

MINUTES
CITY OF WOODSTOCK
OLD COURTHOUSE AND SHERIFF'S HOUSE ADVISORY COMMISSION
April 18, 2016
City Council Chambers

A Regular Meeting of the City of Woodstock Old Courthouse and Sheriff's House Advisory Commission was called to order at 7:00 PM by Chairman Dennis Sandquist on Monday, April 18, 2016 in the Council Chambers at City Hall.

A roll call was taken.

COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT: Lynde Anderson, Jim Campion, Trisha Doornbosch, Jodie Kurtz-Osborne, Jim Prindiville, David Stumpf, Tammy Townsend-Kise, Joseph White, and Chairman Dennis Sandquist.

COMMISSION MEMBERS ABSENT: None

STAFF PRESENT: City Manager Roscoe Stelford, Economic Development Director Garrett Anderson, and City Planner/Staff Liaison Nancy Baker.

OTHERS PRESENT: Plan Commissioner Darrell Moore and City Clerk Cindy Smiley

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion by J. Campion, second by J. Prindiville, to approve the minutes of the March 21, 2016, meeting of the Old Courthouse and Sheriff's House Advisory Commission with the following corrections:

Page 2, Paragraph 2, last line, change "McHenry Council" to "McHenry County"

Ayes: L. Anderson, J. Campion, T. Doornbosch, J. Kurtz-Osborne, J. Prindiville, D. Stumpf, and Chairman D. Sandquist. Nays: none. Abstentions: T. Townsend-Kise and J. White. Absentees: none. Motion carried.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

ILLINOIS STATE MARKER

Chairman Sandquist noted this item was presented at the last meeting. He noted that it was the consensus of the Commission that any plaque should recognize the historic significance of the Courthouse and Sheriff's House as well as the connection with Eugene V. Debs. At the Commission's request, Nancy Baker developed the text included in the packet; and this item was placed on the agenda for consideration and approval this evening. Chairman Sandquist stated if the Commission approves the text and the placement of a commemorative plaque, a letter of support, the text of which is also contained in the packet, would be sent to the Illinois State Historical Society. He noted that the proposed text would increase cost of the marker. He also noted copies of other letters of support contained in the packet.

A discussion occurred of the wording for the plaque, with Chairman Sandquist suggesting that sentences two and three in the third paragraph be reversed. D. Stumpf opined that the text does not

clearly describe the relationship between Mr. Debs and Sheriff Eckert. In response to his questions, Kathleen Spaltro detailed the nature of the relationship. She noted that Sheriff Eckert assured Mr. Debs that he would not come to harm in Woodstock, stating that he felt it was his role to protect the prisoner. Ms. Spaltro noted that a lifelong friendship blossomed between the two men.

Chairman Sandquist stated the City Council would ultimately approve the placement and wording of the plaque. R. Stelford noted the Commission could approve it and then it could be placed on a City Council Agenda. Chairman Sandquist agreed, noting this would ensure the wording is as the City wishes. Ms. Spaltro stated the language will be negotiated between the City and the Illinois State Historical Society. She stated the Society must first approve the application for the plaque and then the wording will be negotiated, so the language being discussed this evening is the suggested language.

Chairman Sandquist asked if the Commission is comfortable with the language as presented, noting he wished to be sure the plaque included how important this building is to the City. J. Prindiville stated the Debs case is the compelling story and he wishes to be sure the plaque shows how important this is to history. He stated he favored the placement of two plaques, one with the Debs story and one with information on the history of the building. Ms. Spaltro discussed the Debs case in more detail, noting its importance to history and the labor law. Chairman Sandquist stated he supports the inclusion of Debs and the inclusion of how important this case was to labor law but noted he wishes to make sure the architect and history of the building is included.

