

Special City Council Meeting
City Council Chambers

February 19, 2014
12:30 p.m.

Present: Mayor –	Joyce Hudson
Council members	Jeff Kennedy
	Duane Oliver
	Tim Strauser
	Jeff Whiting
City Administrator	Bruce Clymer
City Clerk / Treasurer	Connie L. Dalrymple

Press: *Gothenburg Times* - Beth Barrett

Also present: Downtown Revitalization Committee members Anne Anderson, Jennifer Wolf, Shane Gruber, Steve Peterson

Mayor Hudson opened the meeting at 12:30 p.m. Advance notice and a copy of the agenda were given to the Council and members of the press. City Council meetings are conducted in accordance with the Open Meetings Act, a copy of which is available for public inspection on the north wall of the Council Chambers.

Jennifer Wolf of Dawson Area Development discussed the downtown revitalization plan Phase I, Planning and Phase II, Implementation. She has met with most of the downtown business owners, some that participated in the last grant and some that did not. She found that businesses are interested in façade, energy, sidewalks, interior renovations, utility service, and upper story housing. Other requests included more parking areas, improvements to the ‘ugly corner’, green spaces downtown, drainage improvements, alley lighting and improvements.

Some commented that streets should be cleaned more often. Shane Gruber said streets are cleaned once a week starting at midnight and the cars on the street, especially where upper story housing is available, are a problem.

Others commented on the bricks in the sidewalks as a tripping hazard in some places and the need for hand rails where the sidewalk steps up.

Jennifer also talked to businesses about participation in a Business Improvement District where each business would pay an additional fee, perhaps \$5 on their utility bill, to a fund for betterment of the downtown area. Most thought it was a good idea.

Some other eligible activities with the grant are benches, trash cans, planters which are anchored and directional signage.

The Committee will need to determine how the \$350,000 grant and matching funds are to be budgeted among the various activities such as commercial rehab, upper level housing, public improvements, etc.

The Committee will meet on February 24 at 1:15 p.m. to make that consideration and a recommendation to the City Council for their March 4 meeting.

The meeting continued at 1:00 p.m. with members of the Corps of Engineers and other State agencies regarding the flood plain mapping. In addition to Council members, those present included: Police Chief Randy Olson, Lyndon Vogt and Jesse Mintken of the Central Platte Natural Resources District, Gwyn Jarret and Randy Behm, of the Corps of Engineers, Shuai Zheng from the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources, Jennifer Wolf of Dawson Area Development.

The Corps has a Section 22 agreement with the City to review flood information. The 2011 update brought the flood plain into the community more than the prior designation. For every dollar the federal government expends they are required to have a dollar return therefore it's imperative to prevent flood damage. In November the team looked at population and structures in the flood area, the history and source of flooding using the FEMA flood insurance studies from 1935 – 84, and the impact of the 2013 Colorado flood. Roadway embankments, such as I-80, serve as a levy but there must be a federal agreement so nothing is done to disrupt the 'levy' such as installation of power poles and signs.

Discussion was had on the south channel of the river, Cozad Canal, and gates to slow water flow without stopping it which would inhibit wetlands. The south channel of the river has too much vegetation for proper water flow. Since it would be a massive job to clear the river channel it might be an easier fix to widen the gateway in Cozad Canal. This led to a discussion of the future industrial site. Construction in the flood plain is a big deal here after the map changed. Gothenburg has to bring in lots of fill for new lot sales and for existing businesses.

The Corps is concerned about the increase in peak flows to such areas as the industrial tract. Precautions other than fill could be gates at bridges over the river west of town to control water and add it back to the South Platte but we must be careful not to cause more issues for the existing KOA station and campground area.

The Corps will prepare a scope / cost modeling for structures and then we can decide what costs we can handle and what needs to be done to protect property owners and the community and still comply with FEMA flood regulations. There is a 50 / 50 cost share and it can include in-kind services. The Corps is looking for information such as KOA issues, housing, the rock berm that was placed along the roadway south of I-80 and anything else that might help them provide a relevant and useful scope. They are also interested in a financial range the City is comfortable with. The Corps suggested we stay away from the construction of levies as they require too much maintenance but we need to get all the information we can short of construction and then go forward from there.

Other suggestions from the Corps were to be sure all structures in the flood plain have flood insurance and to restrict building in the area insisting that all structures be built up out of the flood plain to be in compliance. The Nebraska Dep't of Natural Resources also has programs to assist with this type of project that include the use of in-kind matching funds.

The Central Platte Natural Resources District has purchased 50% of the 30-Mile Canal but has a management agreement with Cozad Canal to keep it viable. The purpose of the Cozad Canal is to contain excess water flows, not year round flow. This area of the State is considered over appropriated and must put some water back into the river. Part of this comes by drying up farm acres.

Brief discussion was had on the ongoing permit process for Lake Helen.

Strauser moved, Whiting seconded, to adjourn the meeting at 2:22 p.m. Roll call vote: Yea – Whiting, Oliver, Strauser, Kennedy. Nay – none.

Joyce Hudson, Mayor

Connie L Dalrymple, City Clerk.