

**CITY OF WIXOM
JOINT CITY COUNCIL, DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY,
PLANNING COMMISSION, ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS, AND
PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION MEETING
MARCH 21, 2022**

This meeting was called to order by Mayor Beagle at 6:12 p.m. at which time allegiance was pledged to the American flag.

PRESENT:

City Council: Mayor Beagle; Deputy Mayor Rzeznik; Council Members: Gottschall, Gronlund-Fox, Behrmann, Smiley, Sharpe

Downtown Development Authority: Mayor Beagle; Chairperson Willett, Vice Chairperson Rzeznik, Members: Guzowski, Meredith, Serylo, Umlor; Absent: Excused: Cheney, Fine, Garmo, Habbouche

Parks & Recreation Commission: Chairman O'Brien; Commissioners: Menzies, Winters; Absent: Excused: Chupa, Ferrari, VanSickle

Planning Commission: Chairman Day; Vice Chairman Carter; Commissioners: Grossi, Lada, Tacy; Absent: Excused: Cousineau, Lawrence

Zoning Board of Appeals: Members: Berry, Hutchens, Schira, Thorsell; Absent: Excused: Alexander, Caplan, Cousineau, Winters

City Staff: Steven Brown, City Manager; Drew Benson, Assistant City Manager; Carmine Avantini, CIB Planning; Kelly McIntyre, CIB Planning; Buck, Cloutier, Magee, Sikma, Stamper, Venegas

Determination of a Quorum:

A quorum was present for this meeting.

Changes or Additions to the Agenda: (None)

Call to the Public: (Limited to 5 minutes per speakers, addressing Agenda items only)

There were no comments from the public at this time.

New Business:

1. Village Center Area Zoning Ordinance

Ms. McIntyre explained that in February, the Planning Commission brought some Village Center Area amendments to the Council. During that Council meeting, a few discussion topics came up that she felt the group needed to discuss. She noted that there had been a discussion regarding the VCA and the DDA boundaries. (The group was shown a map outlining both of the boundaries.) She stated that a significant item that came up at the Council meeting was to look at removing Multiple Family from the VCA. That would be a bigger decision because of the possible ramifications. The Master Plan was approved in September 2020. Some of the goals were to increase Multiple Family housing or the density in the VCA. The Master Plan translates to the Zoning Ordinance and the Zoning Ordinance is the document that helps the ideas of the Master Plan come to fruition. The purpose of the VCA is very specific. It talks about providing Mixed Use developments, a compact community, and smart principles. If we remove Multiple Family from the VCA, we would have to amend our Zoning Ordinance and the Master Plan so they can be compatible and support each other. She said that we would need to know why we would remove Multiple Family from the VCA. During the discussion, it was very specific about the remaining vacant parcels in the VCA, but we have to think about redevelopment opportunities within the VCA. She hoped to get feedback from the group about what they perceive as the goal. Is it the form or the function, the physical buildings and the way they are constructed, or the density and how those buildings are being used. Also, there was mention of ownership structure and if we had the legal ability to regulate that. If we remove Multiple Family from the District, what kind of long-term effects will that have on the community?

Deputy Mayor Rzeznik felt the stigma in the City goes back to the Village Apartments. At one time, 90% of the police and fire calls were related to those apartments. When one says apartments, that was what came to mind; the fear that the open parcels in the downtown area could become lower cost rentals with multiple families living there. If they were to build a complex like Shearwater in Commerce, that was meant for retirees and younger couples.

Councilmember Behrmann completely agreed. His biggest concern was that the units had 700 square feet. He was not of the belief that we could regulate ownership structure. If we zone it so that any residential units were 1300 square feet or above, it would be high end. Shearwater's smallest unit is 1300 square feet. The units at the Village Apartments start at 600 square feet. He would like to see the east retail developed and he would be fine with residential units above. It wouldn't matter if they were rentals or owner-occupied. The square footage would bring the kind of people we would want to invest in our community. We have a very diverse housing stock in this community. There are houses that are affordable and houses that are worth \$600,000 to \$700,000. We have low-income apartments and it would be nice to have some nice high-end apartments. The downtown area has very small lots and other residential developments with 12,500 square foot lots. He thought we have been good at offering a

diversified product in the City but he also thought we needed to be very selective about what we are going to do with the remaining parcels and not just settle for whatever comes our way.

