

STREETS, BUILDINGS & GROUNDS MEETING MINUTES

October 19, 2020 – via Zoom

In Attendance: **Vermilion City Council:** *Steve Herron, President of Council; Emily Skahen, Ward One; Frank Loucka, Ward Two; Steve Holovacs, Ward Three; Barb Brady, Ward Four; Brian Holmes, Ward Five. Absent: Monica Stark, Council at Large*

Administration: *Jim Forthofer, Mayor; Tony Valerius, Service Director; Chris Howard, City Engineer; Amy Hendricks, Finance Director; Ken Stumphauzer, Law Director*

Call to Order: Steve Holovacs, Chairman, RESOLVED THAT this Streets, Buildings, & Grounds Committee comprised of the committee of the whole does now come to order.

TOPIC ONE: D.O.R.A. and Dog Park

Marilou Suszko of Main Street Vermilion addressed some items that Main Street is involved in - first being the D.O.R.A. program which stands for Designated Outdoor Refreshment Area. She indicated this is a conversation they are having that she would like to bring to Council's attention because it has appeared in a few newspapers. She said Main Street organizations in Ohio are charged with moving these programs forward. She explained the D.O.R.A. program is something the Ohio Liquor Control Board has had in effect since 2015. It's nothing new, but with COVID and with people trying to expand the way they can sell their products, carryout and create more business at a time when you social distance, the D.O.R.A. has been catching on and there is more than 40 communities in Ohio that have implemented these programs. She said they are at the beginning of this conversation and they are trying to find out if this is something the businesses will support and if it even belongs in Vermilion. They are not pushing anything forward yet as they are talking about the possibilities and how they would implement this in Vermilion. She said this means they would create a designated outdoor region. As a visual she said you could designate Liberty Avenue from Brewed Awakenings to Coal and Ice and then from Main Street Vermilion down to Main Street Beach as the D.O.R.A. As another example, they could choose Friday, Saturday, and Sunday from 4:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. of when the program is in effect. This means that people can go into liquor serving establishments and get a drink that they can enjoy outdoors within the D.O.R.A. It has a lot of different safeguards in place as people cannot bring liquor in from their homes or anywhere else. There are marked D.O.R.A. cups and people wear wristbands identifying them as having purchased a D.O.R.A. drink. You are not allowed to take a D.O.R.A. drink from one establishment into another and all the other liquor control laws apply. She said she has

been talking with a lot of communities on what their experiences are with it since they have a library and parks within the downtown region. She is finding there is no problems. She wants to make council aware they are having these conversations as these programs do not happen unless council creates legislation for these things to go forward. If they feel they have enough support from the businesses, Main Street, and the Chamber of Commerce, they may be prepared next year to ask for a temporary placement of a D.O.R.A. downtown, which means they can do a trial period for 90 days to see if this program works for Vermilion and that it doesn't create problems. She noted the City of Lorain has a D.O.R.A. and they have gone back to council to expand their boundaries. She provided to council the communities that have a D.O.R.A. on the books already.

B. Brady said she understands they cannot take a drink into another facility, but retailers and businesses may permit a D.O.R.A. inside. M. Suszko said this means she cannot buy a beer at Route 6 Pub and take it into Chez Francois or vice versa. You can't take a drink purchased from one establishment into another liquor serving establishment, but say parents go to Soda Grill with their kids and they would like a drink with dinner, then they could go to Route 6 and buy a beer and as long as the owners of Soda Grill agree and want to be a part of the program, then they will allow that drink to come into their establishment. She said there is signage and boundary markers and other safeguards in place to make sure this program runs smoothly. B. Brady asked if these drinks are sealed. M. Suszko believed they have a lid, but they are identified as a D.O.R.A. cup as opposed to somebody walking down the street with a red solo cup.

Drew Werley felt this program promotes overdrinking. He said he really doesn't drink but if he purchased a drink from Route 6 and goes to Chez as the example, and he isn't allowed to bring it in there, then he thinks they should do the business themselves just like you would do with Soda Grill because if he cannot go into Chez with that drink, then he will drink it really quick. He does not like to waste money. If the business allows it then he would drink it slower. M. Suszko said this is something that is built into the program and you cannot change that within your community.

