

JULY 22, 2021

The Clarksburg City Council met in CONFERENCE (Work) SESSION on Thursday, July 22, 2021 at 6:00 PM at the Clarksburg Municipal Building – Council Chambers, 222 West Main Street, Clarksburg, West Virginia, with Mayor Marino presiding.

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT:

Will Hyman
Gary Keith
Jim Malfregeot
Jerry Riffle
Wayne Worth
Vice Mayor Junkins
Mayor Marino

ALSO PRESENT:

Harry Faulk, City Manager
Annette Wright, City Clerk

With attendance taken upon arrival by the City Clerk, Council proceeded with the following agenda:

- **Comprehensive Plan – John Whitmore** – Mr. Whitmore explained that the Comprehensive Plan was a document to guide and develop a plan as to how to best anticipate future investments and community needs. Mr. Whitmore informed that RFPs for the Comprehensive Plan are due by August 13th and such were sent to various firms and West Virginia planner websites. Mr. Whitmore explained that the firm would work with Council, the Planning & Zoning Commission, stakeholders, citizens and all interested parties, etc. to prepare the plan. Mr. Whitmore stated that it takes about eight to 14 months to complete the Comprehensive Plan and noted that this is prime time to do a plan due to the availability of the recent census data and projections. Mr. Whitmore continued that right after the Comprehensive Plan is completed is when you would start looking at your zoning codes and ordinances. Mr. Whitmore remarked that the process gives Council and the City the ability to engage the public to see what the people want and what the community really needs. Vice Mayor Junkins inquired as to the firm's extent of involvement with Mr. Whitmore informing that once the RFP is completed is when discussions with the firm will take place; however, the City should be able to have guidance to provide for updates within the 10-year timeframe. Mr. Whitmore pointed out that the document should be a living document. In drafting the document, Mr. Whitmore apprised that the practice is to have the community engaged as much as possible and that P&Z would be making recommendations to Council wherein Council decisions should be made that keep in line with the Comprehensive Plan. With the process being open-ended, Mr. Whitmore informed that his role would be more of a managing position and also working with the firm to prepare the draft. Mr. Whitmore stated that he would also be facilitating the contract as well as keeping all parties together on the timelines. Councilmember Riffle requested that the Comprehensive Plan be placed on the City's website with Mayor Marino noting the importance of the plan being a workable document and Vice Mayor Junkins concurring on the importance of community involvement. Mayor Marino asked that Council remain updated on this matter.

- **Economic Development –**

Councilmember Worth inquired if a commercial property listing was available with mention made of the Harrison County Development Corporation and the information contained on their website regarding county-wide property availability. Councilmember Keith stated that he wanted to discuss the website with Mr. Faulk apprising that he has a meeting next week with a web developer. Councilmember Keith commented on the need to make the website more user friendly including the ability for on-line payments. Mr. Whitmore informed that he is working on a vacant property list for the website. Councilmember Worth suggested that HCDC Executive Director Amy Wilson be invited to a future work session. Vice Mayor Junkins referenced a previous Business Summit and inquired if there were plans for another one with Mr. Faulk inquiring as to when Council would like to have another one. Vice Mayor Junkins remarked that some businesses feel a disconnect from the City and that she would like to see us bridge this gap and how we can get business owners in a room together, possibly in sections, to see what they are interested in, what their needs are and work to bring in groups to help with their needs. With regard to timing for the Business Summit, Vice Mayor Junkins stated that she would like to have one soon. Brief discussion was held concerning how to get the message out to the businesses regarding the Summit with Mayor Marino suggesting that possibly Mr. Whitmore and/or Ms. Spatafore personally visit said businesses and provide a flyer/information

regarding the Summit. Councilmember Keith noted the importance of a time for the Summit that is convenient for the business owners. City Clerk Wright apprised that there should be data available that was gathered by Ms. Spatafore when she was requested to visit the businesses and seek information therefrom as to their concerns, needs, etc.

Councilmember Keith referenced the façade program suggesting that this program be promoted more, as well as looking at putting money into the budget therefor, and possibly including residential properties, through grants, etc. Mayor Marino noted the popularity of the façade program in the past and inquired if the program was being promoted. Vice Mayor Junkins opined that the paving, the facades, etc. fall under the Comprehensive Plan and the marketing of the City. Councilmember Malfregeot referenced the sidewalk program and the need for such to be addressed by property owners with Mayor Marino commenting that we may need to incentivize the program so that more people utilize the same.

