

CITY OF FENTON COUNCIL WORK SESSION PROCEEDINGS
Monday, June 1, 2015
City Hall Conference Room
301 South LeRoy Street
7:30 PM

Mayor Sue Osborn called the meeting to order at 7:32 PM.

Present: Bland, Grossmeyer, Jacob, King, McDermott, Osborn.
Absent: Lockwood (excused).
Others Present: Lynn Markland, City Manager; Mike Burns, Assistant City Manager, Dan Czarnecki, Director of Public Works and Mike Reilly, Building and Zoning Administrator.

CITIZENS COMMENTS – Bobbie Sweetman asked to speak on the Mill Pond Park improvement.

COURT CONSOLIDATION

Jamie Curtis, Tony Brown and Mike Lynch from the Genesee County Board of Commissioners and Circuit Court Chief Judge Richard Yuille were present to answer questions regarding court consolidation. Mr. Brown stated the votes do not exist on the current Board of Commissioners to close the Fenton court, but he cannot speak to action future boards will take. Judge Yuille stated there will come a point in time when technology will drive the closure of the out-county courts. Technology will allow tasks to be completed that now have to be done in person and stated some of that technology exists now. Osborn stated her concern is with citizens having to make the commute to downtown Flint to take care of issues now handled at the local court. Judge Yuille stated there is an option to pay tickets via a kiosk that can be placed at City Hall or another location to be determined. He anticipates asking for a space locally to handle small claims cases one day a month instead of handling those cases in downtown Flint. Osborn stated her other concern is the expense of sending officers to Flint. Jamie Curtis responded felony cases are heard in Central Court but tickets are not handled by a district court judge, but by magistrate. Curtis stated a lot of the issue is getting people to understand how the courts work and once that's understood, a lot of the fear about consolidation goes away. He has been Chairman of the Board of Commissioners since 2010 and he gave an overview of steps taken to improve the financial position of the County including renegotiating contracts, taking dormant buildings offline, selling buildings, consolidating services, eliminating pension legacy costs and changing benefits for new hires, including City of Flint 68th District Court employees slated to become County employees of the 5th Division of the 67th District Court for Genesee County on January 2, 2016. Currently four buildings can be taken offline and what is proposed is to build a metroplex that would be a one stop shop for County services. He stated the 68th District Court has become the 5th Division of the 67th Circuit Court and that has no effect on outer county courts. A ten year financial plan was created and efforts are being made to control fixed costs and the proposed metroplex can be completed for the costs of taking older buildings offline. He gave an overview of the expenses involved with maintaining older buildings and steps the County has taken and plan to take to become more efficient. He stated future generations will have the ability to close the courts but it

would only be done if it's absolutely necessary and commented the metroplex would be able to accommodate future closures, should they happen.

Grossmeyer thanked Messrs. Curtis, Brown, Lynch and Yuille for coming tonight and wished this conversation could have taken place at an earlier date which would have put a lot of worries to rest and he is relieved to know there are no current plans to close the court in Fenton. He asked Commissioner Curtis about an article he was quoted in that indicated he wanted to get the votes from the current Board of Commissioners to move the out county courts to Flint. Mr. Curtis responded he would like the votes to move forward with this in order to position the County for the next recession and clarified what he would like to take a vote on is to authorize bonding to build the proposed metroplex during this election cycle.

Grossmeyer confirmed the vote would not be regarding moving the out county courts. Mr. Curtis responded that is correct. Grossmeyer asked Commissioner Brown how he would vote should the issue of moving the out county courts be brought to the Board of Commissioners for a vote. Mr. Brown responded he would vote no.

Judge Yuille briefly recapped the history of the court consolidation issue stating it started with the Supreme Court who, every few years, survey the workloads of various courts. The Supreme Court suggested merging the Flint and County Circuit Courts and that suggestion was approved by the Legislature, Board of Commissioners and Flint City Council. He thinks the out county courts will eventually close because technology will allow people to take care of court matters without having to physically come to the courthouse in Flint.

King commented the Secretary of State was moved out of the City of Fenton and feels that being at the southern end of the County that sometimes the City is forgotten. She expressed concern that not all residents have computers or access to modern technology or may have a difficult time getting to Flint to take care of court matters.

Curtis stated the County is here to partner with local municipalities but the County has to control its fixed costs and needs modern facilities. He hopes that advancements in technology will allow for more efficient services.

Bland stated the County is trying to do what the City does and try to control costs, improve services and save money. The City doesn't have to back their efforts but should not argue as to what the Board of Commissioners thinks is best for the County.

