

REVISED 8/11/06
PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE
Parking Lot Discussion Meeting
July 27, 2006

Present: Mayor Liechty, Council Members Grabinger, Parisien, Schulz and Heinrich, City Engineer Horgan and City Administrator Fuchs

Council Member Schulz indicated that he feels the City Council needs to deal with the infrastructure issues concerning the parking lots, while the private sector needs to provide any funding to construct any type of structures or amenities relating to improvements to the area. He felt that this was always the intent of the Council; however, the community has confused the issue.

Council Member Heinrich indicated that in developing the downtown area we need to think along the lines of a combination of residential, service industry and retail, as retail alone can no longer be the focus of our downtown area. Adequate parking is needed to support business as well as employees of the business in downtown in order to be viable. He also feels that the City has an obligation to work on maintaining and redeveloping the parking lots as they belong to the City.

Council Member Grabinger indicated the City needs to maximize parking opportunities and improve the free flow of traffic in the downtown area. He would also prefer to see a final project include the use of concrete rather than asphalt as he feels that would be the most economical long term cost. He also indicated that he felt the adjacent property owners should bear a higher percentage of the cost of any improvements. He felt the issue was important enough that it should be placed on the November election ballot.

Council Member Parisien stated that if the interest is there for green space, the former Orlandy property would be better suited than property adjacent to the railroad.

Mayor Liechty indicated that her preference was to table discussion on the parking lot improvements; however, the other members of the Council did not support her suggestion.

Mayor Liechty questioned the legality of former Mayor Kourajian, Council Member Grabinger and City Administrator Fuchs meeting with Interstate Engineering, Inc., to gather the information that has been presented to the Council.

City Administrator Fuchs explained that the meeting was held at the request of the Public Works Committee to gather information to bring back to the committee for discussion and possible action. The group was only requested to gather information and as they had not been given any decision making authority by the committee or council, the meeting with Interstate Engineering, Inc., was in fact a legal meeting under state open meeting statutes.

Randy Williams, 101 2nd Avenue SE, appeared and asked if diagonal parking adjacent to City Hall had ever been considered if it was felt that a need for additional parking was required.

Steve Looyen, chairman of the Cops Downtown Flow Committee, appeared to present a timeline and the process used in preparing the committees proposed plan to the City Council.

Brian Amundson, a local business owner, appeared and expressed his feeling that a lot of the numbers being circulated in the community about the Flow Committees' work has been misrepresented. He indicated that the Flow Committee has never requested anything other than infrastructure monies for the project. He feels we need a solution to the downtown problem and a vision for the future of downtown.

Rod Monson, 424 3rd Avenue NE, indicated that he does not view the downtown parking lots in the same light as the Civic Center parking lot that was paid for by a city wide special assessment. He feels that

everyone pays the city sales tax and that would be a better way to pay for parking lot improvements. He is also opposed to diagonal parking on the street.

Deb Bale, 1102 3rd Avenue NE, appeared to state that in her opinion, the current parking lots are well cared for and free of litter, broken beer bottles, etc., and not in need of improvements. She feels the city is not in need of parking lots, but adequate water.

Ron Mayer (Mayer Truck Line), 1207 South Riverside Drive, appeared to discuss his concerns relative to the discussion on how the costs of any improvements would be paid. He indicated that he could not see any direct or indirect benefits to his firm by any improvements to the lots, and that the downtown properties who receive the most benefit should be assessed a higher cost than those properties receiving less benefit. A fair and equitable means of assessing property owners needs to be developed in order that all property owners can easily calculate what their costs might be. He also had concerns as to the street alignment if changes were made.

Pat Folk, 614 5th Street NW, appeared relative to his concern with using special assessments for financing any improvements. He is concerned about the cost to homeowners. He felt the benefited property owners should be assessed for the street improvements.

Kita Smith, 416 6th Street SE, appeared to express her concern as to the development of a park along the railroad tracks. She felt the area is better suited for parking lots and the community would be better served addressing more important issues.

Delbert Sam, 715 3rd Street NE, indicated that he had worked for the railroad for many years and felt there are too many possible safety hazards to locate a park next to the railroad.

Corey Bayer, 8496 County Club Street, and a local property owner, feels there is a need to do something for our city. He feels we need to continue to strive for improvements in the community and not believe what was good enough 20 years ago is good enough today.

Mayor Liechty indicated that she would like to postpone any further discussion for a month to allow everyone to consider the comments made during the meeting and for the ideas presented to settle.

Council Member Heinrich suggested the item could be placed on the August Public Works agenda for further discussion by the committee.

Council Member Heinrich moved to request Council Members Schulz and Grabinger meet with Interstate Engineering, Inc., individuals of the Flow Committee and any other interested parties and to report back to the next Public Works Committee in August. Seconded by Council Member Schulz.

Following further discussion, Council Member Heinrich moved to call for the question. Seconded by Council Member Schulz. Voice vote showed: 4 ayes (Heinrich, Grabinger, Parisien, Schulz), 1 Nay (Liechty).

Roll Call on the motion showed: 4 ayes (Heinrich, Grabinger, Parisien, Schulz), 1 Nay (Liechty).
Carried.

Jeff Fuchs, City Administrator