

MINUTES of the ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
September 19, 2023 @ 5:00 p.m.

Committee Members present:

Councilor Donald Austin, Chairman
Councilor Robert Gibson, Vice Chair
Councilor Richard R. Michaud
Councilor Matt Gerding

Staff Members present:

City Manager Bob Belmore
Finance Director Scott Smith
Director of Planning & Community Development
Michelle Mears
Deputy City Clerk Ammy Ramsey

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Austin at 5:00 p.m.

APPROVE PAST MEETING MINUTES OF JUNE 14, 2023

Councilor Gibson made a motion to accept the June 14, 2023 minutes as submitted. The motion was seconded by Councilor Michaud and passed 4-0.

FORMER NATIONAL GUARD READINESS CENTER

City Manager Belmore stated that the City Council had referred this back to the Economic Development Committee to explore options for this property. Manager Belmore mentioned that some residents would like to see the City retain the property and build a Community Center. Manager Belmore also presented the Committee with some information regarding the rezoning options that could be taken to accommodate the potential sale of the property. Manager Belmore mentioned that the City could hire a real estate agent to list the property or another option could be to send out another Request for Proposal (RFP).

City Manager Belmore stated that the City could consider subdividing the Little League field to ensure the City retains the field, which could be a condition of the sale.

City Manager Belmore also mentioned that Planning Director Michelle Mears and himself have been contacted by a few developers that have expressed interest in the property. There was discussion pertaining to the advantages and disadvantages with the option of going with a realtor versus an RFP. Councilor Michaud mentioned that going with a realtor could be faster. Councilor Gerding stated that the sale of the former Police Station went well being handled by a realtor but is concerned that the property may not sell as easily when there are zoning and subdivision considerations. On the other hand, he also has concern that the sale could move so quickly that the Council wouldn't know what type of development would be the most beneficial for the City and the Community.

Councilor Gibson mentioned that he has a concern about the Real Estate Market crashing and the opportunity for the sale of this property being hindered if that happens.

Councilor Austin stated that he likes the idea of subdividing the Little League field, and feels that having further discussions pertaining to rezoning or redefining the housing opportunity for the property would be beneficial. City Manager Belmore mentioned rezoning prior to listing the property with a real estate agent or sending out an RFP maybe be premature and could complicate the sale.

There was some discussion pertaining to the sale of the property through a realtor and the City Council not having input on what gets developed on the site. And the decision to do another RFP would give the City Council an opportunity to have input on what type of use or development happens but that may limit the proposals received.

Councilor Gerding inquired about the logistics in contacting the parties that have shown interest in the property and having discussions pertaining to their plans before the next steps are taken. City Manager Belmore stated that fairness to developers could be compromised by doing that.

Councilor Gibson stated he feels going with a realtor is the best option.

Councilor Gerding inquired about the process that would happen if they decided to list the property with a realtor or another RFP and what the subdivision process would look like. City Manager Belmore stated that if they decide to subdivide before, the City would be responsible for the cost to subdivide, but if they choose to wait, then it could be a condition in the purchase and sale agreement and the purchaser would be responsible for that cost.

There was some discussion pertaining to what the communication would look like between the City and interested parties and the process that will take place for the sale of this property. Councilor Austin inquired about the first RFP that went out and wondered if something was missed or not completed since interest in the property has increased. Director Mears mentioned that the interest from Chinburg Builders may have other developers looking at the property now.

Councilor Michaud and Councilor Gerding expressed that they feel going with a realtor would be a good decision because the purchase and sales agreement would come to the full Council for approval.

Councilor Gerding inquired about the contingencies that could be implemented, and City Manager Belmore stated that the subdivision for the Little League field and the cost being the responsibility of the purchaser. Finance Director Smith mentioned that if there are any uses that are not wanted, for example industrial uses, could be listed.

It was the consensus of the Committee to move this issue forward to the full City Council with a recommendation the City hire a real estate agent for the sale of the former National Guard Readiness Center.

MISCELLANEOUS

City Manager Belmore stated he had spoken with Ironwood Design Group concerning 1 Winter Street and inquired what it would cost to provide some conceptual designs for this property, and they provided a quote of \$5,000. If the City chose a conceptual design, it would cost approximately \$35,000 to provide a final design for construction. Manager Belmore mentioned the idea discussed by the Council of a parking area, with the possible concept of a food truck vendor area. There was some discussion pertaining to what other cities have done to accommodate a food truck vendor area and with the unique shape and location of 1 Winter Street, there is possible concerns that could arise from that concept. City Manager Belmore stated that the design group could help with the logistics of a food truck vendor area and at the same time provide other options the City could consider.

Councilor Gerding stated that he is interested in what a design group could bring to the table and feels that the Economic Development Funds could be used to pay for the service.

The consensus of the Committee is to move this issue forward to the full City Council with a recommendation that the City hire a design group to provide some conceptual designs for the development of 1 Winter Street.

Councilor Gerding inquired about Aclara and if there were any updates. City Manager Belmore stated that it appears that only security is monitoring the building and the dam was abandoned but he will reach out to Chinburg Builders for an update.

ADJOURN

Councilor Michaud made a motion to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Councilor Gibson and passed 4-0. Meeting adjourned at 5:53 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Ammy Ramsey, Deputy City Clerk