Chairman Day agreed to an extent. He would exempt from that size requirement any living space above retail. Given the space of the retail, he thought that might be limiting us to how many units we could get in there and whether we could have live-work units there. In terms of form or function, the density didn't bother him. One of his pet peeves was the number of times people complain that more density means more traffic. It will not get better unless it gets worse. If we limit density in Wixom, that does nothing about limiting density in Milford or Commerce. Why should they get the tax dollars for developments that we don't allow and it will still impact the traffic. He would like any buildings in the Village Center Area to not look like the Village Apartments or Stonecrest.

Ms. Gawronski said she moved here from Northville in 2015. They were able to see the City grow. The condo she lives in are now going for \$280,000. They are brand new luxury condos. What was important to them was to have a downtown area to walk to. She sits on the Robertson community board and they are people her same age. People enjoy having the opportunity to live and work downtown. She didn't mind the smaller units. If she were a single person looking to purchase her first home, she would love to get a little condo above a shop.

Mr. Berry said he has lived in this community since 1984 and Wixom Road has always been a main thoroughfare. He hoped the consensus of the City was to take a look at the traffic. There is already a problem. Adding a thousand more people downtown in apartments was not the best move. He would rather see them developed into condos or single-family dwellings. If we start stacking a thousand apartments in Wixom, we are never going to get out of the congestion problem we have now. We have to look at what we want downtown and what would make it attractive.

Councilmember Gronlund-Fox indicated that she didn't mind the Mixed-Use piece. She thought that could be very attractive in a community. The density concerned her. We talk about affordability but it can't be too affordable. Ms. Guzowski commented that every single lot in the Robertson development has sold. She felt that the downtown affordability wasn't low income anymore. Councilmember Gronlund-Fox continued by saying that she also looks at mass transit. A lot of what was included in the packet for this meeting was communities that have mass transit, like Denver and San Francisco. We don't have that in Wixom and we don't know if we will ever get it.

Mr. Benson indicated that these types of comments were just what he was looking for. He mentioned that the highest building can be five stories and you can't go less than two stories. People are interested in doing commercial on single story, but when you ask them to go up one story, there is a lot more hesitation. If you go to three or four stories, the projects become more feasible. He said that they have seen an interest in

apartments being the way to get to Mixed Use. The VCA wouldn't allow another apartment complex like the Village Apartments in the downtown district.

Councilmember Gottschall said that relating back to the previous Council meeting, the square footage was a primary issue. He didn't gather that people were saying no to the apartments or no rentals all together. When the townhouses across the street close, within a few days they are relisted by investors. When we look at what we have left, there is the east retail and redevelopment space along Wixom Road. His comments regarding increasing the minimum size for the units was that nothing prevents investors from purchasing and then offering a property for lease. When you have a certain square footage minimum, that lends itself more to what the square footage of apartments are, not condos. You are tilting the scale to go more toward having those just be apartment buildings rather than having them be single condos that someone chooses to purchase and resell. When Creekside came, a lot of residents came to the Council meeting. The feedback was largely, no more apartments. We should be promoting more owner-occupied. He understood that we couldn't legislate that at all, nor did he think we should. We should be creating atmosphere to talk about affordability. He felt we didn't really have affordable housing in the City. That might be another tool that hasn't been discussed to help get some funds for developers. He has always been a proponent of building up in our downtown. He would love to see three- and four-story buildings. We should get more residents downtown.

Ms. Guzowski said that when the developer came back in to start rebuilding the condos across the street in 2018, they took the missing condos they intended to build and made it one association. That has been a big issue because they are almost 60% rental units. That makes it hard to get a mortgage when you are at that high of a level. They are currently voting to knock that down to 25% capacity for rentals.

Mr. Hutchens stated that he was one of the residents that got vocal at a Planning Commission meeting when they were discussing Creekside. There was a lot of concern amongst the neighbors in his subdivision. The high-density housing would impact the already existing problem we have with traffic. He wasn't necessarily opposed to density, but he would want to see some kind of plan or strategy for how the traffic would be dealt with. It was not enough to say it would be dealt with after it got worse. Wixom Road has some significant limitations on the capability to widen it. The intersection of Maple and Wixom Road has the cemetery and a historical building. He wondered what the feasibility was of addressing worse traffic in the future. He felt that needed to be addressed in a timely way.

Ms. Guzowski wanted to see a study done on the traffic lights in that area. We should look at the timing of the lights from Maple to Old Wixom Road on Wixom Road.

