

OWOSSO CITY COUNCIL

JANUARY 4, 2010

7:30 P.M.

PRESIDING OFFICER: MAYOR BENJAMIN R. FREDERICK

OPENING PRAYER: BOZENA BIENIAS

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: JOSEPH DECAIRE
CALEDONIA CHARTER TOWNSHIP SUPERVISOR

PRESENT: Mayor Benjamin R. Frederick, Mayor Pro-Tem Cindy S. Popovitch, Councilpersons Thomas B. Cook, Michael J. Erfourth, Christopher T. Eveleth, Joni M. Forster, and Gary W. Martenis.

ABSENT: None.

APPROVE AGENDA

Motion by Councilperson Eveleth to approve the agenda as presented with the removal of Item of Business 1. Bid Award and the addition of new Item of Business 1. Washington Street Streetscape Approval.

Motion supported by Councilperson Martenis and concurred in by unanimous vote.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING OF DECEMBER 21, 2009

Motion by Councilperson Forster to approve the Minutes of the Regular Meeting of December 21, 2009 as presented.

Motion supported by Councilperson Erfourth and concurred in by unanimous vote.

SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS

GLOW OWOSSO APPRECIATION

Mayor Frederick and Main Street Director Natalie Burg presented Certificates of Appreciation to Susan Treen, Jeff Reeves, and John Hankerd for their dedication in making Glow Owosso a success.

EMPLOYEES OF THE MONTH

Human Resources Director Jessica Unangst introduced the City of Owosso Employees of the Month for the second half of 2009 as follows: July – Sergeant Rusty Lamay, August - Natalie Burg, September - Andrea Breiler and Anita Bartlett, October - Cynthia Kriesel, and November - Laurie Hendershot.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT

A public hearing was conducted to receive citizen comment on an amendment to the Industrial Development District in the Southeast Industrial Park to include the property at 1370 East South Street.

SEDP Director Justin Horvath commented in favor of the addition to the district.

Councilperson Cook asked staff to present the City’s policy for tax abatements/incentives for review at a future time.

Motion by Councilperson Eveleth to authorize a resolution approving the addition of the property at 1370 East South Street to the existing Southeast Industrial Development District as follows:

RESOLUTION NO. 01-2010

INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT AMENDMENT

Whereas, the City of Owosso established an Industrial Development District in the Southeast Industrial Park on April 18, 1977 to give businesses within the Park the ability to take advantage of tax incentives for improvements to their properties, and

Whereas, a portion of the Southeast Industrial Park remained outside the Industrial Development District, and

Whereas, the current owners of the property at 1370 East South Street desire to have their property included in the Industrial Development District, and

Whereas, the parcel in question was not included at the establishment of the original district, and

Whereas, pursuant to Public Act No. 198 of 1974, as amended, the City Council has the authority to establish "Industrial Development Districts" within the City of Owosso, and

Whereas, written notice has been given by mail to all owners of real property located within the proposed addition to the district, and to the public by newspaper advertisement in The Argus Press and public posting of the hearing on the establishment of the proposed district, and

Whereas, on January 4, 2010 a public hearing was held at which all of the owners of real property within the proposed addition to the Industrial Development District and all residents and taxpayers of the City of Owosso were afforded an opportunity to be heard thereon, and

Whereas, the City Council deems it to be in the public interest of the City of Owosso to amend the Industrial Development District as proposed.

Now therefore, be it resolved by the City Council of the City of Owosso that the following described parcel of land situated in the Southeast Industrial Park of the City of Owosso, Shiawassee County and State of Michigan, to wit:

Parcel # 050-553-000-001-00

PART OF N ½ OF N ½ OF NE ¼ SECTION 30 T7N R3E, DESCRIBED AS BEGINNING AT THE INTERSECTION OF NORTH LINE OF SAID SECTION AND WEST LINE OF MCMILLAN STREET, S01*27' 46" W 335.01', W 435.60', N01*27'46"E 335.01' TO NORTH LINE OF SAID SECTION, N01*26'37" E 335.01' TO POB. ALSO ADJACENT CLOSED SOUTH STREET.

be and here is established as an addition to the Southeast Industrial Park Industrial Development District pursuant to the provisions of Public Act No. 198 of 1974.

