

North Powder City Council Special Meeting
August 28, 2020
6:00 PM Wolf Creek Grange

Attendance: Mayor Mike Wisdom, Councilors Joyce Lawyer, David (Shorty) Schwehr, Jeff Grende, and Logan McCrae, City Recorder Beth Wendt. Councilors Mike Morse & Dennis Lefever were excused. Others: Candace Bowman, Walt Brookshire, Dale Mammen, Sue DeHaas, Jeff Nielsen, Wynn Nielsen.

Mayor Mike called the meeting to order and the Pledge of Allegiance was said.

Mayor Mike noted there was an emergency issue with the sewer system that needed to be addressed. Baker City brought their camera out to scope the sewer line at the end of 2nd Street and discovered a buried manhole that was not on any of the sewer maps. Rick was able to get to the manhole but wanted to know if he could ask the Baker Public Works guys to come back on Saturday to run the camera back into the manhole to try to figure out where the line goes. There are several people in the area who are starting to have problems. Shorty made a motion to allow Rick to have Baker City Public Works come out on Saturday, August 29th for 4 to 6 hours to scope the sewer line. Logan seconded and all were in favor.

Mayor Mike stated that the purpose of the meeting was to make a decision regarding making a non-binding offer on the Stanford building. The offer would come with a request for time to be able to do some inspections on the building. He didn't think anyone had been on the roof but a visual was done from the top of the scale building. He has contacted some people regarding plumbing and electrical inspections. If we decide to proceed, there is some stuff that will have to be worked through to make an offer. Mayor Mike introduced Dale Mammen from LaGrande. Dale has some experience with historic restorations. He felt there was a "wealth of jewels" in North Powder that need to be discovered and analyzed. He talked about some of his experiences with restoring buildings in LaGrande. There are lots of options for grants and funding and he could be a resource person for North Powder. Joyce wondered if grants would require Davis Bacon wages. Logan & Jeff thought as a government entity we would have to pay them. Dale commented that there are three models that could be used. The first is to own it, second is to form a non-profit and third is for a private investor. Beth clarified that wages could be covered with grant funds. She wondered how long Dale would estimate it would take to refinish the Stanford building. Dale though, optimistically it might be possible to be in the building in about 60 days. We should take it in steps and restore the building a piece at a time. He felt the hardware store side and the apartment were close to useable already. He provided what he called a "tool kit" and noted that it would take multiple grants. The first thing is to have an idea and a vision that turns to passion. He felt the decision the Council makes should be with regards to looking to the future and what is left to the community. It would be a legacy for the City of North Powder. A project like this will require a lot of planning, patience, perseverance, and people who will use and support the building. Dale recommended we put together a project team of about 5 people to work on what needs to be done and how to do it. They'd look into where money would come from, what is the history of the building, how big is it, are there as-built drawings, etc. Then we should rely on experts and volunteers to help move the ideas and visions into reality. We need to have structural evaluation. He went through a list of consultants and preservationists. Other things on the check list include zoning, contractors, budget, etc. The project should be done in phases and the plans should be flexible as they can change frequently. There is a lot of "historic fabric" that needs to be preserved. Logan wondered how Dale would sell, to the community, a big project to preserve an old building over the other option of refurbishing the fire