D. Stumpf stated he is fine with the plaque but asked about the historical accuracy of the letter. Nancy Baker discussed Mr. Debs' incarceration in Woodstock, providing information to support the statements made in the letter. She noted that he had his own secretary and did some publishing from jail, stating that Sheriff Eckert allowed this to occur. Ms. Spaltro noted that Mr. Debs was jailed at night but was allowed out during the day. D. Stumpf stated this indicates he supported the cause while jailed in Woodstock.

Ms. Spaltro suggested if the City wishes to further acknowledge Mr. Debs and his involvement with the building and Woodstock, one application could be made for a 250-word plaque for this and then a separate plaque discussing the history and significance of the Old Courthouse could be placed with no permission needed from the historical society. J. Prindiville expressed his support of this approach opining that this plaque should be about the Debs story and its importance to labor law and the impact it had on society. D. Stumpf also supported removing the information about the architect from the plaque and including more information about Debs' incarceration. T. Townsend-Kise stated there are two different important story lines, both of which are being watered down by combining them. She stated her feeling that two plaques may be a better idea if there are funds for two. Chairman Sandquist noted there are no funds budgeted by the City for the plaque. He stated the original proposal asked for a letter of support, stating the requester was raising funds for the plaque, and noted if it is the Commission's desire to give them a letter of support for a plaque about Mr. Debs, it would be with the understanding that this was for the original plaque. He further stated someone could then come forward with the suggestion for another plaque concerning the history and importance of the Old Courthouse.

A discussion followed of the timeline of the project, noting the development of Pullman Park in Chicago and also the importance 2017 would have as the 100th anniversary of important events in

Mr. Debs' life. J. White stated this may be an opportunity to draw more attention to the Old Courthouse and the restoration project.

Motion by D. Stumpf, second by J. Kurtz-Osborne, to approve submission of a letter of support to the Illinois State Historical Society with the understanding that the letter will address the Debs' marker. Ayes: L. Anderson, J. Champion, T. Doornbosch, J. Kurtz-Osborne, J. Prindiville, D. Stumpf, T. Townsend-Kise, J. White, and Chairman Sandquist. Nays: none. Abstentions: none. Absentees: none. Motion carried.

FUNDING/FINANCING

Chairman Sandquist noted that City Manager Roscoe Stelford is present this evening to provide further information on this topic.

R. Stelford stated that at the last meeting the potential for issuing debt for the restoration improvements for the Old Courthouse and Sheriff's House was discussed. He then explained how being a non-Home Rule municipality impacts this, stating this would require a referendum for the issuance of General Obligation Bonds with payment for these through property taxes. He stated that Home Rule status would eliminate the need for a referendum.

Mr. Stelford then noted that the City Council is tax averse, having declined to take the PTELL, or automatic cost-of living property tax increase, for the last five years. He further stated that Council does everything they can to freeze or even lower the City's portion of the property tax bill. He stated without evidence of strong public support of a bond issue, he does not believe Council would support this. Mr. Stelford then stated alternate revenue bonds could be used, but noted that the City would have to identify a revenue stream as a source of payment which would be 125% of the bond. He stated how to pay for it is the biggest issue impacting this project.

Mr. Stelford stated staff has discussed fundraising and grant opportunities, but noted the question of ownership must be addressed first as many grant applications and foundations require this information. He then discussed the possibility of using tenanting at the Sheriff's House in the same way it has been used in the Old Courthouse, with a tenant being given a favorable lease in exchange for them doing significant interior improvements to the building. He stated that five or six restauranteurs have approached the City in the last year with interest in the Sheriff's House. He indicated if the Commission would entertain this, Staff would develop and request RFPs to get as many as possible which would then be sent to the Commission for review and then to the City Council. He confirmed that this would only be for the Sheriff's House.

In response to questions from the Commission, Mr. Stelford stated the investment required would be for interior improvements only, including the kitchen and bathrooms. He also indicated that accessibility questions would need to be addressed. He noted what would be required of the operator and what would be required of the City would be spelled out in the lease agreement.

