

CITY OF FENTON COUNCIL WORK SESSION PROCEEDINGS
Tuesday, September 2, 2014
City Hall Conference Room
301 South LeRoy Street
7:30 PM

Mayor Sue Osborn called the meeting to order at 7:34 PM.

Present: Bland, Grossmeyer, Jacob, King, Lockwood, McDermott, Osborn.
Absent: None.
Others Present: Lynn Markland, City Manager and Mike Burns, Assistant City Manager.

CITIZENS COMMENTS – Chip Beltnick asked to speak on the agenda item regarding downtown parking.

LOCAL STREETS MILLAGE

Markland provided Council information on millage rates from other communities for review. He will continue to collect information to present at the October work session. He stated a decision does not need to be made tonight but hopes in October or November, Council can start working towards a decision whether to place a millage proposal on the ballot and how many mills to levy. Administration will continue to review information and possibly make a recommendation to Council.

Lockwood commented she put in a request to the Michigan Municipal League (MML) to get information and that at the last work session, other members of Council and Administration were to gather information from other entities. She asked to get an email prior to the next meeting reminding people to be ready to present their information.

Markland stated he would like Council to make a decision sometime this fall in order to allow time to prepare information to be disseminated to the public. He stated there are two ways to approach this, to fix everything, which would be very expensive or levy enough to get ahead.

Bland suggested using the studies already completed by OHM and HRC to identify what streets need to be addressed first.

Lockwood stated when information was previously presented to Council, the PASER system used to rate the roads indicated that money would go further if streets that aren't in the worst shape are dealt with first.

Jacob stated if a millage is sought, it needs to be more than to just maintain status quo; enough money is needed to allow for improvements.

King stated the older infrastructure needs to be replaced on some of the streets when they are paved and asked if that would be part of this millage.

Markland responded sewer and water infrastructure needs to be paid for by the sewer and water funds. He stated there aren't many water main breaks and noted that breaks aren't always caused by aging infrastructure. Bland commented there isn't as much traffic on local streets as there is on the main roads.

Jacob stated there are materials available now for parking lots that allow rain water to run through it and back into the earth which would extend the useful life of the existing infrastructure and would reduce the strain on the storm sewer.

McDermott stated he is in favor of an aggressive millage that will provide enough money to improve the conditions of the roads.

Grossmeyer stated if there are vast improvements to the roads during the initial millage, it will be easier to ask for a renewal.

After discussion, Osborn stated Council members will gather information to present next month and this will be put on the October work session agenda.

DOWNTOWN PARKING

Markland stated there have been several discussions at the Downtown Development Authority (DDA) meetings regarding parking issues. He stated downtown is busier than it used to be and people need to realize in a downtown area, some walking may be required. An idea discussed to help the parking situation was to develop the triangular piece of property between Silver Lake Road and Main Street, across from The Fenton Hotel as a parking lot. The property is owned by the City and he would like a discussion with Council as to their feelings on using this property for parking. The idea of a parking structure was looked at but he doesn't think the downtown is ready for that and it is a very expensive option.

Bland stated he thinks parking is a great use for this property as it has been sitting vacant for a number of years. He asked how many parking spaces the property would provide. Markland responded OHM has indicated approximately 59 spaces would be available.

Bland stated if that area is used for parking, he would like to see some sort of pedestrian overpass constructed across Silver Lake Road.

Markland commented a pedestrian overpass can get expensive and he believes it would have to be ADA compliant. A staff meeting was held with the Fire Chief, Police Chief and DPW Director and it was discussed getting permission from the railroad to build a covered walkway within the railroad easement from the parking lot to Leroy Street and that a fence would also need to be installed.

Lockwood asked if the Engineers have identified all available parking spots. Markland responded the Police Chief did a count a couple of years ago.

Lockwood stated members of the audience who represented downtown businesses at the DDA meeting where this was discussed were supportive of using this property for parking. There was a question whether the parking lot at State Bank could be used. She stated the triangle property serves as an entrance to the City and suggested something aesthetically pleasing be done with that property and not just have 59 parking spots installed.

Markland responded the 59 spots estimated is just a rough sketch. He stated the City's ordinances require interior landscaping and a couple of parking spots would be lost due to this.

Burns stated a parking structure would cost approximately \$20,000 per space. If a structure is created, downtown parking would need to be paid parking to help with the costs.

Lockwood stated there is parking downtown that people aren't aware of particularly on the east side of Leroy Street. She thinks identifying parking spots available downtown and signage directing visitors to available parking is critical. She would like to see a clearer picture of what sort of walkway will be installed and how it would affect future development.

King stated, a number of years ago the State Bank talked about purchasing the collision center across the street for parking. She suggested that possibly the State Bank or the DDA buy that property for parking and asked if anyone has talked to the State Bank about their intentions or possibly partnering with the City on a parking project. Osborn responded she thinks the Bank has an agreement with the City to use the parcel in front of their building for parking.

King thinks the property near the collision center should be looked at to use for additional parking. Osborn responded that parcel would have to be purchased in order to build a parking lot.

Grossmeyer stated when this was first discussed, he thought it was a great idea but the more he's thought about it, he's not so sure. He thinks if the Beanery property ever gets redeveloped there could be a much better development if a large parcel is available rather than half of it being a parking lot. He understands there are two separate parcels, but if both are put together, a really nice development could be put in that area as opposed to parking.