Councilmember Riffle commented on the role of Habitat for Humanity in helping neighborhoods. Councilmember Keith suggested that we try to put developers in contact with property owners of structures on the condemnation/demolition list who have the means and ability to address the condition of the properties. Councilmember Worth advised of Huntington's landbank program and stated that this may be something we may want to look into and suggested that we invite knowledgeable individuals to come and discuss the same with Council at a future meeting. Councilmember Keith remarked that the City has to get out of the "demo" business. A suggestion was made to get in touch with Travis Blosser of the WVML to obtain more information on landbanks.

Councilmember Keith commented and suggested the following:

- Upgraded sound system for downtown
- Scooters
- Lights across a street (4th Street) – with Councilmember Malfregeot adding that this has been his idea for the last eight years to have lights across 4th Street for a designated time for a coffee shop, wine shop, chocolate shop, etc. with tables therefor and a small stage to allow for entertainment. Councilmember Hyman commented that beer gardens, breweries/pubs attract visitors with Vice Mayor Junkins informing of possible interest in the Empire Bank building for a brewery. Mr. Faulk suggested that we give this idea of utilizing 4th Street in the manner described above a try during the upcoming festivals. It was noted that Uptown Clarksburg has lights and that the assistance of Public Works was needed to get the lights up. Brief discussion was held concerning the vibe for the City, as well as a change of the downtown culture with Councilmember Worth stating that a meeting with Amy Wilson was necessary to get in touch with property owners as well as share Council's vision for the downtown. Mr. Faulk advised that those businesses located on 4th Street would be contacted concerning the above.

Regarding the west end, Councilmember Keith inquired if incentives could be offered to attract businesses thereto (such as the old Kroger building) with Mr. Whitmore informing that the issue with said property is the size thereof. Mr. Whitmore confirmed that incentives through B&O, etc. could be offered but also noted the challenge with said location being the initial income of the individuals within a certain radius thereof. Mr. Whitmore opined that the building may need to be subdivided to allow for boutiques, etc. but assured that they were working on the marketing of this property adding that the property owner is located in Los Angeles.

Councilmember Worth inquired if the firm selected to do the Comprehensive Plan would know that we have an Opportunity Zone with Mr. Whitmore responding that he would hope that the firm could figure out how to best utilize our Opportunity Zone. Councilmember Riffle remarked on Pierpont's investment in the City commenting on the need to get young entrepreneurs and younger generations involved noting that Pierpont offers business classes. Councilmember Hyman noted the vacant property of the 7th Day Adventist Church stating that this building could be a great location for a coffee shop or such due to the Pierpont campus. Councilmember Riffle suggested that Dr. Hancock with Pierpont be involved in the Comprehensive Plan process, as well.

Councilmember Hyman referenced Lowndes Hill Park and the historical aspect thereof commenting that such location could be used for re-enactments, etc. which would bring in visitors to the area. Councilmember Worth added that maybe the CVB could partner with Bridgeport to create an event. Councilman Hyman remarked that we have history here in the City that we don't take advantage of.

- **American Rescue Act Funds** – Mr. Faulk provided a handout from the U.S. Department of Treasury entitled “Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds” which sets forth what the funds could be used for. With review of the same, Mr. Faulk pointed out that the Sanitary Board could utilize money for the replacement of the steel water piping that comes out of Emily Drive and that funds could also be used for the equipment. Mr. Faulk stated that if we utilize these ARA funds for such projects it would free up money from the Sanitary Board budget to allow for other projects. Mr. Faulk reported that the Sanitary Board authorized a rate study to be performed.

