

MINUTES
VILLAGE OF HINSDALE
DOWNTOWN LAND PLANNING TASK FORCE
THURSDAY, MARCH 6, 2008
MEMORIAL HALL
8:00 A.M.

Chairman Orler called the meeting to order at 8:07 A.M. Thursday, March 6, 2008, at Memorial Hall, 19 East Chicago Avenue, Hinsdale, Illinois.

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

ABSENT: None

ALSO PRESENT: Tim Bleuher, Director of Community Development, Rita DuChateau, Director of Communications District 181

Discussion

Chairman Orler opened the meeting by initiating fellow members to introduce themselves and their interest in the efforts of the task force. Orler went on to give a brief overview of the mission and objectives of the group and findings up to date. He stated that this group was working alongside the District 181 task force which is looking at whether or not it was viable to make the necessary upgrades to the existing school or better fiscal sense to build new at another location. Orler went on to clarify that this group was only reviewing potential development scenarios on the subject property if the middle school did indeed move to another location. Subject matter that is being discussed includes greenspace, integration of the development architecturally into the downtown and surrounding neighborhood, parking and traffic impacts. This task force would be disbanded if the direction from the District 181 group was to only make the necessary repairs to the existing facility.

Kevin Hanrahan, chairman of the District 181 task force, provided an overview of the findings and recommendations that his group has made up to this point and that they were in the initial stage of exploring their options.

Chairman Orler reiterated that the task the two groups were undertaking was monumental in scale and that the findings would most probably serve as a basis of some future task forces. Orler than opened the meeting to the larger neighborhood for questions and general discussion.

A resident asked when, and if, this issue would come to the voters. Orler responded by saying that if the land swap between the district and the Village did occur, that it would have to legally be voted upon in a referendum in November. Hanrahan confirmed the legal requirement. Orler noted that if the Village wanted to purchase the middle school property and retain it all as green space than that would have to be voted upon in a village referendum. Lastly, he added that if a land plan was decided upon by the task force, than he would like to see that go to a public vote.

A resident asked what sort of testing was happening on Veeck Park. Tim Bleuher, Director of Community Development, responded by saying that these were engineers completing soil borings and surveying the site for the stormwater storage tank that is being required of the Village through the Flagg Creek litigation case. A resident asked if these test results had been passed on to the school district. Bleuher confirmed that they had. A resident stated that the district should then have to pay for the test results. Another question was if the soil borings done on site were related to the school. Both Bleuher and Orlor responded by stating that the tests only related to the stormwater facility.

A resident asked why Veeck Park was chosen for a possible location for the middle school. Orlor pointed out a displayed aerial photograph of Veeck Park and utilized a template of the footprint of the current middle school to describe that the need for appropriate available land within the village dictated the park location while still allowing the park amenities to be utilized by the community.

A resident asked Kevin Hanrahan the cost to make the necessary improvements to the school. Hanrahan responded by saying that the figure was between five and a half and six and a half million dollars with two million directly related to necessary ventilation repairs. Another resident asked if the district had this amount already budgeted. Hanrahan responded by saying that they had three million budgeted and that the remainder would have to come as a land sale. A question was asked as to who made the estimate. Hanrahan stated that the figure was given to the district by an architect that the district had worked with in the past and that it was probably over the actual amount as there is some self-interest by the architect. He went on to say that the two million was determined by the district's own personnel.

One neighbor to the middle school made a comparative note to the present location and its walkability and safety for its students and that the proposed location was surrounded by site constraints that would require bussing students and pose as a safety issue with respect to access. Orlor responded to say that the safety of the students was priority but that it is the task of this group and as community leaders to look at land scenarios if the school did indeed move and let the public ultimately decide.

A person in the audience asked if the current district boundaries had anything related to options. Hanrahan responded by stating that there was an overcrowding issue at Clarendon Hills Middle School and that Hinsdale Middle School was underutilized by one-hundred and fifty to two-hundred students. He noted that whatever the outcome would be in the best interest of the children and taxpayers and that the decision would have long-term ramifications five to fifteen years from now.

The group discussed the current zoning on the property and that the Village ultimately has the decision to decide whether or not it is appropriate to rezone the property in order to redevelop it for its highest and best use.

Karl Weber clarified that the purpose of the group and today's meeting was for the task force to hear what the residents would want on the subject property if the school did move from its current location and put forth a recommendation based on what they heard.

A question was raised as to what a development scenario might entail on the school property and David Bossy responded by saying that an appropriate transition in land use intensity consisting of retail, office and residential space going from low intensity on the residential boundaries to more

intense toward the downtown would seem to be best. Discussion resulted in the importance of the historical character of the downtown and how any new development might negatively affect this characteristic. Recent developments in the downtown area were noted as inappropriate and not adding to the overall character. Some of the group brought up the point that if the site is developed that it should include a significant parking portion in order to help out existing businesses. Orler noted that a parking option had been discussed and that the least impact of this component would be to develop it below grade.

One resident asked if anyone had approached the village to develop the middle school property. Orler said that no one has come to the village to develop the school property but that, long ago, someone approached surrounding property owners to redevelop their property but that it did not come to fruition.

Discussion amongst the group than centered on the lack of greenspace in the village and how important it is to secure this space for future generations and that it's proximity to the downtown district was authentic. A resident noted that this effort recognizes the value of the current assets to the village and the downtown area. The members of the task force responded to the overall audience that their thoughts and concerns were heard by all and that their message would be carried forward.

Meeting adjourned at 9:30 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Tim Bleuher
Community Development Director