

CITY OF EL CAMPO, TX

SPECIAL CALLED JOINT MEETING CITY COUNCIL & CITY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

Minutes February 22, 2016 – 4:45 PM

315 East Jackson Street - City Council Chambers

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Randy Collins called the meeting to order at 4:45 PM.

| Attendee Name | Title | Status | Arrived |
|------------------------|---------------|---------|---------|
| Richard Young | Mayor Pro-Tem | Present | |
| Randy Collins | Mayor | Present | |
| Steven Ward | Councilman | Present | |
| Gloria Harris | Councilwoman | Present | |
| Tommy Hitzfeld | Councilman | Present | |
| Ed Erwin | Councilman | Present | |
| John Hancock Jr | Board Member | Absent | |
| Anisa Longoria Vasquez | Councilwoman | Present | |
| Wesley Lange | Board Member | Present | |
| Kinnan Stockton | Board Member | Present | |
| David Allgayer | Board Member | Absent | |
| Larry Russell | Board Member | Present | |

City Employees Present: City Manager Mindi Snyder; Finance Director Courtney Sladek; Community Services Director Chris Barbee; Public Works Director Clay Harris; Police Chief Terry Stanphill and City Secretary Cindy Cerny.

Media Present: Shannon Crabtree with the El Campo Leader-News.

Guests Present: Carolyn Gibson and Beverly Supak.

2. DISCUSSION OF STRATEGIC PLANNING PRIORITIES

City Manager Mindi Snyder noted that job retention; job creation/recruitment; filling vacant buildings and collaboration with different entities were the priorities listed at the January 19th workshop. She asked if the group wanted to continue with these topics or make changes. She added that an Attorney General Opinion had been received regarding determination of site improvements under the Revitalization Program; and that CDC Director Carolyn Gibson would like direction on presenting the CDC's monthly reports to Council.

Snyder suggested collaborating on how to accomplish these priorities – details. Possibly starting with the revitalization program, where to go from there, and finally leading into the priorities.

Kinnan Stockton stated that the Attorney General's opinion on permanent projects came in last week. It did not say that the CDC was or was not complying with regulations. It basically put the ball back into the CDC Board's hands.

Gibson stated the AG referred to site improvements as the permanent enhancement of property or buildings. She noted that the problem lies with defining permanent, adding when there is no judicial definition, the "normal definition" or dictionary definition is used. Gibson stated she believed permanent enhancements to property would increase the value of the property and therefore the ad valorem tax and many people do not do repairs or improvements because their property taxes will increase.

Councilman Erwin asked Gibson if she planned on narrowing down permanent during the workshop, adding that air conditioners are not permanent, but last 25 years; roofs are not either, but may last 30 years. Eventually permanent must give to everyday wear and tear.

Larry Russell stated that the CDC got hung on flowerbeds and paint.

Gibson stated that funds could be used for infrastructure - water lines, wastewater lines, fiber cable, lighting, sidewalks and streets.

Wesley Lange stated that it is necessary to tie revitalization to new jobs.

Stockton added that the new Washateria is a prime example.

Gibson noted that she was working on a project fever in the industrial park where wages would be \$17 per hour.

Councilman Ward suggested separating revitalization and site improvement projects.

Stockton agreed, noting that funding would be limited since the fund balance is lower.

Larry Russell said the CDC is basically providing a match for businesses.

Mayor Pro-Tem Young noted that the town must sell itself, adding that things have been good.

City Manager Snyder added that projects are performance based -380 Agreements which are incentives to help businesses. As the businesses perform, the CDC is giving back. She added that grants are also available. The City must approve the CDC's issuance of debt.

Stockton added that he would like to take 10-15% of the CDC's sales tax revenue and then back into some programs that are clearly defined. This would be a win-win situation for everyone.

Gibson stated that as capital projects go, giving a \$5,000 incentive for job creation would be inviting. However, should the business fail to comply within a certain period of time, they would be required to give the money back.

Stockton stated that the Board plans on holding a workshop in the next 30 days to study and redesign the revitalization program before presenting it to Council.

Mayor Randy Collins suggested that the Board create guidelines and email them to City Manager Snyder or Council in an attempt to keep them informed on projects before approving to possibly eliminate many questions. He added that he would like to see the old mill building across from Collins Music Center revamped or demolished with joint effort of the City and CDC. Collins said he was concerned with possible environmental issues - gas lines, etc.; adding that the building has been an eye sore for many years. He stated that research was needed to find the owner of the property. Someone could possibly have some old brick out of the demolition. The Finkelstein Building and old Theatre Building were also mentioned as far as revamping or demolishing.

Stockton suggested that they (owners) may consider selling the property to the CDC for small amount (\$1) since it could be a liability to them. The CDC could then organize efforts to have the buildings torn down.

Councilwoman Harris mentioned the old school maintenance building.

Gibson asked if the city had substandard housing regulations.

Snyder replied that the city needs more stringent rules or ordinances in place. She added that the City could benefit from a Planning Director as well.

Mayor Collins suggested working on revitalizing downtown. Suggestion was made to move the Museum downtown across from the Chamber. He recommended taking on several buildings at a time as a project and revamping them over a period of 1-2 years.

Councilman Ward added that the City needs to be careful about taking property off of the tax rolls as there needs to be a balance. Infrastructure is already an issue.

Finance Director Sladek stated that the total taxes paid on the Finkelstein Building were \$4,940. The City's portion was \$1,083.

Snyder added that this could be a location of cultural history, not just the museum.

Larry Russell asked when the I-69 Frontage Roads would be developed.

Snyder replied that construction should begin in April and completion is estimated to take approximately 18 months depending on the weather.

Collins stated that the City is being very proactive on the Frontage Roads, adding that Wharton is getting left behind.

Job Retention was brought up. Stockton stated that there is always room for improvement; thus, suggested conducting a survey. He added that a big problem is that Healthcare is too high and there seems to be no answers to the problem.

Gibson noted there has been an attempt to put veterans back to work after returning to the states from overseas. She added that Business Outreach is also an option.

Mayor Collins suggested that Gibson go out and personally visit with the local businesses.

Gibson agreed that was a good idea since business retention is actually part of her job description. She added that major finances from the CDC are minimal.

Councilman Erwin stated that it is important to retain businesses with higher paying jobs.

Gibson commented that the Aquatic Center, CATE Department at El Campo High School (Apprenticeship Program), I-69 and a progressive Council are all favorable to the community. The Apprenticeship Program allows students to work after school, during spring break and summers.

Councilman Erwin agreed that the CATE Department is an extremely good program which establishes great work ethics in our students. The collaboration to help the students is wonderful.

Councilman Hitzfeld stated that the work ethics of today's students are limited.

Councilwoman Harris stated that parental guidance is so important.

Gibson added that the Mentor Program needs to be utilized as customer service training is vital. Stockton emphasized that it would be beneficial to get 16 & 17 year olds' input since they are in the driver's seat.

Mayor Collins noted that collaboration with other stakeholders could be beneficial as well.

Gibson asked what the chances are of getting the City of El Campo and the City of Wharton together, adding that it would be good to know that they have the same ideas about the County as a whole. It is important that the Cities and County work together to achieve the same common goals.

In conclusion, Mayor Collins noted that the CDC's monthly reports will continue to keep Council aware of projects, etc. and eliminate many unanswered questions. Summary reports would be beneficial.

3. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Mayor Collins adjourned the meeting at 6:19 PM to get ready for the Regular Scheduled Meeting at 6:30 PM.

Attest:

Cindy Cerny, City Secretary

Randy Collins, Mayor