Mr. Faulk commented that the Haymond Highway bridge is another project that the funding could be used for and that Mr. Brown is looking for funds for said project. Mr. Faulk apprised of the meeting with Senator Romano wherein they learned that in 2023 the State would be coming in to pave West Main Street and that this may be the time for the City to develop a plan to replace the sidewalks on Main Street. Mr. Faulk noted that this would give us time to get an engineering plan together and work together with the State. Councilmember Malfregeot inquired if the streetlights located on Main Street could be repurposed with Mr. Faulk commenting that now would be the appropriate time to upgrade the streetlights. Vice Mayor Junkins remarked that the streetlights, etc. would tie into the Comprehensive Plan, as well. Councilmember Keith inquired if we had received any funding as of yet with Mr. Faulk stating that while funding is starting to be distributed, Clarksburg has not yet received the funds.

Councilmember Keith inquired if the ARA funds could be used for salaries during COVID and also noted the Public Works' equipment in need of replacement. Vice Mayor Junkins noted the funds to be one-time monies and stated that she would like to see the money spent on something that will bring sustainable/long-term revenue for the City with Mr. Faulk explaining that monies are budgeted every year for these needed infrastructure projects out of the General Fund and by utilizing ARA funds for such would free up money for other projects.

Regarding infrastructure projects, Mayor Marino noted the money the City pays to the Water Board for fire hydrant maintenance and suggested that the City give the Water Board \$1 million for the Chestnut Street project and, in return, the Water Board waive the annual fire hydrant maintenance fee. Mr. Faulk informed that they would reach out to the Water Board.

Councilmember Keith remarked that he would like to see us put money in the Rainy Day Fund with Mr. Faulk apprising that we do; however, in the past the RDFs were used for payroll.

Vice Mayor Junkins stated that she would like for the City to have a small hotel/conference center downtown with Councilmember Malfregeot noting the availability of the Chase Bank building which could be utilized therefor. Also, Mayor Marino inquired if funds could be funneled to the CVB to assist with their budget.

Councilmember Malfregeot remarked that the Waldo is going to need to be addressed with Mr. Faulk apprising that they do have someone working on securing the building and fixing the bricks. Councilmember Riffle noted the importance of keeping communications open with Vandalia regarding the status of the property.

Councilmember Riffle suggested that they work with the County Commission regarding the ARA funds with Mayor Marino requesting a meeting be set up with the County Commission.

- **Demolition** – Mr. Faulk referenced the current condemnation list provided to Council stating that these are the properties being worked on and not all structures will make it to the demolition list. Public Works has three (3) structures left to take down making it 74 structures that the City (Public Works) has demolished, a record high for the City. Mr. Faulk noted that this would now deplete the list. Mr. Faulk apprised that the new list would be ready the first of the year for Council approval and that Public Works will work continuously on their demolition

projects. Councilmember Keith inquired as to the accuracy of the list as well as who makes the decision to put properties on the demolition list with Mr. Faulk responding that the engineer informs which properties go on the demolition list. Mayor Marino commented that the City Council should have the ability to make properties a priority as well as provide input to the Engineer. Councilmember Worth referenced 505 Milford Street, an on-going troublesome property, noting that properties must be on the condemnation list two (2) years before going on the demolition list but noted the concerns thereat. Mr. Faulk remarked that citizens needed to call “911” to report such concerns/happenings thereat in order to build the case in order to address the property.

Councilmember Riffle inquired as to why some properties that may be in better shape than others are taken down ahead of those in worse condition with Mr. Workman explaining the process noting that the same starts with Code Enforcement and also apprised of the cost to move the equipment from location to location. With regard to needs of Public Works to address the demolition of properties, Mr. Workman apprised that container trucks would be beneficial and more time-efficient for demolition projects.

- **Paving Project(s)** – Noting the Water Board issues concerning their need to address lines that may contain lead, the City has been able to delay its paving project for about a week; however, the project now must move forward, stated Mr. Faulk; but we will continue to work with the Water Board the best that we can. Delaying the project further will result in an increase in cost.
- **Sidewalks** – Mayor Marino noted the recent discussion concerning sidewalks stating that he hoped we could look for some streetscape grants.

Mr. Whitmore referenced the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) provided to Council regarding the scooters apprising that a private company and not the City would be operating the program; however, they are seeking permission from the City to do so. Mr. Whitmore briefly reviewed the content of the MOU stating that the City would receive 15 cents per ride. Council was in agreement to place the MOU on the next regular Council agenda for formal consideration.

Concluding discussion, meeting adjourned.

James Marino, Mayor

Approved: August 19, 2021

Annette Wright, City Clerk