

MINUTES
VILLAGE OF HINSDALE
DOWNTOWN LAND PLANNING TASK FORCE
THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 2008
MEMORIAL HALL
8:00 A.M.

Chairman Orler called the meeting to order at 8:07 A.M. Thursday, February 21, 2008, at Memorial Hall, 19 East Chicago Avenue, Hinsdale, Illinois.

PRESENT: Chairman Vic Orler, Jeanie Janes, Kevin Hanrahan, Susan Dunphy, Philip Moriarty, Nickie Giannopoulos, David Friedman, Karl Weber

ABSENT: David Bossy

ALSO PRESENT: David Cook, Village Manager, Rita DuChateau, Director of Communications

Discussion

Chairman Orler opened the meeting by stating that the role of the task force was to explore what should be built, if anything, on the middle school property if the other task force decides that it is viable to move the school out of the downtown area. Furthermore, this task force would disband if the other decided not to move the middle school. This task force will discuss how to maximize the value of the property for district 181 and then how to make a development acceptable to the surrounding community.

The task force and attending neighbors to the subject property reviewed aerial photos of the site and discussed the size of the existing open space (6 acres), footprint of the current school (103,000 square feet) and school capacity (800 students). Orler noted that the current gymnasium is located on the third floor of the school and would have to be added to the new school's footprint square footage. A resident asked if the vacation of Washington Street had been considered. Orler responded by saying that a retail study indicated that a thru street was vital to businesses.

Chairman Orler stated that one option for discussion; is to have the site be all green space with no development. This would bring no revenue to the Village and the possibility of purchasing the property would have to go to referendum. One resident stated that the school is a preferred neighbor with respect to time open during the year and hours of operation than that of a big box store like a Costco store.

Chairman Orler asked residents to state their preferences for the property which ranged from green space, community center, single-family homes and closing off of Washington. Orler noted that at one time there were eight single-family lots on the soccer field property. The group discussed the opportunity of placing underground parking on the site with greenspace above and removing the Chamber of Commerce building in order to provide a pedestrian connection to First Street.

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A resident asked members of the task force if the existing retention basin could be utilized for development and Dave Cook responded by saying that a separate storm sewer is scheduled to be installed along Garfield in 2009 that would help alleviate the storm drainage problems on the site..

Task Force members and property owners discussed what was an appropriate buffer such as landscaping or single-family dwellings between their properties and the downtown. Discussion also was centered on the true need for additional retail space downtown with so many current vacancies.

The group discussed the possibility of utilizing all of the subject property as green space as Hinsdale is low in the amount of green space as compared to surrounding communities.. Chairman Orler responded by stating that the Village could not afford to purchase the property. Phil Moriarty brought up the option of a public/private partnership in order to make the purchase. Dialog continued on the shortage of greenspace per homeowner throughout the Village and that the existing greenspace was an added attraction of the downtown.

Moriarty asked Kevin Hanrahan what was wrong with the existing school. Hanrahan responded by saying that it needed one to two million dollars in upkeep issues.

The consensus of the group, with one residential couple not agreeing, was to keep the middle school in the downtown but address the current needs. Orler gave approximate costs to various redevelopment scenarios that involved rehabbing the school and adding greenspace and parking. Nickie Giannopolis asked Orler if this group has the responsibility to develop scenarios for a possible referendum. Orler responded by stating yes and that the job of this group was to come up with the best plan possible for the taxpayer.

The group did agree that a development scenario involving underground parking to benefit the school and downtown businesses should be explored. Moriarty asked Hanrahan when his task force would have real numbers. Hanrahan stated that they should have real numbers in the next couple of months.

Orler stated that the task force would be meeting with residents from a larger surrounding area in two weeks and that there would be a townhall meeting at 7 p.m., Thursday, March 6th.

Meeting adjourned at 9:22 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Tim Bleuher
Community Development Director