Grossmeyer further stated when the Cornerstone project went to the Planning Commission, it was calculated that 175 parking spaces would be needed and 93 would be provided on site. A 500 foot radius was looked at and it was determined that with the 93 provided, within that radius, plenty of parking would be available for the project to be developed. If pedestrian access went to either the crosswalk on Silver Lake Road or down to Leroy Street and over to Cornerstone, either option resulted in about a 700 foot walk to get to Cornerstone. Unless that distance can be shortened up with a walkway over the railroad tracks or a pedestrian walkway between the tracks and the Beanery, he doesn't know if that is any better of a parking option than the parking already available within the 500 foot radius around Cornerstone. He thinks if the two parcels are available for development down the road a much more attractive development could take place on that property.

Jacob asked if it would be possible to go under the tracks instead of over them. Markland responded it's possible but it is an expensive option and there would be flood concerns and issues with handicap accessibility.

Bland commented he agrees with Councilman Grossmeyer's comments regarding development of the Beanery property but that it has been sitting vacant for twelve years and doesn't feel it is in a good location for development and feels the City would be better off putting a parking lot there. He asked what the status is of the old Topps property. He thinks the property by the Beanery and the Topps property are the only properties that would work at this time to provide additional parking.

Lockwood commented she thinks the Topps property would be good for development to bring some tax revenue into the City. She suggested the property next to the Library be looked at for parking and stated it would be helpful to know the number of spots currently available. She stated at the DDA meeting, some of the prospective tenants for Cornerstone expressed concerns with parking. She stated there are issues on Silver Lake Road with traffic and pedestrians and doesn't know if the property being discussed tonight is the best choice for parking and this is not something she can make a decision on right now.

Grossmeyer stated when parking requirements are looked at for a mixed use building it can't be looked at with what businesses are there today because in five years something different could occupy that space. He is concerned with keeping parking south of Silver Lake Road and the railroad tracks and asked if property by the Depot is available. Burns responded the City owns some property near the Depot.

Markland stated businesses can require employees to park away from the business to free up parking spots closer to the building. If a parking lot is built on the triangle piece of property, it might not be used as much for customers as it is for employees.

Burns stated Council also needs to address issues with Cornerstone. The building will have 23 residential units and Council may need to consider allowing tenants to rent parking spaces from the City between the hours 8 a.m. – 8 p.m. Some of the businesses going into

Cornerstone have specific needs for their business in regards to parking and there needs to be some sort of lease agreement with the tenants to accommodate their needs.

Bland asked if these issues are addressed by City Council or by the developer. Markland stated he thinks they can be addressed by the DDA as they own the parking lot.

Lockwood stated she thinks an ordinance will have to be adopted or added to if spots are designated for a particular business or use and the City Council would have to look at that.

Bland suggested a traffic control order could be written by the Police Chief and approved by the City Council.

Jacob stated as parking problems get bigger, different solutions need to be looked at and stated it had been previously discussed to have some sort of public transportation available to bring people in from areas outside of the downtown. This would reduce the number of people parking downtown and would be very helpful during downtown events.

King thinks that for security purposes, two parking spots should be designated for each business that are close to the business so employees opening and closing the business don't have to walk far to get to their vehicle.

McDermott stated walking is a normal part of living and interacting in a City and is necessary in a downtown area. He is in favor of using the property for parking if the right combinations can be made to encourage the flow of pedestrian traffic the right way.

Markland responded that is why he is suggesting a covered walkway going towards Leroy Street which encourages people to cross at the traffic light.

McDermott stated he thinks this property is the most cost effective to convert to parking because there is nothing to tear down. He also thinks this area would be a viable option for employees of nearby businesses to park.

Lockwood stated she would like to see the plans, in terms of designated spaces for the parking lots at Cornerstone once they are completed.

Chip Beltnick representing Sawyer's Jewelers commented regarding parking concerns with the Cornerstone building. He would like clarification on the State Bank property – whether or not that is available for others to park there. He stated if the property behind the Beanery is developed as a parking lot, it would be owned by the City who would have the option to sell it at any point. Once Cornerstone is completed, he doesn't want to see signs at the State Bank or Library indicating people are not allowed to park there. He asked that residents of the Cornerstone building have designated parking. He thinks there is a lot of parking around town but there needs to be more around Cornerstone and he is in favor of developing the triangle piece of property as a parking lot. He stated there are citizens that are willing to let their parking lots and spaces be used for free if signage is provided that there are certain times or days when public parking is not allowed and thinks the City and DDA should provide the signage for this.

COUNCIL MEMBER COMMENTS

Lockwood provided copies of a Senior Resource Directory from the Genesee County Commission on Aging. She gave a Beautification Commission update and asked what the next step in the parking discussion will be. Markland responded it's not critical that a decision be made tonight as it wouldn't be constructed until the spring but discussions need to continue.

King commented about parking issues at South Long Lake Road and Appletree Lane. She would like 'No Parking' signs installed and stated this issue needs to be addressed. She stated there is an issue with the waste hauler not pulling tags. She also commented regarding issues with wildlife and fowl in her neighborhood.

Osborn commented the Police Chief will be contacted about the parking issues that Councilwoman King mentioned.

Grossmeyer stated there are two openings on the Planning Commission and one on the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA). He stated at the last Planning Commission meeting two individuals were recommended for appointment and asked that a ZBA appointment be made before their next scheduled meeting.

CALL TO THE AUDIENCE – None.

Meeting was adjourned at 9:25 P.M.

Mayor Sue Osborn

City Clerk, Renee Wilson

Date approved: September 22, 2014