D. Stumpf stated he met with representatives of the Friends of the Old Courthouse, noting they are in the final stages of putting together a fundraising plan. He stated the opinion was expressed that if this were to become a commercial building, it would make it very difficult to fundraise and, conversely, if the City retained ownership, it would greatly increase the opportunity to raise funds.

In response to D. Stumpf's presentation of two resolutions for consideration by the Commission, Chairman Sandquist noted, per the Open Meetings Act, these resolutions could be discussed but no action could be taken until the next meeting following the required publication.

D. Stumpf then discussed the suggested proposal that the Old Courthouse be used as City Hall with the current City Hall being sold. He noted the problem with this proposal is that the Old Courthouse space may not be suitable for government use, as was determined by the County in the 1970s. He stated the Commission should try to resolve this issue and discussed a resolution he has crafted for the Commission's consideration. J. Prindiville stated he is unsure as to whether it would make sense for the Old Courthouse to become City Hall, asking whether Dr. Stumpf is looking for an answer. Chairman Sandquist noted this would only be halfway to the answer of this question, as it would also have to be determined whether this would be financially feasible. He stated the value of the building must be determined which could be done through a marketing analysis. J. White stated the building also needs a space needs analysis which would be done by an architect and would identify whether this option is feasible from that standpoint. Dr. Stumpf stated having this information could change the whole fundraising approach and again noted he is not inclined to think this is a viable option.

T. Townsend-Kise noted the Artspace Study is happening in May and will provide an answer as to whether this is a viable option also.

A discussion followed of what information could be provided by City staff. J. Campion clarified that the Commission wished for Staff to prepare a report on the feasibility of City Hall moving to the Old Courthouse. He also stated the Commission should know whether the City is really looking at this, and if this is not the case, the Commission should not spend time on this issue.

R. Stelford stated moving City Hall to the Old Courthouse has been mentioned as an option and suggested the Commission should review this to see if it is feasible. He noted the vision for the Old Courthouse is to be an open building, stating City Hall is not open on the weekends or in the evenings and does not draw people. He also noted that there is much storage available in the current City Hall building, including the large basement and the former fire stations, which is used by Public Works to store much of their large equipment. He stated it would be a challenge to find a place to store all of this equipment should City Hall move to the Old Courthouse. He urged the Commission to explore this option, however.

Chairman Sandquist opined that perhaps the current City Hall could be subdivided to retain this storage space for the City. He also noted that he does not see the City government bringing more people to the downtown area than it already does. He also stated that this question should be put to rest.

Dr. Stumpf stated it may be that the question has already been answered. He suggested placing this question on the next agenda to discuss and vote on to finalize the Commission's position.

Chairman Sandquist noted the next item on the agenda is Public Involvement and stated the question previously discussed, relocating City Hall to the Old Courthouse, could be a question placed to the public on the survey. He further stated the Commission may or may not wish to consider public input on this subject.

J. White stated many people have looked at this and it does not seem to be feasible. He further stated for the City to step away and say this is not a future use for the Old Courthouse keeps the process moving forward. He stated the public is looking at the Commission for a vision and coming back to the public does not make it look like the Commission is moving forward. He expressed his wish to close this topic by saying it is not feasible and then keep moving on.

D. Stumpf suggested placing this item on the next agenda for discussion and possible action. Chairman Sandquist requested staff to research this topic and place for discussion on the next meeting for possible action. It was the consensus that this be done.

Noting T. Townsend-Kise's previous comments, Chairman Sandquist stated the Artspace Study will provide more information on usage and that the Commission will thusly be making incremental progress on this issue.

In response to comments from J. White concerning soliciting further proposals, Chairman Sandquist stated he has spoken with Garrett Anderson on this topic with Mr. Anderson expressing the opinion that the issues facing the Old Courthouse and the Sheriff's House are very different, making a single proposal for both buildings difficult. Chairman Sandquist stated he would support the receipt of proposals from users who would want to make a significant investment in the Sheriff's House, bringing a high-quality restaurant to the Square.

