance and shoveling issue for homeowners, and stated it does not belong in TIF. Alderman Howell and Gelting agreed it was a public works issue. The consensus was to remove the item from the list.

There was discussion on the Museum addition with the consensus being to remove the item from the list.

Hillmoor Golf Course was discussed. Mr. Kordus stated he does not want the city to purchase a Golf Course, and would prefer a private developer purchase the property. He would like to acquire the additional 60 acres, but does not want to purchase it as a whole. Ms. Chappell felt this option is a no brainer as it falls within blight, has historic value, and feels it would run itself. Mr. Howell would like to keep the option open as it is the entrance to the city and believes it would be self sustaining. Mr. Hedlund stated he was a member there till it closed but is not sure it will work as a 9-hole golf course. He feels buying the land would be worthwhile, but is not in favor of running a municipal golf course. He would like to include it in the proposal for the amendment as it goes hand in hand with the back acreage that the city wants to purchase. Mr. Kupsik questioned how much grant money can be put aside in a TIF, is it unlimited. Mr. Draper stated he is not aware of any restrictions on grants; however, a signed developer's agreement would have to be in place before the TIF closes. Mr. Kupsik stated he is in favor of keeping it on the list. Mr. Gelting felt it fits the definition of blight, and the 9-hole course would be attractive. He thinks there are options for public private partnerships on the property and feels including it makes sense. Ms. Hill remembers it being a great local spot but ultimately does not want the city to be in the golf business. She does not see it as a viable option as it needs considerable attention and maintenance, and a number of employees, such as caddies, golf pros, and bartenders. She is certain that it will change hands in the private sector. Ms. Hills stated she does not want to purchase the property out right but is in favor of earmarking funds to secure the wetlands. Ms. Chappell does not feel a municipal golf course has to have a restaurant, caddies or a golf pro. She stated it is not as difficult as everyone thinks.

Mayor Connors encouraged everyone to visit the City of Delavan's website to read about Delbrook Golf Course and look at their revenues and expenses. He noted it is an established that breaks even at best. One of the candidates for the City Administrator position stated Rhinelander owns a municipal golf course, and commented that the city has bailed it out several times with no end in sight. Mr. Connors is concerned with the costs of acquiring the property, re-establishing it as a golf course, equipment and hiring a full time grounds keeper. George Williams and Plum Creek are both out of business. He added he is a golfer but feels it would be a drain on the city. Even as open space, the grass would need to be cut which would require buying a heavy duty mower.

Mayor Connors commented on a few statements made from public comments. He stated the city receives no local sales tax. All the sales tax collected in the city goes to the State of Wisconsin and Walworth County. The city actually pays sales tax to the County and State on the parking revenue. He also stated the Pavilion being built in Flat Iron Park was 100% privately funded.

Hill/Chappell motion to instruct staff to put together the next TIF project list including burying overhead wires, purchase and demolition of the Traver Hotel, acquisition and construction of the White River Trail, downtown signage, downtown alley improvements, grant for the Geneva Theatre, escrow for maintenance, and buy Hillmoor. Mr. Draper commented he is not sure how to come up with the right dollar amount for Hillmoor.

Roll Call Vote: Chappell, Kordus, Hill, Gelting, Kupsik, Hedlund, Howell voted "yes." Motion carried 7 to 0.

Adjournment

Kordus/Hill motion to adjourn at 8:53 pm. Unanimously carried.

/s/ Sabrina Waswo, City Clerk

THESE ARE NOT OFFICIAL MINUTES UNTIL APPROVED BY THE COMMON COUNCIL