Homer Taft said he was glad this came up because he was considering writing to Council about a D.O.R.A. He was just reading the statute and he recalls it is 47 acres of a small town that can create a D.O.R.A. He is not saying they should do that big, but he certainly would expand it beyond the boundaries. He would take it north to Chez and south of the tracks if you're having certain events, but if you can imagine like a 'Third Thursday' or something then you're encouraging people to be outside and you're promoting people going into these establishments which would help that. He said they will want to think about the hours as well as perhaps the months

this is in effect. If it is dark do you still want that to happen – if you're having the Ice Festival to you want people bringing their drinks out to the fire and ice in the evening, or do you want them to stroll during the entire day with beverages. He said the city needs to sort through these things. M. Suszko agrees there are a lot of things to consider and they have not got that far. Right now, they need to know if this is something the businesses want to get behind. She said H.B. 669 which was recently passed allows for 'to go drinks. She said this provides local restaurants more opportunities to create some more revenue, so this isn't so much for events for Main Street or the Chamber, but for businesses and opportunities for people to come downtown and linger longer and shop in the stores a little more. They are finding out from other communities that this is not creating a Mardi Gras scene – nobody has been reporting any specific problems. It is not an invitation to behave badly.

Homer Taft said there is one indelicate issue they need to consider and that is the necessity to have public restrooms if you're going to have people walking outside, because then people will walk into somebody else's establishment and they are not buying there.

Mayor Forthofer said M. Suszko and other community members had discussions about this, and he thinks the benefit lies with the merchants and he feels they need to be objectively surveyed first to see if they want this program. Once this is determined whether they do or they do not, then they can determine if they want to move forward with it and then he agrees there is more detailed discussion that needs to be had.

B. Brady said she would like it to stay out of their parks because if you are a parent with children you want a safe place. Mayor Forthofer said drinking is illegal in the parks anyway. B. Brady said it is included here as a possibility and she would like to see it stay out of the parks.

S. Holovacs said M. Suszko can survey the merchants downtown and then can come back to council on what the take is from the businesses downtown and then council can review the other boundaries and rules.

S. Herron agreed and would like to hear from the merchants either by letter or addressing it to council in person, but he agrees with Mr. Werley – it is a very serious problem as there are potential consequences with drinking. He said many people come to things like 'Third Thursday' because there is no alcohol when walking around and it is a very safe environment. This will be his balance – to what extent are they encouraging a problem versus the merchants who may say this would be good for them.

B. Holmes echoed the idea of what the merchants want, and he also would want to include the Chamber as they are heavily involved with downtown.

Dog Park

M. Suszko said the Chamber and Main Street Vermilion has been working together to develop a Dog Park. They have heard from the Goddard family that they felt that a Dog Park would be a fitting tribute to Dick Goddard who brought so much to Vermilion. At this point they have been working with the Parks Board and addressing concerns and questions about possible sites. She said a site has not been decided yet, but they are exploring lots of different options throughout the city. They do have a concept based on just the idea of a Dog Park and they originally wanted to start some fund raising for the Dog Park before they decided on a location, but she thinks they could have started selling the concept without the location and they have the cooperation of the Parks Board to move this forward, but she understands there are concerns that it would be better to have a location in place before they started fund raising. She feels at this point until they are done with the work at the Parks Board that they could put their request on hold until they have some more information to provide council on where the development of the park is going.

S. Holovacs said he would rather see the plan with the park and then the funding will come at that point, but when the funding runs out how will they handle this. Therefore, he wanted input from the Parks Board, so council could make a good judgment call on what the city is going to do. He is not against it, but he wants more information. He said if he donates and nothing happens then will the money go into the general fund. This is not his belief on what he wants to do with his money. If he gives a donation to the Dog Park, then he wants it to go there and not into another fund.

B. Holmes said this issue will be addressed at the Parks Board meeting via Zoom on October 20th at 6pm.

E. Skahen said they also mentioned how maintenance of the park would be funded.

TOPIC TWO:Tractor/Mower

T. Valerius discussed purchasing a new roadside tractor and mower for the City. The current mower is 23 years old and has become plagued with issues. The last two years alone the city has had to spend over \$15,000 in parts and labor to keep the tractor in operating order, and it has gotten to the point where he feels they would be better off purchasing a new mower than throwing more money into the one we have. The city obtained three quotes

and found the best quote from Polen Implement in the amount of \$135,400.00 which includes a trade in of \$10,000 for our tractor. This quote includes a new tractor, a flail mower, which is a rear mower, and a side mower that will get down into the ditches and can also be raised to mow vertically which will greatly help in areas along Sunnyside Rd. for example, where the brush grows right up to the roadway. He said he would ask Council to prepare legislation for the new tractor and mower.

S. Holovacs asked if it was cheaper to go through Polen rather than a state purchase. T. Valerius said this is a state bid.

