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MINUTES

FEBRUARY 1, 2018

7:54PM

WORK SESSION

YOUNGSVILLE COMMUNITY HOUSE

Mayor Fonzie Flowers called the Work Session of the Town of Youngsville Board of Commissioners to order at 7:54pm. In attendance were Commissioners Graham Stallings, Catherine Redd, Larry Wiggins, and Terry Hedlund. Commissioner Joseph Johnson was not present. Also in attendance were Town Administrator Roe O'Donnell, Town Clerk / Tax Collector Emily Hurd, Zoning Administrator Bob Clark, and Attorney Edward Bartholomew. A representative of the Franklin Times was also present.

The only item on the agenda was a presentation and discussion on the old Town Hall / Police Department Property. Clark gave a PowerPoint Presentation that showed the overview of the property. He stated that the property was .77 acres, approximately 33,540 square feet. Clark noted that it was currently zoned Main Street Business District (MSBD). He explained that the Town currently used the maintenance shed and back lot for equipment storage. Clark noted that the old Town Hall was a block building and showed pictures of the roof and its current state of disrepair. He stated that the roofs for the Police Department and maintenance shed were still in decent condition. Clark noted that the front parking was a bonus and the back had a small paved parking lot with painted lines.

Clark explained that the old Town Hall still had drains and sloping floors from when it was a Fire Department. He stated that the Town had spent \$26,000 to fix a drainage issue along the north side of the building, which adds value to the property. Clark stated that one of the disadvantages of the property was that all three buildings were on one utility pole and only had one-way drives. He noted that there was an encroachment issue by Cross and Main by the Police Department. Clark also noted that there was an encroachment issue with the fence on the north side of the property, along with the driveway on that side being shared with the neighboring property owners. Easements would be needed to correct these issues if the Town decided to sell.

Clark stated that the maintenance shed had recently been repaired and was in decent condition. He noted that there were some above-ground gas tanks and he stated that he was not aware of any spills. O'Donnell noted that it was surrounded by a small containment area that may post-date the tanks and Clark agreed that was probably the case.

Clark showed pictures of the back lot, noting where the Cross and Main dumpster was located and where screening was needed. Commissioner Wiggins stated that there was a problem with rodents as well.

Clark noted the options for the old Police Department. They included leasing the building, subdividing it from the main property and selling it, or repurposing it for Town use, such as Parks and Recreation.

Clark noted the options for the maintenance shed and equipment yard. They included maintaining a secure area if the Town does want to subdivide the property, sell or lease the old Town Hall, or repurpose it for Town use. Clark explained that if the old Town Hall was subdivided or repurposed, there was still the problem of one way traffic to the back lot. Possible uses included the museum or a classic storefront.

When asked, Clark noted that there was also asbestos located within the old Town Hall. This would increase the costs of demolition and/or renovations. Clark gave examples of other renovated buildings in downtown, such as Scoops on Main and Wine and Beer 101 – Youngsville. He stated that the right person could renovate these buildings with a very positive outcome.

Clark stated that they would need to continue the sidewalk and the Town could get approximately thirty parking spaces in the back lot, along with keeping room for the equipment. He stated that he could do better sketch plans should the Board want.

Clark stated that the current tax value is \$160,770. O'Donnell reminded the Board that the new values would be released on February 8th. Clark noted that natural gas was available at these locations.

Mayor Flowers explained that he was hoping to be able to use the local Armories and move the Maintenance Department into the Armory on Persimmon Street, however, that option was not looking promising. He stated that there was not a lot of equipment and some will be sold as surplus soon. Mayor Flowers stated that he wanted to sell the buildings so that they can house vital businesses. He wanted to make sure that all easements were taken care of beforehand. Mayor Flowers stated that we could also open access to the back parking lot from the Cross and Main parking lot. He reiterated that he wanted businesses to locate in the area and stated that builders can do wonderful things with these old buildings. Commissioner Redd wanted to clarify that we would separate the parcels and Mayor Flowers stated yes. Clark agreed that there were things the Town could do to make this work. Mayor Flowers stated that there has been interest in both buildings. He wanted to remind the Board that selling the properties would mean going through a lengthy bid process. Mayor Flowers stated that Youngsville needs more parking and more space for businesses.

