

**Joint City Council, Planning & Zoning and MEDC Workshop
MINUTES**

April 17, 2023, at 6:00 PM

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Byron Sanford called the workshop to order at 6:00 p.m.

Present: **Council**

Byron Sanford Mayor

Carol Langley City Council Place #1

Cheryl Fox City Council Place #4

Absent: T.J. Wilkerson City Council Place #3

Casey Olson City Council Place #2

Patricia Easley City Council Place #5

Planning & Zoning

Jeffrey Waddell

William Simpson

Britnee Ghutzman

Merriam Walker

Absent: Daniel Gazda

MEDC

Rebecca Huss

Jeff Angelo

Wade Nelson

Dan Walker

Absent: Ryan Londeen

Also Present: Gary Palmer City Administrator

Nici Browe City Secretary & Director of Administrative Services

Dave McCorquodale Assistant City Administrator/Planning & Zoning Director

Mike Muckleroy Public Works Director

Anthony Solomon Chief of Police

Kim Duckett Court Administrator

Chris Roznovsky City Engineer, WGA

WORKSHOP ITEMS:

1. Opening Remarks by Mayor Byron Sanford.

Mayor Byron Sanford welcomed everyone present, including staff and the audience. He provided a brief statement about the intent of the workshop and how to get to the common goals we need to collaborate.

2. Introduction.

Each elected official and board member present introduced themselves and their interest/participation in City government.

3. Discussion on the City's Goals, Objectives, and Priorities for short and long term.

Mayor Byron Sanford began this portion of the meeting by stating that as Mayor he is continually having to evolve, and that is no different than the city. The city has to evolve to handle the growth that is here now, and, in the future, we have to collaborate. He stated that the city hired a city administrator now after months of uncertainty and is driving towards creating a shared vision for the city. This component was missing until Mr. Palmers' arrival January 6, 2023.

Mr. Gary Palmer, City Administrator stated that he has been here around five months and, in that time, certain things have risen to the surface and he has the experience to get out into the community and get buy in from residents and businesses. He added Revitalization is a big bold plan, the historic downtown area is the cornerstone of the city, having these meetings will be beneficial to all.

Rebecca Huss, President MEDC asked Wade Nelson of the MEDC why he said in his introduction that the city is at a crossroads?

Wade Nelson, MEDC responded that the city has been hit significantly by people coming here, the development and he feels that the city should not be saying yes to every deal, we can be selective and make sure the types of development they are bringing is going to create value to the city not just affordability.

Rebecca Huss, President MEDC asked what he thought the consequences would be?

Wade Nelson, MEDC responded that if all the city attracts is affordability type of residential development, ultimately retail will not survive and we will end up with vacant buildings. The 75 ft lot is there and has never been enforced within the last five years, and it seems that every developer is asking for a variance, this will drive up land cost. Currently the developers are saying higher density.

Rebecca Huss, President MEDC stated that the policies should be reviewed for P & Z and MEDC, there needs to be goals developed that the board could look at.

Wade Nelson, MEDC responded that the goal is to attract employers here, businesses etc. and right now with all that TXDOT is doing in the city it is a struggle. We should be looking at reduced taxes and tax abatements, creating incentives to bring businesses here. We like development not everyone that shows up, just the right ones, maybe the MEDC can explore hiring an Economic Development Director that can focus on those issues.

Mayor Byron Sanford stated that having shared goals is important, what he is hearing is that the city needs a return on investment, limit the affordability development type and create management proposals for that to occur.

Wade Nelson, MEDC stated that the city needs to be flexible.

William Simpson, P&Z Commissioner stated that the Historic Zone is an area we can control, the façade.

Mayor Bryon Sanford agreed and said that with Dave and Gary updating ordinances and policies this can be achieved, as the legislature has stripped cities of control over a lot of say in development.

Mr. Dave McCorquodale provided the governing bodies in attendance with information on the Historic Preservation.

Jeff Waddell, P&Z Chairperson stated that recently the Commission has turned down 3 or 4 proposed variance requests as it would make everything too tight. He added that the city does not need to make knee jerk reactions and just amend lot sizes, it is wise to remember that Montgomery is further out in the country than somewhere like Conroe so larger lot sizes are typical.

Wade Nelson, MEDC stated he wanted the City to keep the 75ft lot sizes as it sets the bar.

Jeff Waddell, Rebecca Huss, and Dan Walker had a lengthy conversation and debate regarding negotiating with the developers, the quality of the development and the master plan.

Merriam Walker, P & Z Commissioner stated that was a good point, have we even looked at the City of Montgomery Master Plan to see what we want in the future, what the city will look like. She added lately the requests are all about tiny lots with barely any room for cars in the streets.

Cheryl Fox, Councilmember discussed ad valorem tax, and neighborhoods.

Wade Nelson, MEDC stated that we need to decide where the industrial goes.

