

SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING

AUGUST 23, 2021

Present: Mayor David Velegol, City Attorney Mike Gaudio and City Clerk Dave Kurcina

Council: Tammy Johnson, Wendy DeAngelis, Nick Cekinovich,
Charles McCoy, Alexis Russell and John Casinelli

Also: Police Chief Larry Rea, Deputy Police Chief Dan Casto and Public Works Director Steve Meca

Absent: City Manager Jack McIntosh

Place: Follansbee Community House

Time: 5:30 p.m.

Subject: City Plaza Approval & Approve for Advertising

The Mayor stated that the purpose of the new Plaza is to build up the Core of the City for Economic Development and to bring people to the downtown area. He also gave a brief review of the projects that were discussed at the previous project. There were Public Comments from the audience. All who spoke gave support to the Plaza. The Mayor stated that Ohio Street will be made a 2 way street and the remaining portion of Penn Street will remain open.

4th Ward Councilwoman Alexis Russell requested to have the following letter included in the minutes:

August 23, 2021

“I believe that City Council as a democratic governing body; majority rules. I also believe in the process of City Officials working as a team to agree on a project then develop and understand the details and provide constituents’ input, after an idea has been presented. The notion that I am inquisitive about details, facts, and costs, prior to the public release of such information is an affront to the sole developer, why? What is the big secret?”

I am disappointed that not nearly as many who expressed concern via Facebook neither attended nor spoke up. VOICES in support were well organized and VOICES against were absent. It has been brought to my attention that perhaps several attendees were involved ensuring my skepticism was perceived as negativity by the public. The tone of the responses to my request prior to the meeting leads me to believe this. The failure of the chair to call the

meeting to order as an attendee shouted across the room to me when I had the floor further supports that assertion.

The lack of information for Council to review is commonplace, as I have learned and been advised by several former officials. Case in point: Miss K's endowment of \$120,000 to the City. Why was Council not made aware of this upon it's receipt? What authority does the Mayor to discuss usage of such funds without consulting Council? We have a safety issue (lighting in the 1st Ward) that was addressed at a recent meeting, although the matter was identified and discussed at least since 2016. The response being that we didn't have enough money to go more than 3 blocks (@ \$200,000). #Priorities

I am not against this project. I am AGAINST the process with which it was developed. Had a public hearing been held as I requested at the beginning of my tenure, perhaps a restroom and water bill drop would have included in the engineering. This would also lend to proper accounting of the entire cost for the project. Again, I am expected to make a major expenditure decision based on NO CONCRETE INFORMATION – remember the \$33,000 sliding board? I need to watch the Facebook video to see what summary information is available. This is unacceptable; therefore, I will vote NO based upon my inability to make an informed decision (by engineer, I will assert).

Furthermore, moving forward, I intend to vote NO on ANY project or expenditure for which I am denied information, particularly upon my request. I answer my constituents. I want my motive and intentions to be clear to them.

Respectfully,

Alexis A. Russell, 4th Ward Council”

The total cost of the Project is \$285,000.00 based on an estimate with the help of Scott Ewusiak. Currently there is \$180,000.00 in monies for this Project with the difference coming out of the UDAG Account. The Street Department will be doing some of demolition of the Plaza.

Motion by John Casinelli/ 2nd by Charles McCoy to approve the Option for closing Penn Street to Rose Street to construct a new Plaza. Motion Carried

4 in favor

2 opposed (Alexis Russell and Tammy Johnson)

Motion by John Casinelli/ 2nd by Wendy DeAngelis to advertise for Construction of the new Plaza. Motion Carried

4 in favor

2 opposed (Alexis Russell and Tammy Johnson)

Motion by John Casinelli/ 2nd by Wendy DeAngelis to adjourn at 5:55 p.m. Motion Carried Unanimous

Dave Kurcina, City Clerk