

Thursday 12/2/2021 6:30 P.M.
Special Called Full Council Meeting
Place IMH East Campus/Former Littlefuse Building

Council Members Present: Barragree, Cahoe, Garfield, Marcier, Miller, Musk, Rushbrook, Ulfers, and Mayor Allhands.

Mayor brought the meeting to order with calling the roll call. With the interest in making an informed decision the mayor stated he wanted other stakeholders to voice their opinions on the matter being discussed.

Guest Present: Kerry Bell (First Trust Bank & Kitchen Cabinet), Ted Horner (Kitchen Cabinet & IPC,), Roger Dittrich (Kitchen Cabinet) Cody Fredricks (FTSB and Watseka Chamber), Todd Oster (Witseka Park District), Michelle Meadows (IARDS), Doug Geiger (Planning Commission & Kitchen Cabinet), Ted Horner (Kitchen Cabinet), Brian Hasbargen (Planning Commission & Watseka Library), Steve Knapp (Kitchen Cabinet and Knapp Funeral Home), Carla Waters (Times Republic) and Shawn Bransky (IMH)

Mayor stated the reason for the change of venue and purpose for the meeting. The IMH Board and Mayor Allhands have been in communication about the city buying the East Campus Building for \$25,000. Mayor also referred to past studies performed by the city in the past and recently with the IHDA which basically state the same thing that the city needs to think about improving the business area of town. Also, through guests and council members there seemed to be an agreement that the city needs a reception hall and community meeting place.

The council and some of the guest were taken on a tour of the facility lead by Shawn Bransky of IMH.

Following the tour the group reconvened in the lobby of the building to further discuss the opportunity presented to the council.

Mayor Allhands stated that there are a lot of possibilities to multipurpose the building. Allhands mentioned possible uses such as: Reception Hall, Community Room, Storm Shelter and, City Employee Classrooms to name a few. He also mentioned that not all of these have to be done immediately as IMH will need to house the Physical Therapy Department there for a while and they discussed that the medical equipment vendor has been a good renter. There

was also the mention that the IARDS educational center could use about a third of the building and become another renter.

Discussion was opened up to the council and Aldewoman Musk asked/stated how and why would the city start a reception hall business. Mayor Allhands stated that the city wouldn't that it would be the business it would be the matter of providing the venue and or equipment to lease or sub-contract these services out to wedding planners. As for the community room this could be rented to citizens and civic groups.

Mr. Dittrich also mentioned to Alderwoman Musk that the purchase of he building once rehabbed could purposely become revenue generator and fill a lot of needs for the citizens. He stated to Musk that this should not become a burden to the city.

Kerry Bell mentioned he had talked with Chip Hasselbring and that both of their financial institutions could donate or possibly to help the project along. There was even a discussion of a possible public private partnership may be established.

Allhands stated that he had been in touch with the owners of Grapes and Hops a wine bar in Kankakee. A few of the guest and Allhands state that there has to be some questions answered that we just can't right at the minute, but that she should leave her mind open to the potential future endeavors and prospects.

A few mentioned that this could lead to visitors going to other stores and businesses in the city. Allhands put it into perspective the city put \$50,000 into the festival which is a good thing but that is only for a 3 day event and then they will probably ask for that amount or some amount again the following years Where the investment in the building is \$25,000 is half much as the festival and will probably bring revenues into the city and is a onetime thing but will go on for years to come.

Benny Marcier asked if this is a good thing why hasn't a private firm thought about getting the building. It was pointed out that IMH is offering a 40,000 sq ft building for \$25,000 to help the city fill the needs of citizens, where is they sold the building privately the price will be in the 6 figures range.

Doug Geiger emphasized that this building with its potential would offer competition to the only other reception hall in Milford. Others pointed out that there is less parking and there is more room on the inside for wedding goers. He along with the Mayor mentioned that this could possibly reopen hotel talks that were halted due to COVID. There were three meetings and the last one was with the VP of New Development and they stated that they were interested in Watseka.

The Mayor mentioned that he had talked to the owner of Grapes and Hops Wine Store in Kankakee and also owns the old Majestic Movie Theater and has converted it to Reception Hall and he stated he would have an interest in discussing the buildings use if the city buys it.

Ted Horner mentioned that it's a shame that the Watseka Alumni had to have their reunions out of town and Kerry Bell agreed. With the Physical Therapy and health equipment located there that there is a good traffic pattern coming out to the building anyway. It was felt that this could be a very nice positive collaboration and sharing of a facility for many benefits to the city.

Michelle Meadows Director of IARDS career and technical education spoke about her concepts of developing supplemental education for the county schools shop classes. Though her potential curriculum is in the conceptual phase she felt liked she could use the back-warehouse area and a few classrooms for her programs.

At the end of the discussion Roger Dittrich and Kerry Bell mentioned an Adhoc Committee should be formed and that the entire group should be reconvened on January 13th for an open discussion on whether to proceed or not. The Adhoc Committee will try to meet a few times before that date to try and come up with a plan on how to proceed. Much of the conversation related to the costs to redo the building and get it ready for becoming a reception hall. This will be some of the purpose of the formation of the Adhoc Committee.