station that the City already owns half of. He has heard that it was not a good idea. He thought people already had very little faith in the City Council because they have watched the water and sewer systems, roads, and building maintenance be mismanaged for years. Dale thought the City Council should sit down in a work session to lay out options for Council projects. Another idea is to have a non-profit organization purchase the building with a lease agreement. There are probably more grants available for non-profit organizations. If the City was to lease the property, it immediately becomes tax exempt. He thought we should look at this as a 5 year project. The disadvantage is that the City Council changes. Another option is a private development where the property owner could get a property tax exemption if it was leased to the City. He left a bunch of information on historic grant possibilities including main street revitalization. Some required matching funds or were project specific. Matching funds can be in the form of another grant. He recommended using a grant writer and contacting SHPO to get started. Generally time (work hours) spent can be considered as "in kind". Government grants like in kind stuff. Mayor Mike asked if Dale thought it was realistic to think we could get grants to refurbish the Stanford building and what would be a realistic time line. Dale thought the newer side of the building could be useable in about 30 days. The Oddfellows side would take at least 1 ½ to 2 years, but reiterated that it should be done in phases. It is important to have continuity. If we have a committee and give them the authority to move ahead, it wouldn't matter if the Council changes before the project is complete. Mayor Mike noted that a commitment is needed to form a historical district. Dale added that North Powder could be a very unique spot with its old buildings but it needs to be nurtured and discovered. Joyce commented that there are citizens who support refurbishing the Stanford building and others who support the fire station. Mayor Mike noted that we had some engineers do a structural evaluation of both the fire station and the Stanford building. They will provide a report on their findings. Shorty reported they thought the Stanford building was very solid. They looked at the walls, floors and ceiling. They recommended a seismic survey. There didn't appear to be any leaks and the upper floor is solid. It needs a lot of work, but mostly superficial, at this time. There is some stone work that needs to be done on the outside but it shouldn't be too difficult. We should think about a heating and cooling system that would service both sides. Mayor Mike thought the duct work on the hardware side should be sufficient. Jeff felt it would depend because if you add sections, and then each section may have to have a separate control. Shorty continued that they checked the crawl spaces. The original ceiling seemed to be rather unique. Overall, they thought it was fairly solid. The fire station is about 30 years old but will still take extra work to make it usable. We need to talk to contractors for that as well as for plumbing and electrical. The floor in the fire station needs to be leveled but it is not as bad as it may seem. Mayor Mike spoke with a couple of plumbing outfits to get an estimate for ADA restrooms. He thought it would be less than \$500 for fixtures. But we need to have someone look at both locations from the ground up. An electrician will charge \$85 for electrical inspection. Walt noted that inspections are generally done at the expense of the buyer. Candace said it could be added into the agreement that the seller would do some of them. Mayor Mike wondered if a seismic inspection could be grant funded. Shorty thought the engineers could do one. Dale added the DEQ may require an inspection for asbestos but there is grant money for "brownsfield" clean-up. Shorty said the engineers didn't see anything that looked like asbestos. Jeff was concerned that the City only has one full-time and one part-time public works employee. Would they be able to add the maintenance of the old building plus the extra lots? He thought the cost would be more to maintain the Stanford building. He was also concerned about the ditch out back. What is the liability to the City and what will it take to maintain it. Joyce wondered if we could get grants to put in an underground water system. Jeff noted that we still have to maintain it. Mayor Mike felt watering was not a real time issue. We have already talked about the need to add another full-time or seasonal employee. This is an unusual year. Jeff reiterated that the man power we have isn't getting stuff done now. We should look at the whole picture in that is it more feasible to take away a building that could be possible business. Joyce commented that we could sell the other lots.

Logan noted that the Stanford building is the only commercial building for sale right now. The Council talks about trying to bring business into town and if we buy the Stanford building, it takes it out of circulation. He felt the City didn't really need the extra property. It is a really neat building and is stout, but it isn't a good fit for the City. It is a huge project but it should be left to a commercial business. The City just needs something simple and functional. Walt thought the biggest challenge for a community is the lack of control and marketability of available land. The City could acquire the building, restore it and put it back on the market. It gives more control back to the City to decide how the property is used. Logan would still rather see a private business. Walt thought the ultimate goal of the City should be to have property owned by private individuals but the city has marketing tools and access to systems that are not necessarily available to private individuals and can develop economic tools that can bring a business into town. He agreed that someday it should be a privately owned and bring in property taxes and water and sewer income. Logan reiterated that he would rather see it be a privately owned business. He wondered if a non-profit could do the same thing in conjunction with the City to restore the building. Candace felt there is a lot of organization needed before we enter into a contract because if it isn't done properly it will fall into a big hole. If a non-profit organization were to take it on, it would be easier to get everybody behind it. She wondered if the City wanted to write an offer. Dale commented that there is a narrow window of opportunity to purchase the property but there is a big window of grants that would give the City time to do it right. Shorty made a motion to work on an offer for the Stanford building tonight. Joyce seconded. Mayor Mike wondered if an offer is put in, how far we can we go before we decide to say no and what are the repercussions. Candace said the offer should have all contingencies with a time frame, including all inspections, to get our due diligence done. Mayor Mike was concerned that if we do inspections but decide it isn't going to work and the fire station would be more prudent, would there be any kick back. Candace said we still have to put down Ernest money but as long as we meet our time frame we aren't out anything. Walt added that it always says if there is something unacceptable in the inspections we are clear. Candace remarked that they will still continue to show the building and take back-up offers. She thought \$1000 Ernest money would show good faith and if the seller agrees, the time frame could be extended. Mayor Mike restated that a motion was made and seconded to make an offer on the Stanford property with contingencies. Joyce and Shorty were in favor. Jeff and Logan were opposed. Mayor Mike cast a tie breaker vote in favor of the motion. Candace provided a packet with paperwork to use as a guideline and checklist for making an offer. It was suggested that everyone look at the information and make notes as to what they would like to include.

Meeting adjourned at 7:50PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Attest:

Beth Wendt
City Recorder