

City of Merrill
Redevelopment Authority (RDA)

Tuesday, June 2nd, 2015 at 8:00 A.M.
City Hall Council Chambers

RDA Present: Bill Bialecki, Ryan Schwartzman, Karen Karow, Wally Smith,
Jill Laufenberg, Amanda Kostman, and Tony Kusserow

RDA Absent: None

Others: Alderpersons Dave Sukow and Chris Malm, City Administrator Dave Johnson, City Attorney Tom Hayden, Finance Director Kathy Unertl, Ken Maule from Lincoln County Economic Development Corp., Mike Morrissey and Mary Rajek from Redevelopment Resources, City Building Inspector/Zoning Administrator Darin Pagel, Tonia Speener from Clark Dietz, Clyde Nelson and Kurt Rust from Lincoln Community Bank, Dewey Pfister, Linda Berlin from Trophy Bar, Diane Goetsch from Kindhearted Home Care, LLC, and City Information Technology Manager Ron Turner

Call to Order: Chair Bialecki called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m.

Public Comment: None.

Approval of meeting minutes from May 5th, 2015:

Motion (Schwartzman/Smith) to approve the meeting minutes. Carried.

Consider potential RFP responses for sale and redevelopment of 900 E. 1st St. (TID No. 9):

City Administrator Dave Johnson reported that only one RFP response was received. That plan is from Diane Goetsch for construction of new Kindhearted Home Care, LLC building for social center, spa services, respite care, and offices for supportive home care services, with surrounding green space.

The purchase price offer is \$5,000 with various proposed contingencies. Diane Goetsch proposes closing on the lot on or before December 10th, 2015.

Karen Karow commented that she would like to see retail at the site and higher offer than \$5,000. Wally Smith questioned the viability of retail due to lack of parking. Ryan Schwartzman suggested that professional office could be fit for the site.

Jill Laufenberg asked Goetsch for information on her business. Goetsch reported that business serves both adults and kids – over 150 families. Preliminary concept is for two-story building with offices and adult day care on lower level and business or apartments on second floor. The business would bring people downtown.

Consider potential RFP responses for sale and redevelopment of 900 E. 1st St. (TID No. 9) - Continued:

Johnson highlighted the contingencies and City responses. Specifically, City would transfer title via quit claim deed and no environmental issues were identified. By realignment of East 1st Street west-bound traffic markings, there could be pick-up/drop-off in front of the proposed building. There would need to be an application for a new driveway access off of North Mill Street. The State of Wisconsin controls approvals for Adult Day Care Plans and requires that buildings have fire sprinkler system.

At this point, it is unknown if or how much of a potential financing gap might be. Goetsch may apply for loan funding through the Merrill Community Development Committee. Unertl cautioned that loan funding would be preferred since Tax Increment District No. 6 has already invested over \$50,000 for site acquisition, demolition, and site preparation work.

Motion (Schwartzman/Smith) to recommend sale of 900 East 1st Street for \$5,000 to facilitate development of new Kindhearted Home Care, LLC building. Carried.

Consider resolution authorizing a development agreement by and between the City of Merrill and Fick Bricks LLC (for Ballyhoo's at 124 N. Prospect St. – Tax Increment Distric No. 6):

The 2012 façade sketch by Stacy Ness from Kyes Studios was displayed along with picture of existing exterior appearance. City Administrator Johnson commented on the awning over the sidewalk. Bialecki and Unertl reported that this was a historical stage coach site and that improvements to the support posts were planned.

Mike Fick proposes to make improvements both to interior and façade at estimated \$53,525 total improvement cost. City staff are proposing TIF development incentive of up to \$10,000 upon completion of the improvements,

RDA Commissioner discussion on what previous TIF development incentives have been. Both Studio 808 and Clark Cup-n-Cone have been \$10,000 amounts. Finance Director Unertl conservative TIF tax increment projection comes close to covering the proposed TIF incentive.

Motion (Karow/Schwartzman) to a resolution authorizing a development agreement by and between the City of Merrill and Fick Bricks LLC. Carried.

Follow-up on Downtown Vision Plan potential implementation:

a. Consider potential implementation feasibility and costs for downtown wireless:

Unertl noted that City Hall Council Chambers currently have public Wi-Fi. City Administrator Johnson commented that parents sit outside McDonalds and the T.B. Scott Library so that families without internet service can access public Wi-Fi service.

