

City of Albion
Study Session Minutes
May 29, 2019

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Atchison opened the study session at 6:00 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL

PRESENT: Vicky Clark (1), Lenn Reid (2), Sonya Brown (3), Jeanette Spicer (5), and Mayor Atchison.

ABSENT: Marcola Lawler (4) and Shane Williamson (6).

STAFF PRESENT:

Scott Kipp, Interim City Manager/Chief Public Safety; Haley Snyder, Acting Assistant City Manager/Deputy Clerk/Treasurer; City Clerk and Cullen Harkness, City Attorney.

III. ITEMS FOR INDIVIDUAL DISCUSSION

A. 2nd Grocery Store

Mayor and Council Members identified the following as driving factors behind seeking an additional grocery store:

Council Member Clark (1):

- Prices at Family Fare are rather high.
- Do not currently shop here in town. Works out of town and shops out of town.
- There are some things the grocery store does not carry in general – for instance, limited Hispanic food selection.

Council Member Reid (2):

- Prices are high here in town.
- Take senior residents shopping out of town and hear comments on how their money does not go very far.

Council Member Brown (3):

- Our City is identified as a food desert.
- Community garden has worked to fix the issue; however, having a second grocery store could help to address the issue.
- Do not currently shop here in town due to high prices.

Council Member Spicer (5):

- Agree with other Council Member comments regarding high prices here in town.
- Work and shop out of town.
- Offering a second option to residents could help to keep money in town.

Mayor Atchison stated a general consensus on driving factors – lower prices, offer more of a variety, and fresh produce.

Amy Deprez, AEDC President provided Council with previous efforts taken, obstacles, and possibilities on bring in an additional grocery store:

- Recently approved the AEDC Strategic Plan – providing other shopping options are included in goals 1, 4, and 7.
- AEDC Office researching and trying to understand current trends with grocery stores.
- Shrinking middle class creates a major obstacle with attracting additional grocery retail.
- Expansion of delivery options – Wal-Mart, Meijer, & Amazon
- Destination Shopping – offer more than just shopping (beer/wine and coffee available while shopping) – Horrocks.
- Urban Development – a Target opening in downtown East Lansing with high-rise apartments on top.

Obstacles:

- Demographics – do not have the population count, or foot traffic.
- Expendable income.
- Three (3) Dollar Stores located in our community.
- Shifting away from rural grocery stores with shrinking of the middle class.
- The City has to have something to offer – great risks for developers to come to our community.

Possibilities & Easy Targets:

- Discussion with Family Fare – discuss what is not acceptable for our community.
- Define what the true needs are – butcher market, produce market, etc.
- Incentives are available – none at Federal level, CDBG funds and CRP (community redevelopment program) available at State level.
- ARC – offer redevelopment subsidized space.

- Strip Mall Developers – interested in incenting developers to come to our community.
- Partner with Albion Food Hub – possible Food Co-Op.

Council Member Clark and Brown offered to take the lead on this goal and work with Assistant City Manager Snyder to develop a survey to disseminate to residents to help identify what our needs are as a community.

Comments were received from Council Members Clark, Reid, Brown, Spicer; Mayor Atchison; Amy Deprez, AEDC President, and Joyce Spicer, AEDC Board President.

B. Senior/Affordable Housing

Amy Deprez, AEDC President provided Council with an update, obstacles, and possibilities on housing developments:

- Currently, the City has a lot going on with potential housing. There are many prospects, but the process takes time.
- Calhoun County Land Bank Authority (CCLBA) conducted a Target Market Analysis study in 2014. Received good info on demands in our area.
- The City's needs are in every single category – single family homes, apartments, condos/townhomes, complexes, etc.

Obstacles:

- There is a lack of skilled workers in the current workforce for housing projects.
- Builders are choosing \$300k and up homes to develop.
- City's demographics.
- Lack of comparable – many vacant areas are located on contaminated sites.
- Consensus of Council – how stable is the community?
- Lack of full time City Manager.

Initiatives/Possibilities:

- Director Tracy provided the Council with maps showing all vacant city owned lots.
- Neighborhood enhancements and corridor improvements are addressed in the 2017 Comprehensive Plan.
- Urban Renewal Area – perfect area to launch an RFP for development.

- Before releasing an RFP, the city needs to decide what type of development is important. Will provide RFP's we have used in the past for review.

Council Member Brown stated Council Member Lawler has been focusing on this goal and would be the appropriate person to take the lead.

Comments were received from Council Members Clark, Reid, Brown, Spicer; Mayor Atchison, John Tracy, Director of Planning, Building & Code Enforcement; Amy Deprez, AEDC President.

IV. PUBLIC COMMENTS (Persons addressing the City Council shall limit their comments to no more than three (3) minutes. Proper decorum is required).

Comments were received from Garrett Brown, 1016 S. Superior St and Mary Slater, 517 E. Michigan Ave.

V. CITY MANAGER REPORT-None

VI. MAYOR AND COUNCIL MEMBER COMMENTS

Comments were received from Council Members Clark, Reid, Brown, and Mayor Atchison.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

Spicer moved, Brown supported, CARRIED, to adjourn the study session. (5-0, vv)

Mayor Atchison adjourned the Study Session at 7:51 p.m.

Date

Haley Snyder
Acting Assistant City Manager
Deputy Clerk/Treasurer