

Joint Planning Commission/Board of Zoning Appeals Meeting

Thursday, January 26, 2017

Mayor Koster called the meeting to order at 7:01 P.M.

Roll Call:

Planning Commission: Jim Koster – yes; Tom Blair – yes; Sue Fisher – yes; Curt Johnson – yes; Karolyn Squire – yes (arrived at 7:03 pm) .

Board of Zoning Appeals: Paul Emch – yes; Judy Beaumier – not present; AJ Bissell – yes; Sharon Moster – yes; Al Tolchinsky – yes.

Visitors: Tracy Jemison, Joe Hernandez, Nick Tromba, Anne Wishart, Lisa Hernandez

Pledge of Allegiance

The Mayor opened the meeting by introducing Mr. Nick Tromba, newly elected Burton Village Council member, and then introduced Mr. Jemison, and asked everyone present to share a bit about themselves. After the introductions, Mayor Koster emphasized the need for an up to date strategic plan.

Mr. Jemison advised the group to “do what you’re already doing, and doing well.” Mr. Jemison also noted the significance of having fiber optic cable running through the Village that comes from Cleveland, and the implications of this cable for Burton’s economic growth and development. Mr. Jemison suggested a few business development opportunities that could do well in the Village including opening up office space and tech jobs; a call center; an office complex; Independent/Assisted Living for Seniors; a business incubator.

Mr. Jemison then told the group that it was important to find something to attract people to the Village; for instance, the fact that Kent State Geauga is here, which could open up potential research & development opportunities between Kent State and potential new businesses. Mr. Jemison felt that the Fiber Optic Cable was key, and could play a big role in any future opportunities. Mr. Jemison also stressed the fact that during Pancake Breakfast Season, the Village has an additional 4500 people in town every Sunday, and this is something the Village should capitalize on.

The discussion then turned to the Historical Society. Mayor Koster asked Mr. Jemison if there was any interest from the Historical Society to develop some of the land the Historical Society owns. Mr. Jemison had not heard of any interest. While Mr. Jemison had seen growing interest and movement in the last 6 months near Burton Village, he had not seen any in Burton Village.

Mayor Koster asked if there might be some taxing structure opportunities available to the Village in the future, especially if the proposed school consolidation takes place. Mr. Jemison stated that it depends on the project, although Burton Village does not have the space for very large projects. Mr. Jemison advised that instead, the Village should be looking for grants that might be available, and in trying to find a grand, ask the following questions: “What do your residents want? What do you do well?” Lastly, Mr. Jemison advised to make sure that the project was economically viable.

The discussion then turned to marketing. Ms. Moster felt that the Village did not do a good job of marketing itself, and that the Village did not have enough boutique or small businesses to draw tourists in, or enough investors willing to invest in such endeavors; and further, that the Village did not try hard enough to bring people in. Ms. Moster said that in her experience working with non-profit agencies, if you don't actually look for ways to market your organization, it shows; Mr. Jemison agreed. Mr. Emch agreed that the Village does not market itself well. Mr. Jemison advised that the Village may want to hire a marketing specialist. Ms. Squire noted that social media is important, but also noted that the Village does not collaborate enough with other organizations within the community.

Ms. Squire felt it was important that the school district and township not be ignored. Ms. Squire also noted that most people think of the Township and Village as one in the same.

The group then discussed ways that the Village could increase tourism and/or community involvement through special events such as festivals, band concerts on the green; movies in the park or at Century Village; farmer's markets, etc. The conversation then turned to ways that the Village could partner with the Historical Society to bring some of these plans to fruition. Ms. Fisher felt that the Village needed to be branded, and Ms. Moster added that funds needed to be raised to work towards building interest. Mayor Koster felt it was important to plan, adding that there are many costs associated with bringing tourists and vendors into the Village.

The discussion turned to the potential school consolidation. Ms. Squire felt that the consolidation would be a positive thing, and noted that the Berkshire community deserved to reap the rewards of such a consolidation. Mr. Jemison explained to the group that House Bill 148 passed, and it is now known as House Bill 438 – and it stipulates that \$.55 cents of every \$1 spent on the new school would be paid for by the State, rather than the residents of the school district(s). Mr. Jemison also said that the merger must take place before July 1, 2018.

Mr. Koster noted that the Berkshire-Ledgemont merger took a great deal of planning, and that timing is important. Mr. Jemison agreed and said that the more organization the group has, the better.

The discussion then returned to Burton Village's assets. Mr. Jemison urged the group to look at the assets right here in Burton Village – the Car Show or Friday night concerts, and to look for ways to collaborate with other groups.

Mr. Tromba noted that building a community center would be an asset, since many people who live in the Village but don't have children in the schools wonder what they would get out of the plans for a possible merger.

Ms. Squire noted the importance of developing a strong sense of community, and how that should be an integral part of the Village's strategic plan, since volunteers account for much of the workforce behind such things.

The group discussed committee size, and how best to include other groups. Ms. Moster noted that Mr. Dietrich said the committee should be small, and wondered how that could be accomplished with so many outside groups to include. Mr. Jemison explained that you could still keep the committee small by including representatives of each group to attend, not the whole group. Mr. Jemison stressed the importance of everyone, regardless of which organization they come from, sharing the same vision. Mayor Koster agreed that sharing one vision was the key, and that the school district and township

should be tied into the planning process. Mr. Blair noted that the time had come to unite and form one group – one Burton. Ms. Squire added that the group needs to be proactive, that the Village is too small to achieve this alone.

Mr. Blair noted that there are areas in the Village yet to be developed, and that it is our responsibility to ensure that we have the environment in terms of good streets and infrastructure, to handle new homes and businesses as they are developed.

The discussion then turned to finding a consultant, with Mr. Emch asking Mr. Jemison if there was a website where the committee could find a consultant. Mr. Bissell noted that Chardon used DB Hart, and they were happy with the results. Mr. Koster added that Chesterland used DB Hart, and while they did a decent job, there were areas that could have been improved upon.

Ms. Moster asked Mr. Jemison if there were any grants available to pay for hiring a consultant. Mr. Jemison advised Ms. Moster to look at what might be offered at the Foundation Center at Kent State. Mr. Jemison offered to contact someone at the Cleveland Foundation.

Mayor Koster stated that the next step will be to find someone to head up the Strategic Plan. Mr. Hernandez noted the need for a Request for Proposal. Mr. Jemison agreed and advised the group to whittle the list down to three potential consultants, and ask them what other projects they've worked on. Mr. Jemison also suggested contacting nearby municipalities to find out who they used for consultants.

Mayor Koster thanked Mr. Jemison for his time.

Moving on to other business, Mayor Koster asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the January 19th, 2017 meeting. Mr. Tolchinsky made the motion on behalf of the Board of Zoning Appeals, seconded by Ms. Moster. By voice vote, the motion passed. Mr. Blair made the motion to accept the minutes on behalf of the Planning Commission; seconded by Ms. Fisher. By voice vote, the motion passed and the minutes were accepted.

A motion to adjourn was made by Sharon Moster; seconded by Sue Fisher. By voice vote, the motion passed. The meeting was adjourned at 8:27 pm.

Mayor

BZA President

Clerk