Mr. Benson commented that we are not in control of Wixom Road. Oakland County is reactive. They only pay attention when it becomes a problem.

Chairman Day didn't think we wanted to expand Wixom Road to make it a thoroughfare through town. We need another north/south route that is west of Wixom. That would be up to the County to try to figure out how to do that. It would take a lot of pressure off of the Milford and Commerce traffic.

Mr. Avantini said that he was part of the West Oakland County Study over 20 years ago. They had meetings throughout the whole area and everybody agreed that we need a north/south way of getting from White Lake Township to this area. The problem was no one wanted it in their area and no one wanted to take it on. He guessed the County would tell us the same thing.

Chairperson Willett said that with COVID, a large portion of the population now works from home so they aren't driving at the normal times. She wondered what the difference was with traffic coming up and down Wixom Road. Businesses have realized they can get a better value, more productivity, and less costs with people working from home. She asked if we had taken that into consideration. She didn't think we needed any more housing downtown. She thought the whole goal was so people who move here have something to do here. That was the draw in Wixom. She has seen this area develop and she thinks it is fabulous. She thought the diversity was fabulous. We need to have a mix of income; that is what society is. She thought we needed more retail downtown. The median age has changed. They aren't having kids early; they are traveling; they don't mind a smaller housing unit.

Councilmember Behrmann thought we would never get all the remaining properties downtown developed as retail unless there are more people. As much as he disagreed a lot with Deb Barker, she kept saying we needed more people living downtown to develop the downtown. He thought that was important, but he also thought it needed to be done in a strategic way. He was all for housing above the retail downtown and for developing the property where the Trail crossed the street. The density doesn't bother him. Whether we build something here or not, we will still have the traffic problem. Whoever builds the east retail is definitely not responsible for the traffic problems we have now. We will be better as a community to get a high-quality development there with more people. It is the same thing with the Maple property. When that gets developed, it will be more people turning right onto Wixom Road. He didn't think we could solve the traffic issues and he wasn't sure it mattered for the current zoning of the downtown. What matters for the downtown is that we are all on the same page for what we want to see built. We get that in the ordinance. In the past, he felt some people were always pushing more, more, more and that was not what people here wanted. People didn't want an apartment complex off Maple Road. Although that would have been more people in the downtown area to help develop the east retail, that was not what Council should be supporting if that was not what the residents wanted.

Chairperson Willett said that we should draw from everywhere. Novi draws from us and Milford draws from us. We aren't ever going to be able to support retail of any magnitude based on our residents. We will have to draw from other areas. That's how they survive.

Mr. Benson didn't think it was necessarily the population numbers. It was literally to get the buildings built. We are at a disadvantage. We are not building them at a time when it is easier for certain development patterns to happen. Smaller apartments are the preference. With the two-story minimum, we can't get the east retail developed.

Chairman O'Brien commented that Amazon delivers seven days a week in his neighborhood. He asked how much retail would be supported. He wondered what the planners saw when they were putting in retail. Brighton was an example. They have more restaurants.

Mr. Avantini stated that Fenton just had their third multi-story building completed. The retail was leased before the building was finished and all of the apartments were leased before they started construction. The office was moving slower than they had hoped. Every building has been purchased and leased. It was not just the restaurants, but also the specialty retailers, who are loving the downtown. The demand is out there, but you have to have the space. He stated that it doesn't help when the property owners are not willing to sell at fair market value. We have to be prepared to close that financing gap with multi-story buildings. A lot of the communities are helping to close that gap with their DDAs (tax increment financing). The MDEC is also coming in with usually between \$500,000 and \$1 million in grant money to make it work. They are great looking buildings in Fenton and that can happen anywhere.

Ms. Guzowski loved Fenton as an example since she grew up there. She walked through downtown Fenton growing up and it was all vacant buildings. Now it is booming and she liked that.

Mr. Hutchens thought we had to be very cautious. As we learned with Creekside, people don't want more people here. People like what they have now. He thought we might be better off with more retail in the downtown area rather than more apartments.

Mr. Lada asked if we would be able to reword this to say that the multi-use is only for the contiguous property on Wixom and Pontiac Trail. Mr. Benson clarified if he meant only Mixed-Use buildings on major roads and Mr. Lada replied yes. If your property is adjacent to that, that is our Mixed-Use opportunity. That would afford the people who want to do a business with apartments above. We wouldn't jam ourselves with some larger piece of property that was further out that has the apartments we don't want or that we want a certain square footage. We wouldn't say we aren't doing it. We are only limiting it to these specific areas. Ms. McIntyre said that was something we could do. Mr. Lada said he kept hearing in order to move this in the right direction, they are going to want Mixed Use. He didn't know if he wanted to be on board with it being a certain square footage. He would like to see what they bring to us.