Mayor, Byron Sanford added that with the growth coming to the city it is vital to strike the right balance of residential and commercial. We need to be smart and as if often described as a Live, work Play incentive. He went on to discuss flooding issues on the North side of town, and his communication with Commissioner Robert Walker, and his request for help being met with a No. The County is not the only one issuing grants. Something has to be done however, the County must get involved as it is absolutely intolerable that people's homes continue to flood.

Rebecca Huss, MEDC President stated that the MEDC has talked a lot about mobility and with schools letting out and where and when, the intersections at FM2854 its important to get people to Montgomery efficiently. The MEDC is looking at obtaining grants and working with TXDoT as a long-term goal.

Jeff Waddell, P & Z Chairperson stated that the issue on the 2854/105 problems is that the State and the County are not communicating with each other.

Mayor Byron Sanford stated that it is his intent to set up a Task Force of members of the elected boards and staff to deal with TXDoT, which can monitor and interact and keep abreast of the activity.

Jeff Angelo, MEDC asked if anyone has nailed down what TXDoT love language is. He is ready to create a plan and work and focus on getting a traffic study to assist with the plan. He inquired if there were any other heavy hitters in the area that had the County Commissioner ear, that could help us out.

Jeff Angelo also asked Wade Nelson where and how the plan for the Johnson Development which is incredible mixed-use development get their plans.

Wade Nelson stated that it was a conceptual plan.

The governing body members spent a short time discussing obtaining funds from HGAC, and the process and qualifications to receive any distribution of funds. Discussion took place on Tip funds. Further discussion on Impact Fees and how they are assessed and how they are utilized.

Jeff Angelo, MEDC stated that what he is taking from this meeting is that there is a very important goal, create a plan, and a mobility plan these have to be done for the long-term success of the city.

Mayor, Byron Sanford led a discussion with the group and with the City Engineer on the TXDoT median construction through the city.

4. Discussion on a Strategy to reach shared goals.

Mr. Gary Palmer, City Administrator informed the governing bodies of the distribution process of federal funds and that when it gets down to small cities, the fact that they are unable to match the funds results in them losing out on a lot of programs.

The governmental bodies brainstormed strategies to accumulate the “matching” funds from MEDC and other locations in order to be in the game for allocation of federal funds.

William Simpson, P & Z Commissioner stated that is it worth curtailing or putting a moratorium on development of 800 homes.

Rebecca Huss, MEDC President stated that a development such as Johnson with retail in the front and the 800 homes in the rear would be incredible.

Merriam Walker P& Z Commissioner asked do we just wait for the developer to come to us because of our master plan?

Wade Nelson, MEDC stated that’s the point there is no plan.

Merriam Walker, P&Z Commissioner stated no plan? Where is it?

Mayor, Byron Sanford stated that has been his question, it is not easy without a plan, and to that what use is a Tif for mobility.

Mr. Gary Palmer spoke to the governing bodies regarding Tif dollars and informed them all that he sees the first thing is to create a transportation plan, then build in objectives to get to that plan. He then went on to provide them with his rough guide as to how he would proceed based on tonight’s discussions.

5. Open Discussion: Each body can discuss issues, concerns and suggestions.

Julie Davis resident spoke to the governing bodies regarding Thorofare plan, HGAC, TXDoT and the Ad valorem taxes. She encouraged the city to use Tif funds and provided an example of how she felt the road behind McCoy’s on 105 should be extended in the mobility plan.

Sara Countryman, resident spoke to the governing bodies and stated she felt the city needs to hold County Commissioner Robert Walker’s feet to the fire with the Round A Bout. She went on to state she had personally talked with Charlie Riley regarding obtaining a south loop and he agreed.

Bill Clevenger, resident stated that this could make or break the economy when talking about the type of housing that you bring in. He encouraged the city to look at creating a walkable community with things to do for youth, so tax dollars along with the youth are not heading down to the Woodlands. Make it teens and family friendly.

Stan Donaldson, a resident, stated he was very encouraged by the workshop and all three bodies coming together to share a plan. He added it is very positive for the city.

Cheryl Fox, Councilmember stated she agreed with transportation and mobility and that is the responsibility of all of these bodies, to enrich the lives of our citizens.

Merriam Walker, P&Z Commissioner stated that she is saddened by the poor engagement within the city, which is reflected in the turn out for voting. She added that the city needs to work on getting the citizens engaged, offer them exciting things.

6. Discussion on scheduling Joint meetings Quarterly.

* Suggestion for items such as the Chamber, City Departments or other entities.

Mr. Palmer recommended that to begin with these meetings should occur quarterly, which would allow for the elections to be held, new members sworn in. He will hold an initial goal setting workshop.

Rebecca Huss, MEDC President stated that with the meetings, it could add to the burden to staff for preparation and minuting meetings.

Mayor Byron Sanford stated he would prefer these meetings to be scheduled on a regular meeting night, either before or instead of.

ADJOURNMENT

Mayor announced that the meeting was adjourned.

ADJOURNED: 7:36 P.M.

Submitted by: _____
Nici Browe, City Secretary

Date Approved: _____

Byron Sanford, Mayor