Drew Werley asked if the \$135,400 purchase price is net. T. Valerius confirmed it is \$135,400 after the trade. D. Werley asked what the model of the mower is. T. Valerius said the side mower is an Alamo Machete-18 and the flail mower is an Alamo SH-88.

B. Brady asked if service is available for the Alamo. T. Valerius said it would probably need to be serviced through John Deere. B. Brady asked if it was a John Deere as she is just worried about parts. T. Valerius said the Alamo mower is a common brand.

F. Loucka said this should be a great asset as they have heard over the years that the mower has been out of service and that does not include the labor loss with people fiddling around with this old mower. He said the side mower will be a great advantage for good visibility along the road. He said if they have the money in the budget it's okay with him.

S. Herron said they must do this because they cannot keep throwing money away on repairs.

S. Holovacs MOVED, F. Loucka seconded to have legislation prepared for the purchase of a tractor/mower in the amount of \$135,400 with a trade in of \$10,000. Roll Call Vote 6 YEAS. **MOTION CARRIED.**

TOPIC THREE: ICEBREAKING CONTRACT

T. Valerius reported that bids were open for icebreaking on October 8 and the city received one bid from South Shore Dredge and Dock for an initial payment of \$59,525.33 for mobilization, insurance, and standby, which is due upon approval. This bid is the same as last year's bid and he asked council to consider preparing legislation to authorize this contract.

B. Brady asked about the hourly rate charges moving forward. T. Valerius said they are the same as last year - \$525.00 per hour for a four-hour minimum.

Mayor Forthofer said he had three meetings with the Army Corp of Engineers and with the Coast Guard regarding more passive means of icebreaking in the river and there really are none when it comes to breaking the ice ourselves. He said with a resident's suggestion he also contacted an icebreaking group that resides in the Black River in Lorain and they did not have interest or the equipment to do a job in Vermilion. Although there may be some minor things they can do in the river, there is nothing that will replace icebreaking as the city knows it.

F. Loucka MOVED. S. Herron seconded to have legislation prepared to enter a contract with South Shore Dredge and Dock for icebreaking services. Roll Call Vote 6 YEAS. **MOTION CARRIED.**

TOPIC FOUR: Woodlands Entrance

E. Skahen understands in the past that concerns have been addressed pertaining to the Woodlands Entrance; even before she came on council and knows there still is not a solution for the entrance which is located near the Pit Barbeque. She said there is safety issues going into the development and in the past the 50-mph speed limit has been mentioned. She said the stop sign within the development on Woodlands Drive when entering the development has a sharp turn radius, and it is hard to make the turn when another vehicle is at the stop sign. She said there are boulders (larger rocks) that people are trying to avoid when coming into the entrance. The rocks are being knocked into the road when trucks/buses come into the entrance. She knows of two people who have had thousands of dollars of damage to their car when making the turn when another car is sitting at the stop signs at Liberty and Woodlands Drive. She said it has been suggested that maybe they can remove the stop sign on Woodlands Drive and make it a yield sign, so nobody is sitting there when somebody else is pulling into the development. She said it was also suggested that maybe the stop sign on Woodlands Drive could be moved back a little farther to give somebody more clearance when entering the development. She did not know how much of the area could be cleaned out or if they can remove the boulders, so that they are not getting hit. She said they need some suggestions on what they can do at this entrance to help make the area safer. She asked if the city engineer could look to see if there is anything the city can do.

F. Loucka asked if there is a homeowner's association in the Woodlands. E. Skahen said not one that is active with the homes. She believes the condos may have associations. However, the homes do not pay dues. F. Loucka thought the entrance would be up to the people in the Woodlands. He asked if this was all right of way. E. Skahen said the stop sign would be the city's responsibility and the idea of changing it to a yield sign.

C. Howard said they will look at the entrance to see what options they can come up with. However, where the existing Woodland sign is currently located it is within the State of Ohio right of way. He will look to see if this is something that can be widened, but they will look at some options of opening this up a little bit. He said in the past they did look at reducing the speed on Liberty Avenue, but the city could not get ODOT to change the speed limit in that section based on the development east of the bridge.

This issue will be referred to the November 9 meeting for an update by the City Engineer and Service Director.

S. Holovacs adjourned the meeting after no further business came before the committee.

Next meeting: November 9, 2020 @ 7:00 p.m. at the Vermilion Municipal Complex, 687 Decatur Street, Vermilion, Ohio.

Gwen Fisher, Certified Municipal Clerk