Ms. McIntyre thought she was hearing they were not opposed to Multiple Family as part of the Mixed Use, but they weren't interested in seeing a standalone building that was 100% multiple family. Mr. Lada confirmed that it needed to be Multiple Use.

Ms. Tacy said that they were looking at how middle housing came about. They started with the VCA and they were looking at restoring a downtown that would have developed organically. That was part of the strategy that went into how it should look, what would the housing structure look like. That thought concept went into the pocket parks and that type of development downtown and the street fronts along Pontiac Trail was what defined the nucleus of our downtown. Part of the conversation they had when middle housing was introduced was that this was a traditional development. We had the larger buildings downtown which were backed by duplexes. It was a slightly lower skyline and smaller footprint than a village development, but still a Multiple Family development. That gave way to the single-family homes. We talked about keeping the Mixed Use along the Pontiac Trail and Wixom corridors. As any other properties became available one block over, it would be an appropriate area for a middle housing type of development. They wondered where this would be appropriate. As other properties became available and they aren't on the main thoroughfares, what might be appropriate that would solve some of the housing issues without a huge development. Lastly, she commented that Wixom Road used to go to the left and we made it go to the right. We now have Old Wixom Road and Wixom Road. We have an arched wall that leads off to the left. She asked why we couldn't finish that arch wall to circle to the right so the whole thing was our gateway. She asked if we could not put an arch to the right and finish that around. We want to lead everybody into the downtown but we are sending them to Milford Township.

2. Remaining Downtown Development Opportunities

Mr. Benson said the biggest challenge wasn't that the downtown district didn't have development opportunities; it was that some of them were challenging and some of them were owned by individuals who may not be financially able or interested in developing them. In their packet, he summarized every development opportunity in downtown Wixom. The east retail was what we all want to see the most. Earlier, Mr. Avantini talked about tax increment financing and gap financing. If we can find a developer who the current property owner would like to work with, we believe that project will happen. The other thing the City can do as the third largest property owner in downtown is be more aggressive with the property that we own. There is property that we could put back on the market, like the Renton Street properties. These were properties that the City purchased to facilitate Phase 2 of the Trail. The City owns about three and a half acres there. Phase 2 will be going in this summer and we anticipate having the opportunity to make the rest of that available. He thought that was an obvious choice. Being the owner, we are less concerned if we sell it for \$1 million over asking. We are concerned about the outcome and at least getting our money back.

The discussion continued regarding how the Phase 2 of the Trail would continue through the downtown area.

Mr. Meredith asked what the City would like to see going in on Pontiac Trail. Mr. Benson said it would be traditional Mixed Use. Ms. Tacy stated that they were looking at

anything along the main thoroughfare to serve the public. The next lot back would be stepped down. She said that she was part of a discussion previously where they talked about putting a parking lot in that area to use that as their starting and stopping point on the Trail. She asked if the vacant field at Wixom Elementary could be utilized. She indicated that the principal would love to see that turned into a parking lot. Mr. Brown said he agreed that if that were turned into a public parking lot, it would serve both needs.

Mr. Benson thought right after the Trail was finished, we could have that be an available opportunity next year. Now getting into the more complicated things that the City could be involved in, he referenced the City Hall campus. There is open space, like where the barn property is located. There is also a quarter of an acre between City Hall and Wixom Station. These are perfect opportunities, but we know we need retail and commercial restaurants. We lose more businesses who want to be here. He wondered what the interest was for looking outside of the box. Would we be reserved by saying we should really focus on trying to find ways to subsidize those privately-owned pieces or was there interest in trying to pursue our own opportunities.

Mr. Meredith said there didn't seem to be a lot of movement on available property owned by someone else. He thought it might behoove us to look at our own area that can be developed. Ms. Guzowski agreed. Even if we start a small project, it would have to spark the property owner's interest.

