

MINUTES
PIQUA CITY COMMISSION JOINT WORK SESSION
Thursday, August 27, 2015
4:00 P.M.

Piqua City Commission met in a City Commission Work Session at 4:00 P.M. in the Piqua Central Intermediate School located at 807 Nicklin Avenue. Mayor Fess called the meeting to order. Present were Commissioners Terry, Martin, Wilson and Vogt. Also present were Piqua School Board members Lori Webster, Frank Patrizio, Andy Hite, Bob Luby and Steve Greggerson, as well as Gary Huff, City Manager; Stacy Wall, Law Director; Cynthia Holtzapple, Finance Director/Assistant City Manager, Chris Schmiesing, City Planner; Justin Sommer, Economic Development Director/Assistant City Manager and Rick Hanes, Superintendent of Piqua City Schools.

The purpose of the work session was to address the future of the closed Piqua school sites. Superintendent Hanes stated the Ohio Schools Facilities Commission required all sites be initially taken back to green space in order to get full funding and then the schools can do with them as they deem fit, with the long term goal being what is in the best interests of the city and the community. Mr. Hanes stated that the Nicklin site is being reserved to support the new intermediate school and will not be up for further discussion as to use.

City Manager Huff stated those in attendance from the city were strictly there as a resource and to assist in any way possible, not to tell the School Board what to do.

City Planner Schmiesing delivered a presentation of the various school sites up for discussion. Those sites are Staunton Street, Bennett, Favorite Hill, High Street and Wilder. A comprehensive plan indicated the sites are underutilized and need to assist their respective neighborhoods. It should be noted, however, that the community as a whole does not want to see low income housing on any of the sites.

With respect to Favorite Hill, Commissioner Vogt stated Brice Avenue should be extended and an intersection made with Grant Street to allow created lots to be sold for new housing, which would bring the property values up in that area. Board Member Hite agreed that new housing would be ideal for this site.

Mayor Fess stated the city is most interested in the Bennett site and as far as the other sites are concerned, the city does need new housing; maybe a little lower in price than the Deerfield area.

Board Member Patrizio stated Bennett should remain green space or, long term, build nice condominiums on the site. Regardless of what happens with the site, it is his preference that this site be given to the city with a clause that the School Board has to approve any future development, with restrictions on use. Mr. Patrizio further stated that Wilder could be a city park, but he does not want the schools to have to maintain the site.

Commissioner Wilson stated he likes the idea of city parks; however, the city currently doesn't have the manpower to maintain those parks that exist at the present time, to which Mayor Fess wholeheartedly agreed.

Commissioner Terry has concerns about the Wilder site with respect to the need for water to frequently need drained out. Superintendent Hanes stated that water appears to be natural but engineers are working with the city to come up with a resolution. Commissioner Terry suggests if there is a water issue, perhaps a splash park would be ideal. She further stated that for the 43 years she has lived in that area, this site has been utilized as a playground/park. Some residents in this area have commented on future housing for the site, which Mayor Fess agreed with.

Board Member Patrizio noted to keep in mind that if housing goes up on any of the sites, a bidding process would be necessary.

Commissioner Martin questioned the timeline for the completion of all sites, which Superintendent Hanes responded as follows: Staunton Street is complete; Favorite Hill will be completed in approximately two weeks; Bennett is currently in the process with the asbestos being completed and the demolition set to begin in two weeks; Wilder will be initiated after Bennett is completed, with the aim of all sites being completed by December 2015. Commissioner Martin would like to see requests for proposals to see who is actually interested in the sites and what possibilities exist.

City Planner Schmiesing suggested a community/neighborhood meeting to gather input and ideas as to what the respective communities/neighborhoods would like to see on the sites. Board Member Greggerson agreed that such a meeting would be a great idea. Mayor Fess stated if everyone is in agreement, that meeting should move forward. School Board members suggested separate meetings for each neighborhood affected rather than one meeting for all so as to keep it focused on one neighborhood at a time.

Commissioner Terry stated the sites are somewhat restricted because they are all in residential areas, except perhaps Staunton Street. This location is between five to six acres, which Economic Development Director Sommer stated someone could place a 20,000 square foot building. This property abuts Crane Pumps, so industrial use would be ideal.

City Manager Huff suggested city staff and School Board staff work together and come up with options for the sites.

Commissioner Martin questioned if it's reasonable to say there is a market for housing on all of the sites since the housing would be the same, however, City Planner Schmiesing stated a developer would need to determine that.

Board Member Webster doesn't believe all sites can be marketed as housing, so a decision should be made as to which site(s) would be more suitable. She further stated she is in full support of donating the Bennett Street site to the city.

Mayor Fess believes the Wilder and High Street sites could have nice housing and possibly Favorite Hill; however, that will depend on the price of the land.

Board Member Luby questioned if any known developers have expressed an interest in the sites and Mayor Fess suggested Cornerstone Construction may possibly be interested.

Commissioner Vogt believes developers will show interest when the land is available.

Superintendent Hanes noted that the sites will be ready for utilities so the developers will not have the added expense of getting them utility-ready for building.

City Manager Huff stated the goal is to continue to develop down the river. The city will continue to obtain properties for Riverfront Development as they become available. Mr. Huff further stated there are currently no plans for the Bennett site and it may stay green space, but the planning will come in segments.

Mayor Fess stated the goal is to open Riverfront and have an amphitheater, among other things, that go from Lock Nine all the way down to the Bennett site.

Superintendent Hanes made clear that everyone understand that the schools only own six feet of the parking lot back from the Bennett building; the remainder is leased from the Miami Conservancy District.

A public comment was made by Nick Alexander, 713 South Roosevelt Avenue, Piqua, Ohio, in the form of a question asking if the sites will be fenced in during the final decision making or if the sites will be accessible to the community, i.e. play areas for the children. Superintendent Hanes responded that currently the plan is for the sites to be green space while the schools maintain them, so the temporary fences will come down.

Mr. Alexander further questioned the removal of trees on the sites stating that some of the schools have memorial trees. Superintendent Hanes stated all trees are trying to be saved; however, some have had to be removed due to demolition issues. If a plaque is attached to any removed tree, that plaque is placed in the School Board office and families are contacted for input as to whether or not they would like to pick the plaque up or have it relocated elsewhere.

Motion was made by Commissioner Vogt to adjourn the Piqua City Commission Joint Work Session at 5:10 P.M.; seconded by Commissioner Martin; motion carried unanimously.

LUCY FESS, MAYOR

PASSED: _____

ATTEST: _____
KIMBERLY J. HEBB
ACTING CLERK OF COMMISSION