

Finance Committee
October 5, 2020
6 p.m. - City Hall Council Chambers

Chairman Tom Ptak called the meeting to order at 6:07 p.m.

ROLL CALL:

Present: Chairman Ptak, Alderman Demes, Alderman Lavieri, Alderman Jeppson.

Absent: Alderman Herndon

Others present: Finance Director John Duncan, Mayor Jeff Grove, Alderman Crane, Alderman Reynolds, City Engineer Brian Brown, Economic Development Director Leah Inman, Superintendent of Public Works Jeff Bumgarner, Treasurer Virginia Kochanowski, City Clerk Carrie Brown, Deputy City Clerk Brent Bader.

A quorum was present.

The minutes of the Finance Committee held on September 21, 2020 were unanimously approved by the Committee after a motion from Alderman Lavieri and a second from Alderman Demes.

Chairman Tom Ptak invited Gary Hammers, Nick Hammers and Jeremy Reed to speak before the Committee following a motion by Alderman Demes and a second by Alderman Lavieri regarding development ideas for city-owned lots at 324, 328, 330, and 362 Third Street. Gary Hammers began by noting his previous work in the community before inviting Jeremy Reed forward to speak.

Reed referred to a PowerPoint presentation (Exhibit A) detailing a “small-town American revitalization,” which he said was already happening in La Salle. He noted how the Main Street business model was making a resurgence in small towns and how younger people are reconsidering moving back to rural communities due to the cost of living and “authentic experiences” small businesses offer. He also acknowledged that businesses that adopt outdoor dining see an increase in revenue and that many businesses are adopting it now due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Nick Hammers also presented similar outdoor concepts in Texas and Minnesota that are successful as examples of what they’re hoping to achieve as well as local examples such as the Psycho Silo in Langley and Jamie’s Outpost in Utica.

Gary Hammers stepped in to speak to introduce “The Filling Station” which was proposed to be a number of retail and dining options on the bottom floor at the sites as well as bed and breakfast options on the top floor, all connected by a center courtyard. Additional parking would also be made available. Gary Hammers said they would hope to create a pet-friendly, family-friendly environment that could also host events such as car shows. He also suggested it

would be beneficial to the City as a way to attract the many Starved Rock State Park visitors to the community.

Mayor Jeff Grove asked what the cost of the project would be for the developers and what their expected timeline would be in having it constructed. Gary Hammers said the project would be developed in phases with the first being the construction of “The Filling Station” restaurant. Gary Hammers suggested that could be up running by April while the retail spaces and apartments could take longer due to the size of the spaces and their condition. He suggested 18 months total for those properties. Gary Hammers said the development would cost “closer to a million” when asked again by Mayor Grove about a final project cost.

Alderman Lavieri asked how long they would be open during the year and Gary Hammers said with the use of heated units the courtyard could be open for 10 months, but the retail and restaurants could be open year-round. When asked about retail, Gary Hammers said the plan is for as many as five with two restaurants being in The Filling Station.

Alderman Demes asked if there would be access off of U.S. 6 or through the nearby alley. Gary Hammers said there would be access off of Bucklin Street but that remains conceptual as they are still trying to figure out how to implement a drive-through pick-up window as well.

Alderman Crane asked whether local contractors would be involved in the project, which Gary Hammers answered in the affirmative.

Alderman Ptak asked what the presenters were looking for from the City and Gary Hammers said they wanted donation of the property as well as any necessary rezoning. Alderman Demes advised Gary Hammers of a drainage issue he’s familiar with as a nearby neighbor and that any build should be designed to drain towards U.S. 6.

Mayor Grove said the property “is a very important corner for La Salle” and agreed with Gary Hammers’ earlier sentiment that it’s a gateway of sorts for the downtown. Grove said the project would be “super,” but they also don’t want the property just sitting without development and expected the City would ask for a timeline to be included in the agreement which Gary Hammers said he would be agreeable to include. Mayor Grove said the City Council would have an answer prepared for the developers during their next meeting.

Chairman Tom Ptak next asked if the Committee had any questions on the bills. Alderman Demes had questions about a \$5,000 invoice for vehicle repairs. Superintendent of Public Works Jeff Bumgarner explained a truck was repaired for issues with its springs when a transmission issue was found. Alderman Lavieri asked if Well #6 was cleaned and the pump replaced which Superintendent of Public Works Bumgarner answered in the affirmative which has increased its output. Alderman Jeppson asked about an invoice of \$3,400 to Candy Favorites which Finance Director John Duncan said is for candy canes for the Celebration of Lights which comes out of that donation fund.

Chairman Tom Ptak then brought the conversation to the possibility of a donation, monetary or otherwise, towards the IV Food Pantry following her visit to the City Council during the September 21, 2020 meeting. The Finance Committee had informally taken a straw vote to donate \$500 on August 24, 2020 when she originally planned to visit the Council, but no formal vote was taken. Alderman Demes asked if the City had any vehicles they could donate but none were identified. Alderman Lavieri asked if there was any update on identifying another building and Economic Development Director Leah Inman said she sent some options to IV Food Pantry and they also still deciding whether or not to optimize the space they currently have. Alderman Lavieri motioned to recommend donating \$500 to the food pantry which was seconded by Alderman Bacidore and unanimously approved.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:38 p.m.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Carrie Brown".

Carrie Brown, City Clerk by Deputy City Clerk Brent Bader