Chairman Day asked what the problem was with the owner of the east retail property. Mr. Benson said that the last time he spoke to him, the type of development they talked about doing was a single-story, suburban style building with drive throughs. Mr. Brown added that we have different people to try to talk to him to generate interest. Mr. Benson said that much like single-family housing where companies are buying it up and leveraging against it, they will fund their life style. We see that with land and in the downtown district. What they would like to do or feel comfortable doing was either not allowed under our ordinance or we've said that would not work. Mr. Brown commented that earlier Mr. Avantini had talked about gap funding and that was something that could come into play with the DDA.

Councilmember Behrmann remembered seeing some renderings of the land in front of City Hall and the Community Center being Mixed Use. He asked if that was something we would still be fine with, by putting a three-story building there. Mr. Benson said that was the question. Councilmember Behrmann thought it seemed like a lot of property but he wondered if there was enough. Mr. Avantini said that when they did the original renderings of that portion of the development, they said there was enough to put a line of buildings in front of both City Hall and the Community Center. Councilmember Behrmann thought that might be something to talk about with what it would look like to market those properties. If those two were to go and the one on Wixom Road was to go that we own, eventually the owner of the east retail would have to figure something out. He asked if the triangle property at Wixom Road and Old Wixom Road was owned by

the same family and Mr. Benson said that everything south of Wainstock was owned by the same family.

Mr. Avantini said that five or six years ago when they met with the Pootas on the triangle piece, he was talking about selling it and putting the money into the Mini-Mart. He hired an architect to do a rendering of a building on the triangle property. It was a multi-story Mixed Use building. It would have been a really nice building. He said he brought it up about a year or two ago, and Mr. Poota's concern was that he couldn't get the rents there. Mr. Avantini thought he had some of the highest traffic volumes in the County for a vacant, redevelopable spot anywhere. He could do very well with a project there. He thought the challenge that we are seeing with him and the east retail owner was that we have people that don't do Mixed Use development. There are people who do that type of development and they are really good at it. If the property owners aren't willing to sell, we can't force them.

Mr. Benson said sometimes these development opportunities can be conflicting. He knew the DDA had talked a lot about the park opportunities and now that they have some funds available, we are building a walking path around the City Hall campus. There was some interest in moving the barn and there were some who were not interested in that. For staff's focus, he asked what the desired direction was. Should we look more at the recreational opportunities, should we look more at moving the barn and putting a commercial building there, or is it trying to incorporate it in. If we want to move forward trying to market a piece like that, which could be done, it could happen. There are pros and cons.

Chairperson Willett stated that part of the goal of the DDA was to preserve the historic properties in the downtown. The last one we have is the barn. She knew that was a sore spot for people, but for the DDA and the positions they are in, that is the last hurrah for them. Yes, they have the Gibson House down the road that no one is walking with their Junction cocktail down to see. It is great if you are going to go for a day with your kids. But it is not somewhere that is inviting and a destination. The goal with doing the walking path and part of the sell to the other DDA members was that we needed somewhere for people to come and stay. People work around here. They might grab dinner on the way home, but they don't stay. If we want to keep the ability to have the downtown, we have to create something that causes people to want to stay downtown. The Design Committee has been working on the bike racks to compliment the Trail. Maybe the DDA can help invest in the Renton property where a developer can put in a bike shop. There are a lot of different things that the DDA can help with. Maybe the DDA does help with the gap funding. As a DDA person and in the construction industry for a while, she thought we were distracted and getting a little off track with finding small pieces. We can build out these little spots all over but we will still have an eyesore across the street. She thought maybe we could move the barn to Renton and it could become one of the Trail hubs. The DDA board is all volunteers and are here to help the community be better. We just have to find the right way to make it best for everyone. The demographics have changed from 15-20 years ago. Moving forward, we have to be thinking of who we are trying to please. The DDA has done some online surveys of who

was in the downtown and what they want in the downtown. That is how we are leading the DDA. She thought the Community Center was pretty and putting a big building in front of it would take away from that.

Mr. Benson thought that was a great prospective. The buildable area is about .83 acres. It isn't an insignificant opportunity. We would have to figure out the parking too. It was one of those tough policy choices where you have to move the barn and put parking there. The pro was that we could control it. There are other opportunities.

Ms. Serylo asked if they brought up their inability to get financing if it was three stories or more. Mr. Benson said they were told they could go up to five stories. They mentioned that it was hard to get financing because they look for 60% to 70% leased. That was another tool that was discussed with the DDA. They could help guarantee some leases to get the financing.

Mr. Brown confirmed that the group was interested in the City being more aggressive and no one said they were against it.