Clark explained that there was also an option of exchanging property. The Town could exchange the old Town Hall for property in another location that may be more beneficial to the Town. Hurd explained that we had done this before.

Commissioner Wiggins stated that the residents of Youngsville wanted the museum and the current museum location did not have adequate parking. Mayor Flowers asked if the Woman's Club could afford the renovations, as they were unable to renovate the building

they were currently in. Commissioner Wiggins stated that there was a group of residents that have expressed interest in raising the funds. He explained that the Woman's Club could relocate to the old Town Hall and use their current facilities for storage. Commissioner Wiggins stated that it would also open up parking for other events since parking was an immediate need as the area develops. Commissioner Redd expressed concerns about the time frame for raising renovation funds, as well as who would run the museum; would they be town employees, when would it be open, who would be responsible for the upkeep, and what would happen if the Woman's Club dissolved.

Commissioner Hedlund stated that he wanted to sell the buildings "as is". He explained that this would create tax value, raise money, and still allow for more parking. Commissioner Hedlund stated that he was not against the Woman's Club museum but he knew they have no funds to move forward. Commissioner Wiggins stated that we could set a deadline for them to raise the funds. O'Donnell asked what the projected renovation costs would be and no one was sure of a total. Commissioner Redd liked the idea of setting a proposed deadline but who would retain ownership. Commissioner Wiggins stated that the Woman's Club could purchase the building with a clause that it would revert back to the Town should they disband. Commissioner Redd still felt that this was not the best solution. Attorney Bartholomew explained that it could be worked that if the building was purchased by a non-profit, such as the Woman's Club, for a specific use like the museum, it could revert back to the Town should something happen. He stated that maintenance should be the responsibility of the purchaser. Mayor Flowers stated that he did not want to lease the property and Attorney Bartholomew agreed it complicated things.

Commissioner Redd wanted to confirm that there would be approximately thirty parking spaces and wanted to know if there was room for a pocket park. Clark stated that he could check on the accessibility and get an estimate.

Mayor Flowers stated that there could be a public / private partnership concerning the building of the parking lot. Commissioner Redd stated that she preferred to leave the parking lot as gravel, as it drains better.

Commissioner Hedlund stated that he hated to turn his back on incoming funds. He stated that he was not against the museum but the money was hard to turn away from.

When asked, O'Donnell estimated that it would cost approximately \$20,000 to \$25,000 to do the parking lot.

Commissioner Stallings asked if the value of the property would go up if we continued to do nothing, just keep the maintenance shed and use the two buildings for current departments. Mayor Flowers expressed concerns about the leaking roof, as well as other problems. He stated that he worried it would cost too much to continue using the facilities. Mayor Flowers stated that he did feel it could be renovated by someone that had the money and the back parking could be retained for public use. He pointed out that a renovated building housing a business would increase the tax base with the bonus of public parking in the back lot. Mayor Flowers stated that people have expressed interest

in the buildings and there is limited room in downtown. Commissioner Wiggins stated that he agrees with Commissioner Stalling about not selling the building yet.

O'Donnell stated that vibrant downtowns need commerce. He stated that the empty buildings will fall down if nothing is done. O'Donnell stated that we should keep the back parking lot since it's needed but sell the front two properties. He also mentioned that it would increase the tax base, especially since there is no current tax value for government property. O'Donnell noted that there was a lot of potential and it was located in an area that garnered a lot of foot traffic. He explained to the Board that the costs of renovating the Community House was going to be \$125,000, mostly for the outside. O'Donnell stated that he wanted to make sure the Board understood that renovating a building in the condition that the Town Hall was in was going to be very costly. He stated that he was a believer in trying to generate foot traffic and making downtown vibrant. Clark stated that there were many uses for the buildings based on the MSBD zoning.

Commissioner Hedlund stated that he didn't think the Board was setting the right example by keeping the building vacant and leaving it in bad condition. Commissioner Redd agreed and noted that the Community House was also in disrepair, though the Town was moving forward on fixing it up.

Both Clark and Attorney Bartholomew summarized the conversation, problems and possible solutions. Hurd was directed to continue this discussion on the Agenda for the regular Board Meeting on February 8, 2018.

The meeting adjourned at 8:48pm.