J. Prindiville stated his feeling that the Commission does not need to be in a hurry, noting there has not been much surveying or solicitation of public opinion. He does not want the market to drive the decisions rather wanting to decide what is best for the public. He expressed his opinion that another restaurant may not be what is needed and stated his feeling that the Commission does not need to solicit proposals at this time. He stated the market is improving and opined it is to the City's advantage to go slowly. He also noted it would be necessary to have answered the question of ownership should a proposal indicate a wish for an option to buy.

T. Townsend-Kise stated her opinion that the Commission and the City should consider all interested parties, noting the City would not be required to accept any proposal that was solicited. She stated the Sheriff's House is an empty storefront on the square and is closed and noted her feeling that the Commission should take advantage of any interested party. She further stated if the Commission wishes to gain public support then the public has to have access and get in the building. She stated her opinion that the Commission should explore this option so public support and interest can be generated.

Discussion then followed of what could be specified in the RFP with Chairman Sandquist noting specific concern about how the jail cells would be used. He also noted he would not want the RFP to cut off any options. R. Stelford noted that one of the entities that has expressed interest has stated its wish to turn the jail cells into seating which would attract the public's attention. He further noted that all who have looked at the building have indicated that the cells are a draw.

In response to a question from Chairman Sandquist, it was the consensus of the Commission that Commissioners Stumpf and White will work with Economic Development Director to develop an RFP and the process for its issuance and review of the responses.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

N. Baker noted that she and Commissioner Doornbosch met subsequent to the last meeting to refine the questions on the proposed survey.

Chairman Sandquist stated he likes having the survey available all the times on the City's website and asked T. Doornbosch for more information on the survey as presented.

T. Doornbosch stated this is not a full-blown focus group but rather an on-line survey to develop a basic strategy. She noted the Commission can still receive information from focus groups but that this survey will open a line of communication with individuals who may not have an opportunity to share their views as the survey will be available on the City's web page and take little time to complete. She also noted it is inexpensive. Ms. Doornbosch stated this is just one avenue of communication.

Discussion followed of the City's demographics and why it may be difficult for people to participate in focus groups.

Noting a Commissioner's previous concern, Ms. Doornbosch stated there may be silly or irrational comments made but these can be discounted. She also noted there may, indeed, be negative responses but that these must be given equal weight with the positive responses, stating they cannot be rejected just because they do not agree with the Commission's or other's opinions.

Ms. Doornbosch stated it is reasonable to solicit responses from all sources. She noted the building is a national landmark and that no restrictions should be placed on where the answers come from. She stated the survey questions should be written using the most neutral language possible, noting to skew the answers would be to violate the purpose of the survey. Ms. Doornbosch stated there should be both open-ended and closed-ended questions, with best practice being to keep it simple with a limited number of questions. She noted the proposed survey will cost only time and talent.

In response to a question from T. Townsend-Kise, Ms. Doornbosch stated the survey should be placed on the web site as soon as possible and be left on for several months. In response to a question from Chairman Sandquist concerning what would happen as decisions are made, T. Doornbosch stated the on-line survey could be modified as long as it was ensured that the data before and after the modification is divided and isolated.

In response to a question from T. Doornbosch, R. Stelford stated a banner could be placed on the website to drive people to the website and also a press release could be issued. Mr. Stelford stated the City also already subscribes to Survey Monkey which could be used if it meets the Commission's needs. He also stated that Council will wish to know how many or the percentage of respondents are residents of Woodstock. T. Townsend-Kise supported inclusion of the question concerning residency. Chairman Sandquist requested that the respondent's zip code be requested also. J. Prindiville agreed, noting that while knowing how many respondents are residents may be important, if TIF funds are used it also could be important to know how many respondents are residents of the school district and the Fire Rescue District.

Discussion then followed of the length of time the survey should remain available on the website. It was opined by some that it should remain up indefinitely while others felt there should be a defined period so that the public knows this information is being reviewed and considered.

