
IX.A. Consider options on disposal of the 1927 Old High School – ***(Tabled on December 2, 2008)***

(This item was moved on the agenda by previous motion.)

Mr. Bressner and the City Attorney had prepared a report and reviewed the 13 disposal or use options for the Old High School. The procedure for conveyance of the property was established in the Code. Sale of the property would require a 4/5th vote. Leasing was also a possibility.

The ultimate fate of the Old High School remains the issue. If a private developer is the choice, the strategies necessary to facilitate any development will be required whether the final use is a private or public benefit. The price of refurbishment increases annually. The dollars spent for similar projects in the area have had more of an emphasis on expending public funds rather than private funds. The City does not have the resources to refurbish the building at this time. Mr. Bressner suggested an option may be to have a referendum vote from the public on a general obligation bond issue. The cost for an election was discussed.

Mayor Taylor revealed he had discussions with a developer and Mr. Bressner about a lucrative offer for a new City Hall and trading properties. The site of the Old High School could possibly be involved. He suggested a delay on a decision until February, so the proposal could be further explored.

Vice Mayor Rodriguez recalled the Commission had decided to postpone going out for a Request for Proposals on any downtown master plan development. Mayor Taylor contended it was an option that should at least be considered. Commissioner Hay agreed with the Mayor's suggestion. Vice Mayor Rodriguez also agreed, but requested if discussions broke down, the Old High School decision be brought before the Commission as soon as possible.

Brian Edwards, 629 NE 9th Avenue, alleged the delay was a diversion on making a decision. The area buildings that have been restored are incredible and draw crowds. The discussion should be on how to make the Old High School a thriving attraction. A new development surrounding the Children's Museum would be inappropriate. Refurbishment of the Old High School would compliment the Museum. A creative solution for funding the restoration should be discussed rather than building a metropolis around a tiny Museum. Mr. Edwards stressed a definitive decision needed to be made on the fate of the Old High School.

Commissioner Hay wanted it known that he favored saving the Old High School. He viewed the delay as lengthening the life of the building. He pointed out funds can be derived from memberships, fundraising, sponsorships, state and county grants, endowment income, rental income, ticket income and other sources. Any discussions with a developer should be an attempt to initiate a feasible plan for developing funding sources.

Motion

Vice Mayor Rodriguez moved that discussions of the Mayor and City Manager be focused on the intention of saving the Old High School and be a primary discussion point around any land swap

deal or redevelopment effort. Commissioner Hay seconded the motion. The motion passed 4-1. (*Mayor Taylor dissenting.*)

Mayor Taylor maintained that the Old High School was not worth saving for \$8 million and a catalyst for the City could be built at the site for much less. Taxpayers are still subsidizing restoration projects in other cities and they remain a drain on those communities. The Old High School building is totally deteriorated inside and would have to be completely rebuilt inside with only the outside shell remaining.

Vice Mayor Rodriguez reiterated the intent of his motion was to use the Old High School as an incentive in return for the new project and incorporate the Old High School into any development decisions being made.

Mayor Taylor stressed the discussion thus far involved the site of the current City Hall only. He had suggested offering more land to make the deal even better. However, he would not include the Old High School site based on the decision of the Commission.

Commissioner Weiland had supported saving the Old High School, but did not feel it would come to fruition. He agreed with letting the voters decide on a referendum issue.

Herb Suss, 1711 Woodfern Drive, echoed Mr. Edward's remarks. A referendum vote would allow the citizens to have a voice in the decision. If an alternative can be found in the interim, the Old High School would have had two options for survival.

D. Resolutions:

None

E. Other:

None

XIII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

A. Remove the contingency of receiving a match to the City's Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP) funds within six months for the Ocean Breeze West project.

Mayor Taylor reported he had a met with Lisa Bright, Community Redevelopment Executive Director and Addie Green, County Commissioner, stressing the need for the matching funds to commence the Ocean Breeze West project for construction of 38 single family homes. Ms. Green was very positive, but could make no guarantees. Vice Mayor Rodriguez was encouraged, but felt a time limit of eighteen months should be included.

(Commissioner Weiland left the dais.)