Motion supported by Councilperson Forster.

Roll Call Vote.

AYES: Councilpersons Erfourth, Eveleth, Cook, Martenis, Forster, Mayor Pro-Tem Popovitch, and Mayor Frederick.

NAYS: None.

CITIZEN COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS

Caledonia Charter Township Supervisor Joseph DeCaire indicated he had had discussions with City staff about public safety restructuring. He said he felt our communities have a lot in common and he would be presenting the benchmarking public safety document to the Caledonia Township Board during their meeting later in the month.

Shiawassee Economic Development Partnership Director Justin Horvath indicated the SEDP would like to develop county-wide guidelines for tax incentives. He said he would be happy to share any information he has regarding the policies of other local communities to assist in review of the City's policy.

Shelva Cebulski, 1243 Marion Street, asked that Council keep recycling in mind when considering priorities tonight. She said she would also like to see some efforts to further curb burning in the City.

Eddie Urban, 601 Glenwood Avenue, mentioned that he liked the calendar that the City of Midland sends to all of its residents detailing city meetings, services, and phone numbers. He suggested the City do something similar. He also mentioned that the City of Saginaw put a freeze on Council wages.

Betty Coon, 1204 Palmer Avenue, said she appreciated the extra salt spread on her street since her request last month. She went on to say she hopes the handicap parking sign will be replaced at City Hall. Lastly she said that those that would like to ban burning should take up a petition to do so.

The Citizen Comments and Questions period was closed as no one else wished to speak.

Suzanne Carpenter asked if she could speak now unless comment would be allowed during the discussion of the Washington Street Streetscape. It was noted now would be the appropriate time for comment on that item.

Motion by Councilperson Erfourth to reopen the Citizen Comments and Questions period.

Motion supported by Councilperson Forster.

Roll Call Vote.

AYES: Councilperson Erfourth, Mayor Pro-Tem Popovitch, Councilpersons Eveleth, Cook, Forster, and Mayor Frederick.

NAYS: Councilperson Martenis.

Suzanne Carpenter, 120 North Washington Street, indicated that she lives in the 100 block of North Washington Street and is concerned the proposed streetscape would destroy the atmosphere of the downtown. She was especially concerned about the removal of the trees in the downtown. She felt the project on the Exchange Street does not look nice and does not desire the same look for Washington Street. She does not like the proposed bump outs and is concerned the reconstruction of the streetscape will irreparably damage businesses downtown. She suggested that the money proposed for the streetscape go toward fixing the facades of the buildings in the downtown.

CITY MANAGER REPORT

City Manager Fivas noted that he is trying to get further information on the DEQ rule making meetings regarding burning for those that are interested.

CONSENT AGENDA

None.

ITEMS OF BUSINESS

WASHINGTON STREET STREETScape APPROVAL

City Engineer Ronald Baker presented plans for the new Washington Street streetscape. He indicated that Council approval was necessary to move forward with a bid letting in early March which would start construction in April with a completion date sometime this summer. He indicated the plan was to match Washington Street with the new streetscape on Exchange Street including the construction of new curb, sidewalk with inlaid brick, the installation of new trees, benches, and planting areas with built in irrigation, and bump-outs to calm traffic and provide for greater pedestrian safety.

There was significant discussion regarding concern about the opportunity for public comment on the proposal prior to approval. City Engineer Baker indicated that approval would be needed tonight in order for the project to remain on schedule. A public forum was tentatively set for February 4th to receive citizen comment. City Engineer Baker noted that almost any changes suggested by the public at that time could be accommodated if the suggestions did not involve wholesale changes to the project. He also noted that he and Main Street Director Natalie Burg would be conducting a door to door campaign in the downtown to personally talk with business owners and building owners about the project and to gain their opinion on the proposal. Owosso Main Street Director Burg further noted that the Main Street Board had approved the plan and the general sentiment among downtown business owners was in support of the project. Council expressed further concern over the length of time the Exchange Street streetscape project took, saying they did not want to jeopardize businesses further with another long project. It was noted the project could be delayed or discontinued should Council not feel comfortable with the plan.

There was further discussion regarding the purpose of the bump-outs, the challenges the bump-outs present for the DPW, Fire Department, and delivery trucks, and the use of stamped concrete as opposed to inlaid brick.