3. Downtown Cost Sharing & Downtown Development TIF Plan

Mr. Benson said the DDA has a unique opportunity. The amount of residential within the DDA district is unique. Eighty nine percent of their capture is now residential and they have recognized that is not the desired outcome. We want to have more commercial. In 2003, it was the other way around, almost all commercial and no residential. They created the plan and all this development happened which was designed and funded. Then development couldn't happen without a DDA and the bonds it took out to lay the underground infrastructure to do the streetscape and finance the fountain. They increased the taxable value that has occurred over the last 18 years. In our case, downtown Wixom was fortunate to not have much developed across the street. All of that was captured 100% but that was all required to pay the bonds. Even with the higher capture than most, the taxable value in downtown Wixom is higher than the taxable value of downtown Ferndale for the TIF district. All of these developments are starting to pay off. The revenues are exceeding the expenditures and this will be the first year that the DDA will have repaid all of its debt obligations to the City. They were making double payments for a number of years when the DDA didn't have the revenue. The DDA now has the opportunity to invest in more projects and they have been having a lot of great conversations about them. There have been meetings with the Parks and Recreation Commission to work on that kind of partnership. The City management has been talking about cost sharing. There are services provided by the City within the district. Historically the money wasn't there but we would provide them (Public Works, Financial, etc.). The goal was not to use the DDA as a piggy bank for the City to get rich but to at least cover part of our costs to help make it all happen. At the same time, we want to allow for those projects to take shape. The current DDA plan will expire in 2028. They generally last about 25 years. We talked about extending and amending the plan to allow for new eligible activities and to potentially have a longer time horizon. He said that after talking with the County and the other taxing jurisdictions, the City management

has decided to postpone those discussions of extending and amending. There are limitations that come with that, like how we can spend revenue. The DDA has been open and comfortable with it and the City Council has not had the opportunity to directly discuss this. From the community's prospective, based on the discussions we have had about our downtown, we think there is a case to be made that this all makes sense and this is the best financial decision at the moment.

Mr. Brown said that in the beginning, we talked about extending the DDA existence because it was only recently that they started getting their head above water when it came to the bond payments. They did not have an opportunity to have impact on the downtown because the money hadn't been there in the past. There was also the issue that if things weren't in the DDA plan, we couldn't use DDA funds to fund those items. Some of those things were gap financing, which was not anticipated back in the day. That was another reason to look at extending it because then we could change the plan. The downside to that was when you do that, those taxing jurisdictions have a chance to take a look at it again and potentially opt out. It is our position that it was not worth that at this time. We could still do an extension closer to the expiration date and meanwhile capture the full amount of monies from those other taxing jurisdictions. He said that was the course of action they were recommending.

Chairperson Willett commented that the DDA did vote on that and agreed with City management on that item. We have several years before we have to think about updating or extending the plan. In that timeframe, we can really make an impact on some of the things that we have been looking to do.

Mr. Brown said that 2028 would be the expiration so in 2026 or 2027, we would start to make some plans to talk about an extension. In the meanwhile, we would capture the full amount of those taxing jurisdiction funds.

Deputy Mayor Rzeznik asked if land acquisition was one of the allowed activities and Mr. Benson replied yes. There are still a number of things we can do. One of the tools that Mr. Avantini talked about that we really liked was the tax increment financing for projects. They would be reimbursed their own tax increment increase from their developments over a specific period of time to subsidize, which is a great tool but we currently can't do that.

Mr. Benson stated that the second point was what were the areas of focus. We talked about land acquisition, infrastructure improvements, sidewalks, the barn, and finding ways to incentivize development. There are a million things we can do and even with a decent capture after bond payments, there is still only so far that goes. From the individual group's perspective, he asked what was the desired direction.

Ms. Guzowski asked if everyone was okay with the DDA cost sharing packet and the DDA keeping their plan going.

Mr. Brown said he would like to see the City and the DDA cooperate in getting more aggressive with things in the downtown. The Heath building was one. That is something that is not within our ownership, but we can try to do some things to facilitate movement. Other properties that would be under the City's control, like the Renton property, were other areas where the DDA could play a role. We would like to prioritize actual downtown developments and add new businesses.

Mr. Benson said that with the cost sharing proposal, we recommended 5% for the City Manager's Office expenses, 5% for financial administration, 5% for Public Works, and 50% of downtown specific events and activities from Community Services. He thought that was a fair middle ground and it seemed that there was no major consternation from the group on that. Mr. Brown added that it still leaves a lot of money available to the DDA.

