

Minutes
Special Forum Meeting
January 25, 2016
Town of Iowa
115 N. Thomson Ave.
Iowa, LA
6:00 P.M.

Mayor and Town Council met for a special workshop session this date in compliance with all requirements to notice.

Present: Mayor Ponthieux, Council Members: Julie Fontenot, Larry Hardy, Thomas Talbot
[quorum present]

Absent: Errol Marshall, Gerald Guidry

Invocation by Mayor Ponthieux followed by Pledge

Agenda

Mayor says this is just an informal open session to discuss some recent issues.

Mayor introduced and recognized special attendees in the audience: Mr. Shalon Latour our new Police Juror, Clinton Leger, Drainage District and Eric Cormier from SW Alliance. Jerry Jones, economic specialist from IMCAL will be present later.

1. Economic Discussion – SW Alliance and IMCAL – Eric Cormier was introduced. He gave some update information regarding the Walmart decision on the closing of the Express stores. As he was told by the Walmart Regional Manager for this area that the closings were due to the fact the express markets plan was not a good fit and didn't work for them logistically. Every Mayor responded by contacting Walmart and told them to look at the sales figures there is a profitable market. Walmart said it's not about the money it's just not part of our business plan. Mr. Cormier stated he was put in touch with the real estate consultant for Walmart. There are four different regions and every property has a different plan. Walmart in Iowa is owned and will be sold. They are also removing the non-compete clause thus the property can be sold. Gas tank situation has not been decided. The Town now waits for the LA broker, go through appraisal to put a sales price on property and then wait to see how the market will deal with this. It's been stated the former employees will be taken in by other stores. Once we know the sales price then as a team the Alliance can help to market that property. It is understood that Iowa needs another grocery store. Iowa has growth potential and the Alliance through Buxton is trying to find some prospects. Need to find investors. Julie Fontenot asked why Walmart will not consider it for a Walmart Neighborhood Market, the larger size store. They really need to expand the store size here. Eric says we need to look for investors who might be willing to put money into something/looking for opportunity. Town needs to consider putting out a marketing plan to businesses we want to see some here. Cormier says the Town needs to get this package

put together quickly with the assistance of IMCAL and market ourselves so the Town has some say as to what type of business we want to see in the Town.

Mr. Bouquet suggested the Council to take this opportunity to look at land management. Not necessarily full zoning but a modified form. We might start by looking at smaller municipalities to see how they handle this subject.

Fontenot said we should look at this as we want to have a welcoming area and some areas need to be more for business or for residential. The Town can't stay stagnant. We need to grow and if it means updating our ordinances we need to do so. Some might be unpopular but the Town needs to start somewhere.

Mayor said some thought has been given to Town Planner but again we come back to the cost of having such an individual. Perhaps the Town could look into some form of joint agreement with another entity to share planning services.

Mayor introduced Jerry Jones, IMCAL economic services. Mr. Jones summarized again steps the Town could take to market itself, to make ourselves more attractive. Mr. Jones said he would communicate with the Alliance regarding some sort of TIFF. IMCAL is looking at all alternatives as to what purpose that property could be used. Jones suggested he would provide us with a comprehensive plan. Such plans allows honest discussion about what we would like to see for our community. Iowa and Sulphur are going to be hit when this economic growth really hits the area. IMCAL will help us to find someone as he believes Town really needs to see a clear picture.

2. Discuss billboard/signage – Mayor says we need to be thinking are we go to allow signs in certain areas, how high [type] etc. Jerry Jones from IMCAL will send us some information to review to give us some guidelines or thoughts to consider.

3. Discuss Animal Control – looking at implementing Calcasieu Parish language/rules –

The language/ordinance you are reviewing is from Town of Vinton and their best practice was to adopt the parish language. Mayor and Mr. Bouquet reviewed some of the language in certain sections. The Parish is wanting uniformity especially in dealing with vicious/dangerous animals. Mayor says will place on agenda for next meeting. Town will retain Section IV regarding the Bird Sanctuary.

There being no further discussion Talbot motioned to adjourn at 8:04 p.m.; Hardy seconded. Motion carried.

ATTEST:

Sandra Turley, CMC

Carol Ponthieux, Mayor