Chairman Sandquist requested a monthly report of the survey results. T. Townsend-Kise suggested that it be stated the responses would be compiled and reviewed monthly, noting in this way the public will know their responses are being read and considered.

D. Stumpf stated he is not in favor of a survey, noting his concern that the responses could set unrealistic expectations that all suggestions may be not only considered but put in place. He noted the example of many respondents stating the Old Courthouse should become a commercial building but that being impossible for financial reasons. He noted this could result in many questions. He stated his concern that the questions asked will set expectations. He recommended first narrowing down the options, such as the question of ownership.

T. Townsend-Kise disagreed stating her opinion that it is appropriate to ask questions about ownership. She noted the survey is asking for people's opinions and nowhere is it being suggested that what is suggested will be done.

The Commission then discussed the wording of the survey and how it can be worded to gain more valuable information. Jodie Kurtz-Osborne suggested that the first, introductory paragraph be edited to more clearly reflect the purpose of the survey. J. Kurtz-Osborne noted that many people will not know what TIF or tax levy really mean. It was suggested that public funding would indicate taxes.

Discussion followed of whether a press release should be issued with the consensus being that efforts should be made to obtain as many responses as possible.

Motion by T. Doornbosch, second by J. Kurtz-Osborne to proceed with doing an on-line survey with the Commission to receive monthly results.

A roll call vote was taken. Ayes: L. Anderson, J. Champion, T. Doornbosch, J. Kurtz-Osborne, J. Prindiville, T. Townsend-Kise, J. White, and Chairman D. Sandquist. Nays: D. Stumpf. Abstentions: none. Absentees: none. Motion carried.

In response to a question from Chairman Sandquist, it was the consensus of the Commission that T. Doornbosch should continue to work with City Staff on the development of the survey based upon the comments made by the Commission and that Ms. Baker and Ms. Doornbosch will see that the survey is placed on the website.

T. Doornbosch asked anyone who had comments on wording or would like additional input to forward that to Nancy Baker.

LEASE INFORMATION

Discussion followed of the leases forwarded to the Commission by N. Baker with R. Stelford providing additional information as requested by the Commission.

STAFF UPDATE

Nancy Baker noted that the clean-up of the buildings has been completed by the Public Works Department. She stated she is awaiting a date for window delivery. She also noted the City Council discussed the budget for the Old Courthouse at the recent Budget Workshop and stated there will be \$250,000 allocated to this project which will be used primarily for windows.

Ms. Baker stated she attended a joint meeting of the historic groups at which the original bid specs for the building were on display. She noted she was able to scan these so the City now possesses copies of these.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Based on previous discussion, the following were noted:

- a) Staff will work to develop a resolution with finding of fact as to why use of the Old Courthouse as City Hall has been eliminated from consideration by the Commission.
- b) Staff, along with identified members of the Commission, will work to develop specifications for an RFP/RFQ process.
- c) T. Doornbosch and N. Baker will work to complete the on-line survey and will report back to the Commission at the next meeting.
- d) N. Baker will invite representatives from the Opera House or Friends of the Opera House to discuss the restoration of that facility, operating a public building, and fundraising.
- e) N. Baker will contact the Friends of the Old Courthouse and invite representatives from that organization to attend a meeting when they have information to present.

ADJOURN

Motion by D. Stumpf, second by J. Kurtz-Osborne, to adjourn this regular meeting of the Old Courthouse and Sheriff's House Advisory Commission to the next regular meeting on Monday, May 16, 2016 at 7:00PM in the Council Chambers at City Hall. Ayes: L. Anderson, J. Champion, T. Doornbosch, J. Kurtz-Osborne, J. Prindiville, D. Stumpf, T. Townsend-Kise, J. White, and Chairman Dennis Sandquist. Nays: none. Abstentions: none. Absentees: none. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 8:40PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Cindy Smiley
City Clerk