

Minutes
Citizens Advisory Board
6/12/12

Present: Candice Mayton, Sarah Jacobson, Mel Jacobson, Ann Sheehan, Fred Opalinski, Don Zeigler, Vera Ellison, Jim Reber, Pam C, Gary Wegman

Absent: Geraldine Westley, Kent Wrobel, William Bender

Guests: Councilman Marmarou, Eron Lloyd and Larry Murin, Special Assistants to the Mayor

I. Call to Order

Attendance/sign-in sheet was distributed.

II. Minutes of the 5/8/12 meeting and the agenda for the 6/12/12 meeting were distributed electronically to CAB members in advance for review.

Mel Jacobson moved to accept. Minutes were approved as distributed, with all accepting instead of Vera because she did not receive the minutes in advance and did not have adequate time to review them. Otherwise, no corrections, additions or deletions were requested.

III. Announcements: Gary Wegman informed the group that, in an effort to expand the CAB, he has spoken with two people who are interested in participating. He encouraged them to visit the city website to download the application. Both are from the second district (Councilwoman Goodman-Hinnershitz).

IV. COMMITTEE REPORTS

1. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT - Mel Jacobson reported on the subcommittee's progress and passed out copies providing an overview.

Discussion:

- Fred Opalinsky questioned the purposes of the city's comprehensive and strategic plans for clarification. Eron Lloyd explained that the strategic plan is designed to bring together the general operations of the city under the priorities and goals of the administration, with measurable ways in which to track progress (or lack thereof.) He pointed out that, in past administrations, goals have been set with no measurable way to track the extent to which any progress had been made. He referred to the strategic plan as the "kernel" of the comprehensive plan, which expands on the Act 47 recovery plan. The comprehensive plan is designed to be a vision for where we would like to see our community in the long term, and includes elements dealing with housing, land use, recreation, transportation, business development, etc. The difference between the comprehensive plan and the Act 47 plan was briefly discussed, with Mr. Lloyd

referring to the recovery plan as a “life support plan” designed to be a short-term stop-gap for the city. Strategic and comprehensive plans are designed to think about the longer term, after recovery. That said, Mr Lloyd explained that the administration and council want, with the support of PFM, to first amend Act 47 somewhat to bring it more closely in line with city realities, and then focus on strategic and comprehensive planning. The Act 47 revision process will likely take at least 6 months or so, and is largely contingent upon negotiations with the police union. Councilman Marmarou noted that the State senate has put a hold on Act 111 for those cities that are in distress. If a city is in Act 47, the arbitrators must consider this.

- Mr. Opalinsky made the point that it is important to remain focused on the here and now while at the same time thinking about the long term. Mr. Lloyd pointed to John Kromer's economic development/housing plan as an example of immediate and mid-term issues to tackle. He pointed out that the so-called "Kromer amendment" is a good start, but the administration doesn't feel comfortable calling it a full-fledged economic development plan. For example, Mr. Lloyd discussed a "leakage analysis" that was conducted upon the new administration. Compared with national averages, Reading is far below other places in light manufacturing, indicating room for growth in this area. At the same time, jobs relating to the arts are not nearly as far below the national average, indicating the necessity for a renewed focus on light manufacturing.
- Mr. Opalinsky asked about the extent to which the Ricktown neighborhood development is happening, given this reality. He appreciates the idea that the city should focus on one area to enhance development. Mr. Lloyd and Mr. Murin reported that approximately \$5m of CDBG money was lost, limiting the city's ability to invest, though private investment is still an option and appreciated. Sarah Jacobson pointed out that the housing section of the Poverty Commission (appointed under the previous Mayor) agreed with the idea of focusing on one area of the city to improve economic development, but had recommended focusing efforts to buffer marginal areas around already stable neighborhoods.
- Mr. Wegman asked about council's expansion of the KOZs. Councilman Marmarou responded that council is not interested in creating an environment in which a situation that helped to facilitate the failed bottling works plant.

2. Neighborhood Revitalization- Committee members were unable

to meet together this month. However, Pam Cianciosi reported that she visited neighbors near her neighborhood park. Neighbors are not interested in restoring this park, which was destroyed by Agnes, because they are concerned that the city will not have the resources to maintain it. Pam also reported an experience with the Windsor and Ritter Park. Neighbors mobilized to clean it up, and when they called the city to ask them to get the trash, they were told to contact the school district instead, since it is a district-owned property. Neighbors are concerned that there is no recourse from the city if the district doesn't clean it up, especially when representatives from the citizen's service center told the caller that they can't address it since the property is not under city jurisdiction. Mr. Murin responded that this should not have happened, and that city codes should be involved, regardless of whether or not the property was district-, city-, or privately-owned.

3. Public Service- Gary Wegman reported that members of this committee will begin attending the public works meetings. They discussed the new hiring of Carol Snyder (the city's new Managing Director) and the new Administrative Services Director (likely Matthew Bembenick, pending approval) who will likely start June 25th. Carol Snyder will start July 5. The city has also brought on a new Human Resources director. Mr. Murin discussed the transfer of city billing service over to RAWA. Council approved this transfer at its last meeting. Trash, recycling, and water bills will be unified for simplification.
4. Workforce Development – no committee members at this time.
5. Executive Committee - Sarah Jacobson made two requests to members of other committees: 1) since the executive committee meets one week in advance of the meeting of the whole, committees should email their reports to William Bender, CAB secretary, no less than one week before the general meeting so that executive committee members have time to adequately synthesize the information and create an appropriate agenda. 2) Sarah Jacobson requested that, in the next month, committees focus some of their work on identifying those elements of the Act 47 plan that are most pertinent to their committee work.

V. General Discussion –

- Fred Opalinsky asked that we talk to the parking authority about the very

confusing parking stickers on the meters downtown. Gary Wegman suggested that members ask to be placed on the Parking Authority agenda and bring it up at their next board meeting (6/13/12).

- Candice Mayton announced that she will be unable to continue her role as chair of the committee, as her husband's job is requiring their relocation. Her last meeting will be 10 July 2012.
- Mr. Wegman requested that, in the future, one of the committees looks at the \$500 fee for inspection of apartments every 2 - 3 years. Mr. Lloyd responded that it may be useful to ask these questions of Mr. Lenin Agudo, director of the Community Development office. It was agreed that Mr. Agudo would be a useful resource for a future meeting for discussion of a number of community development related topics.

VI. Dismissal - moved by Mel Jacobson, seconded by Pam Cianciosi, approved by all.