

MINUTES
Plainwell City Council
September 26, 2019

1. Mayor Keeler called the special meeting to order at 7:00 PM in City Hall Council Chambers.
2. Pledge of Allegiance was given by all present.
3. Roll Call: Present: Mayor Keeler, Mayor Pro Tem Steele, Councilmember Keeney, Councilmember Overhuel and Councilmember Wisnaski. Absent: None.
4. Mayor Keeler introduced City Manager Erik Wilson who gave an overview of the history of the Mill since its closure and bankruptcy to the city purchasing the property and planning for development. He noted the accomplishments over the past 13 years including moving City Hall, demolition of blighted buildings, improvements at Fannie Pell Park and the pedestrian bridge over the Mill Race. He noted that the city had no debt service on the mill as of today, thanks to over \$4.3 million in grant funding over the years.

A motion by Steele, seconded by Overhuel, to open a Public Hearing to discuss a Mill Demolition Grant at 7:17pm. On a voice vote, all in favor. Motion passed.

City Manager Wilson reported that the city has submitted an application to the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) for mill demolition and showed the public the expected buildings to be demolished by showing various aerials, photos and drawings. He noted that Building 1, the mill's cornerstone brick building on the west side, has suffered years of snow load and deteriorated to the point that it has been declared a dangerous building by professional inspectors, and is at risk of collapse. A plan will be developed to repurpose as much of the wood and bricks that can be salvaged from that building. He noted that the grant funding would require a 10% match and that no contracts have been let as of today, except certain engineering work to determine how the buildings could be demolished.

Comments and questions were taken from the public in attendance. Those questions included:

- *Whether any metal scrap from the train depot would be reclaimed as part of the city's share?*
- *Exactly where are the buildings to be demolished? I'm having a hard time visualizing which buildings they are.*
- *Whether this grant was a "done deal", or could the funding still not come through?*
- *What is the timeline for demolition if the grant funds are awarded?*
- *What will be the square footage of the remaining buildings after demolition?*

City Manager Wilson noted that due to the match requirements, the city could retain only 10% of the scrap value for the metal salvaged. He reported that the city is spending money on engineering for this project even without a signed grant agreement, which is an indication that confidence is high about being awarded the grant, but this is not a "done deal". He gave an estimate of a planned timeline that by 2021, developers could be working on site plans. He also noted the Weyerhaeuser is the potentially responsible party for the land, but that the development and demolition of the buildings rests with the city. City Manager Wilson also stated that information relative to the environmental review and health and safety plan is available to the public.

With there being no more public comments, a motion by Keeney, seconded by Steele, to close the Public Hearing at 7:35pm. On a voice vote, all in favor. Motion passed.

City Manager Wilson then introduced Jodie Dembowske from GHD, who gave an overview of the site remediation efforts related to soil removal and replacement with residential grade topsoil, or commercial,, depending on the location within the mill site, based on redevelopment plans.

During this discussion, an overview picture of the mill site was shown again when Manager Wilson spoke to the buildings scheduled for demolition and the audience was able to better see which buildings would be demolished. Another person asked about the condition of the buildings to remain on the north side of the demolition site (buildings 2 and 3) to which the Manager indicated those buildings were in "decent" shape.

One person from the audience asked why the façade of the buildings facing M-89 hasn't been cleaned up, to which Council reported that they have been waiting for the final demolition plans before investing in the façade. Another person from the audience asked about whether there would still be deed restrictions on the property after the soil remediation, to which City Manager reported that there would still be deed restrictions related to arsenic and water. He also noted that the entire area is high in arsenic and that the mill site is no higher than other areas, and the water restrictions would be mitigated by the city's requirement to connect to city water.

Finally, City Manager Wilson asked for the city's input related to the power poles along the river. As part of the soil remediation, Weyerhaeuser has to move the existing poles along the river to clean the soil. Negotiations between Weyerhaeuser, Consumers Energy and the city have resulted in the possibility of moving the power lines to new poles along M-89 which could be located north of the tree line on the mill property. This would result in less power poles in the MDOT right-of-way on the north side of M-89 and leave the riverbank available for park development. Questions from the audience included burying the powerlines instead of leaving them above ground. Derek Nofz and Angie Snyder, from Consumers Energy, both spoke to the high cost of doing that, particularly as related to power lines crossing the river or the Mill Race, which would more than quintuple the cost. Mr. Nofz also noted that burying power lines in outside of Consumers Energy's normal agreement with the Michigan Public Service Commission. Ms. Snyder did note that because of the varying types of power lines in this area (high voltage, low voltage, and communication), that there would still be need for power poles in the MDOT right of way to service buildings on the south side of M-89, that two (2) poles would need to remain along the river near City Hall to service the Mill Building, and that there remains the possibility that the communications companies may not move their lines off the existing poles. Those in attendance were largely in favor of moving the power poles off the river and co-locating them along M-89. City Manager Wilson then asked the audience if anyone was not in favor of moving the poles off of the riverfront and co-locating them along M-89; no one from the audience opposed the moved.

One audience member identified himself as Andy Webb, Planning Commission Chairman from Otsego Township, who noted that he was impressed with the presentation and suggested collaboration with municipalities in the Grand Rapids area which have had similar industrial redevelopments to evaluate other potential opportunities. He also suggested that strong broadband internet lines be placed in the development area to allow for the additional needs.

City Manager Wilson reported that once the grant agreement is executed, the city will report such to the development community, which should spur interest in projects, which could be planned and approved during the demolition process. He closed by saying he's confident that the community will be seeing some progress within the next year. He left a sign-up sheet asking those in attendance to sign up for a Citizen Advisory

Committee asking for input on the power pole and other development issues.

5. Council Comments:

Council Member Overhuel remarked that he is excited to see this development come to fruition.

Council Member Keeney noted that there were a lot of paper mills in this area and that it's great to see what Plainwell has done with theirs.

Each Council Member thanked everyone in attendance for their interest.

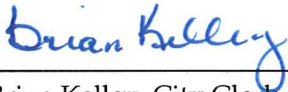
Mayor Keeler noted that without City Manager Wilson's insight, "we would not be doing this" and thanked him for a great presentation.

6. Adjournment:

A motion by Keeney, seconded by Wisnaski, to adjourn the meeting at 8:20 PM. On voice vote, all voted in favor. Motion passed.

Minutes respectfully submitted by,
Brian Kelley
City Clerk/Treasurer

MINUTES APPROVED BY CITY COUNCIL
October 14, 2019



Brian Kelley, City Clerk