Ms. Cloutier commented that these cost sharing initiatives or contracts between cities and DDAs are very common throughout Mainstreet Oakland County programs.

Chairperson Willett said the DDA agreed that 5% was a good chunk of change. She didn't have an issue with it but she did want some type of annual audit to make sure it was fair for both sides.

Councilmember Gronlund-Fox asked if there was communication between the DDA and City staff when there are City events that may take place in the DDA. Ms. Magee replied that all the events are implemented through the Parks and Recreation Department. The funding that would go toward the payment was because the events are downtown and they promote them. They would continue to run them and organize them.

Ms. Guzowski said that was part of her reason for joining the DDA. She started out by helping the Parks and Recreation Department. She hoped to get the two bodies more involved. As a resident, she didn't care if Parks and Recreation was funding it or the DDA was funding it. Chairperson Willett added that the Parks and Recreation has put in a lot of planning and research on these events over a long period of time. They have done a great job. Ms. Guzowski said the DDA would like to help out with these events. Everything the DDA was helping to fund was in the downtown district and that could be argued that it was the DDA's responsibility.

To answer Councilmember Gronlund-Fox's question, Mr. Brown said that Ms. Magee spends a lot of time setting up meetings ahead of time with staff as to what will be required for an event. She does reflect the costs for those events. We were not charging for the DDA events previously. The cost sharing will allow us to capture those kinds of expenses.

Deputy Mayor Rzeznik asked Mr. Benson if he got what he wanted out of this Joint Meeting and he replied yes. There was great information for the VCA ordinance to be able to bring that back to the Planning Commission and then the Council. On the City-

owned property section, he commented that part of his job was to look at the opportunities and we will continue to pursue private development opportunities and make them realistic. If we can do some preliminary work on the City-owned properties, he would like to see what that would look like. He thought it was a useful discussion for working with the DDA regarding the walking path and the barn.

Chairperson Willett asked about the barn. If the barn was restored or moved, we couldn't look at it as a revenue generator but rather saving a historical property. Whether the DDA uses that for their office or it is torn down, we can't use it as a revenue generator. We talked about doing a study on it, but those are the two options. We aren't going to historically renovate it because it is not on the registry and it is too expensive.

Mr. Benson said that one of the things the DDA talked about was to budget funds for the 2022/2023 fiscal year for a more formal study by a third party to get real estimates and real options for what could be done with the barn. He thought that was a key project they were looking at for this next fiscal year. Chairperson Willett added that the DDA also budgeted a small amount for a quick paint job so it looks a little nicer from the road.

Mr. Schira stated that the entrance at the Culvers and the gas station is used as an exit. He didn't think most people knew it was not an exit. It is dangerous and it needs to be changed. Mr. Brown said he was trying to have discussions with the property owner because it is their sign and not a public sign. He will follow up on that.

Councilmember Gottschall said his take-away was if you want to be creative, bring it to us. We don't know until we look at something and no one has really had the thought to separate those out and sell them. He wasn't sure he would be in favor of buildings in front of City Hall and Community Center. He indicated he was not a "save the barn" fan. He felt we were missing a lot of right-hand turns in the downtown area that leads to traffic issues. He suggested moving the Wire House. At PNC Bank there is no right turn for people on Pontiac Trail so there is a stack up all the way to the Post Office when people just need to turn right. As much as we want to look at building and resident improvements, letting people turn from one road to another without waiting would be a giant improvement.

Call To The Public:

Ms. Cloutier thanked everyone for coming out tonight. She enjoyed the discussion and felt it helped the Board and her job. We are excited about the possibilities in the downtown.

Ms. Guzowski thanked everyone. She thought this was an awesome meeting and she couldn't be more excited.

Deputy Mayor Rzeznik thought something that might be interesting to this group is what is working elsewhere in like-sized communities.

Mr. Brown thought the Joint Meetings are a very strong practice in Wixom and he was pleased that we had items to discuss. He thought more of these meetings could happen as things come to our attention. There were exciting conversations and he appreciated everyone's time.

Adjournment:

This meeting of the Wixom Joint City Council, Downtown Development Authority, Planning Commission, Zoning Board of Appeals, and Parks & Recreation Commission Meeting was motioned and adjourned at 8:12 p.m.

Catherine Buck
City Clerk

Approved 4-12-2022