Council expressed general support for the project.

Motion by Mayor Pro-Tem Popovitch to approve the Washington Street Streetscape plan on the condition a public hearing to gain citizen comment is conducted prior to February 1, 2010 and changes to the plan are considered if public sentiment dictates.

Motion supported by Councilperson Cook.

Roll Call Vote.

AYES: Mayor Pro-Tem Popovitch, Councilpersons Erfourth, Martenis, Forster, Cook, and Mayor Frederick.

NAYS: Councilperson Eveleth.

City Staff will report back to Council regarding public comment gathered during door to door visits and the upcoming public hearing later this month.

There was a brief recess at 9:18 p.m.

The session resumed at 9:28 p.m.

COMMUNICATIONS

None.

CITIZEN COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS

Shelva Cebulski, 1243 Marion Street, inquired as to when the DEQ rule making meeting would be held. City Manager Fivas indicated he thought the meeting would be held January 14, 2010 and is in the process of gathering more information on the meeting.

Eddie Urban, 601 Glenwood Avenue, indicated he was initially not in favor of the bump outs but after hearing they are intended to calm traffic he supports their installation in the downtown. He also wanted to know how many parking spots would be lost to the new streetscape.

Michael Cline, 411 North Chipman Street, expressed his disappointment that the City gave AO Smith a tax break worth over \$12 million and when they closed the plant three years later the City did not demand return of foregone taxes. He asked that when the Council reviews the tax abatement/incentive policy that they consider prorating future abatements to prevent companies for getting tax breaks and leaving town anyway.

Councilperson Forster inquired as to the status of the Historic District Study Committee. It was noted there were too few applicants when the submission deadline was reached so the deadline was extended. Since that time more applications have come in and the Mayor hoped to bring appointments to Council soon.

There was discussion regarding the other 4 historic districts already established in town, including who oversees them. It was noted that a number of the existing districts had been repealed and the remaining districts have little authority to force properties within the jurisdiction into anything. It was also noted that there has been very little utilization of the current districts.

Councilperson Martenis noted that he had counted the parking spots shown on the proposed Washington Street Streetscape and found that no parking spots would be lost to the construction. He also expressed his view that he was not in favor of tax abatements saying companies should want to come here without the City giving up tax money.

Mayor Pro-Tem Popovitch reiterated the idea that the Council had voted to approve the proposed Washington Street Streetscape upon the condition that citizens have the opportunity to be heard and the plans changed if necessary.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

COUNCIL PRIORITIES

There was a brief conversation as to what Council hoped to achieve with tonight's discussion

A revised list of priorities put together by Councilperson Cook was distributed to Council. He indicated his intent was to mark out key direction areas rather than specific items to achieve. He identified seven goals based in part on the Blue Ribbon Committee Report. There was support for the document based on its conceptual nature. It was also pointed out any such list of goals should be a living, breathing document that continually changes to accommodate continually changes circumstances.

There was discussion regarding budget factors involved in priority development. The Council talked about the costs of maintaining streets, what we pay outside vendors, making sure our enterprise funds are properly funded, potential restructuring of the public safety department, and Parks and Recreation Commission goals.

After much discussion Council approved the following seven focus areas, taken in large part from the Blue Ribbon Committee Report: Public Services, Economic Development, Neighborhoods and Housing, Parks, Recreation and Culture, Downtown, Green Owasso, and Communications and Marketing.

They further directed staff to develop focus areas for each topic for discussion during the February 1, 2010 meeting.

As email communications had been mentioned earlier in the meeting, City Attorney William C. Brown cautioned Council about using email for communication. He indicated use of email was appropriate as long as members were careful not to deliberate on anything. It was suggested Council members could send out an email with an idea, but institute a practice of not replying to any such emails to avoid even the appearance of deliberation.

NEXT MEETING

Tuesday, January 19, 2010

BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS OPENINGS

Zoning Board of Appeals – Alternate, term expires 06-30-2012
Historical Commission, term expires 12-31-2010

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Councilperson Eveleth for adjournment at 10:39 p.m.

Motion supported by Councilperson Erfourth and concurred in by unanimous vote.

Benjamin R. Frederick, Mayor

Amy K. Kohagen, City Clerk