Downtown wireless (Continued):

City IT Manager Ron Turner highlighted the proposal to extend coverage to the downtown area at cost of about \$25,000 using outdoor wireless access points and point-to-point communication connection back to City Hall. Use of Cable TV Franchise Fee revenue was discussed at the May 5th RDA meeting and Unertl concurs that use fits with that funding purpose.

Smith asked about interference with Wi-Fi in local businesses and hacking. Turner responded that there shouldn't be issue with interference. A warning screen could be added to existing guest network connection. Laufenberg wondered about any reports available on use. Kuesserow asked about potential parent control. Turner advised that City uses Websense for internet filtering and that it would be possible to block additional sites if user abuse. It is also possible to add software to provide report on use.

Smith also asked about any legal issues. Turner and Unertl reported that public Wi-Fi is almost expected in public buildings. When events are held at the Smith Center, there could be thirty to fifty user devices connecting. Turner added that in recent visit to City of Manitowoc, there were downtown signs that public Wi-Fi was available. Turner noted that City has successful outdoor connections at the wastewater treatment plant.

Laufenberg asked about proposed coverage area and whether it would reach River Bend Trail. Initial coverage area would be Center Avenue to Scott Street. An additional outdoor wireless access point could be installed if signal the does not reach the developing Rotary Park at the end of South Park Street at the Wisconsin River.

Motion (Schwartzman/Kostman) to proceed to implement wireless network to the downtown area with funding through the Cable Franchise Fee Revenue.

Carried. At the request of RDA Commissioners, feasibility for west side public Wi-Fi will be considered in future planning efforts.

b. Consider recommendation for purchase of former Guy's Shop vacant lot from Lincoln Community Bank for development of downtown pocket park:

With the Downtown Vision Plan and sketch of the pocket park concept, the Common Council, businesses, and community members can see how the property could be used as key downtown gathering area. Schwartzman reported that Scott Vogt is now supporting purchase of the site and development of the pocket park.

In response to RDA Commissioner questions, City Building Inspector Darin Pagel advised that Merrill Federal Savings & Loan would be completing façade work on the west side of their building. Then, the vacant lot would be graded and grass planted.

Smith asked about potential cost to develop the proposed pocket park. Mike Morrissey highlighted Downtown Plan estimate of about \$125,000; however, the cost is dependent upon features/amenities. Smith commented that some type of retaining wall might be needed. Johnson advised that terracing the site should be possible. Landscape architecture design and engineering services would assist in finalizing plans and providing probable construction estimates which could be included in the 2016 TID No. 6 budget request.

Purchase of former Guy's Shop vacant lot from Lincoln Community Bank for development of downtown pocket park (Continued):

Motion (Kostman/Karow) to recommend City purchase of former Guy's Shop vacant lot for \$25,000 from Lincoln Community Bank for development of downtown pocket park. Carried.

Discussion of additional potential implementation steps:

On May 27th, 2015, the Board of Public Works recommended implementation of angle parking for three blocks of East Main Street from Court Street to Scott Street. Unertl noted that there are already ADA ramps at all sidewalk corners of the downtown area. ADA parking spots will be included with the angle parking as part of a recent accessibility litigation settlement.

Bids are being opened on the afternoon of June 2nd for paving replacement for Public Parking Lot #4 (west of Trophy Bar) and one-block sections of Scott Street and Cleveland Street (between East 1st Street and East Main Street). The potential award of construction contract will be on the June 9th Common Council agenda.

City representatives will follow-up with Wisconsin Public Service as to potential costs to bury overhead electric lines in the downtown area.

Status update on Idle Sites grant activities (Tax Increment District No. 9):

City of Merrill is still waiting for signed Idle Site grant agreement from Wisconsin Economic Development Corp. (WEDC).

Update on proposed meeting with Lincoln County Forestry Committee regarding delinquent tax properties:

City Administrator Johnson advised that he would be meeting with Lincoln County Clerk Chris Marlowe first. There was discussion of need to foreclose on tax delinquent – especially ones that are vacant - as soon as possible (i.e. when three years of delinquent taxes).

Next RDA meeting: Tuesday, July 7th at 8:00 a.m.

Adjournment: Motion (Schwartzman/Smith) to adjourn. Carried at 9:00 a.m.

Minutes prepared by RDA Secretary Kathy Unertl