McDermott asked when the new building would be constructed. Jamie Curtis responded he hopes to go out for bonding within the next eighteen months and the building will probably take two years to build. Markland asked if the building has been designed. Jamie Curtis responded that is currently being worked on.

Osborn thanked everyone for coming to the meeting and stated she is glad to hear there are no current plans to move the court and she can convey that to concerned residents. She would like to keep the court located within the City for as long as possible.

MILL POND PARK PLAYGROUND

Bobbie Sweetman stated the playground area behind the gazebo at Millpond Park is in need of improvement. She stated Harper's Playground is an organization that develops playgrounds that are accessible to all children. She is proposing building a playground at Millpond Park that is truly accessible to all. It would be paid for through fundraising and she is not asking the City for funding.

Bland stated he thinks this is a great idea and if this moves forward, he recommends the Parks and Recreation Board address this issue as they make recommendations regarding City Parks.

Grossmeyer stated if the playground is put in the area proposed, it will require improvements in order to make the path to the playground accessible to all. Improvements will need to be made to the bridge, sidewalks and parking areas in and around Millpond Park.

McDermott stated the playground is a great idea but there may be other areas in the City that would work better to construct an accessible playground.

Item will be referred to the Parks and Recreation Board for further discussion.

MEMORIAL STONE AT CITY HALL

Markland stated the memorial stone and flag pole located by the Leroy Street Bridge was removed during the streetscape project due to work on the storm sewer in the area. The City sent a letter to the V.F.W. asking if they would like the memorial placed at the V.F.W. Hall. To his knowledge, the City has not gotten a response. The stone was then offered to Oakwood Cemetery to display as part of the veterans display but were informed a stone is already there that list the names of veterans. The stone was next offered to the Parks and Recreation Board for placement in Freedom Park. Administration was informed it would not fit with what is planned for that park. He would like Council to make a decision on where to place the stone.

Bland suggested it be placed on the Community Center property near the sidewalk leading to the new addition.

Grossmeyer asked how long ago was the V.F.W. notified. Burns stated he sent a letter and tried calling the V.F.W. and has not gotten a response.

Grossmeyer stated he will be talking with V.F.W. members about the 4th of July parade and offered to discuss this with them. McDermott stated he knows the Post Quartermaster and will call and ask him if the V.F.W. is interested in the memorial.

Consensus was to try to make contact with the V.F.W. and get an answer as to whether or not they would like the stone before discussing other areas within the City to place the stone.

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT (FOIA) POLICY UPDATE

Wilson stated amendments to FOIA go into effect on July 1, 2015. These amendments require the City to update its policies and procedures to comply with the changes. Failure to do so will result in the City being unable to require deposits or charge fees otherwise permitted under FOIA. She stated the Police Department processes their own FOIA requests so language will be added to the first page of the Procedures and Guidelines that will designate a FOIA coordinator specifically for the Police Department. FOIA requests other than those for the Police Department or those that involve multiple departments will be coordinated by the City Clerk.

Consensus was to place item on Monday's council agenda for action.

COUNCIL MEMBER COMMENTS

Osborn thanked Paul and Dawn Overmyer, Councilman Grossmeyer, the City Manager and Assistant City Manager for their help with Saturday's Community Planting Day and commented the plantings look nice.

Markland stated Administration is reviewing health insurance policies and the City may change insurance providers. Administration will be talking to the various unions this week and hopefully will bring the issue to the next City Council meeting for action.

King thanked everyone for the support she received while she was out of town on a family matter. She asked if a grant was submitted for Franklin D. Adams Park. Czarnecki responded he thought a new application was submitted as the Parks Board had previously discussed and approved a grant application for the park. Burns stated a grant application was previously submitted and \$2,000 was received and was returned because it wasn't enough money.

Bland asked when the solid waste contract will be coming forward to City Council for action. Markland responded it should come before Council before the end of the month.

CALL TO THE AUDIENCE

Doug Tebo, 409 Bent Oak, shared plans for a memorial to be placed at Oakwood Cemetery. He asked the status of the demolition of the Seminary. Markland replied bid packages for the demolition have gone out.

Dawn Overmyer, 826 Southwood Drive, updated Council on the plantings done around town this past Saturday as part of the Beautification Commission's Community Planting Day. She stated not all flowers were planted due to the rain and the remainder should be planted this week.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:52 P.M.

Mayor Sue Osborn

City Clerk, Renee Wilson

Date approved: June 22, 2015