

RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS

Held on

April 23rd, 2024



Village of West Jefferson Council

Special Meeting Minutes April 23rd, 2024

Meeting Called to Order at 6:30 P.M. by President Jen Warner.

Roll Call: Council Members Erica Bogner, Samantha Cahill, Linda Hall, Jimmy Litte, Jeff Patterson, Howard Wade and Jen Warner.

Also attending: Assistant Law Director, Josh Beasley and Clerk of Council, Tisha Edwards.

Motion to Adopt the Minutes from the January 9th, 2023 Special Meeting of Council motion by Erica Bogner and seconded by Samantha Cahill.

New Business:

President Jen Warner welcomed the audience and stated that the meeting was simply to discuss a few projects that will be coming up. For one item that Council would be discussing, the Project would be referred to as Project D, due to the company not wanting to disclose their identity. Another item that would be discussed was water and sewer being annexed into projects. President Warner spoke with an attorney at Bricker Graydon and the lawyer stated that the Village does not necessarily have to give water to a project that is not being annexed into the Village. This is allowed to be decided by Council and then the Public Service Director has the ability to be able to make the decision if the Village can provide the surplus.

President Warner asked Council how they felt about deciding not to zone or annex projects until Council has been presented with a plan by the Developer. This is also by recommendation of our lawyers. She stated that there is no sense annexing in and then later finding out that this is not what Council wants. Council agreed that this is a better plan. President Warner stated that Planning & Zoning approved the Metro Apartment rezoning from County Zoning to a planned mixed-use District (PMU). The Preliminary and Final plan will be contingent upon annexation approval by Council. Council member Erica Bogner addressed President Warner that she thought that Zoning would be contingent based upon Council's approval of the site plan and just wanted clarification since she is new to Council. President Warner stated that it would be the zoning and the site plan they would be voting on, and both were contingent upon annexation. The President stated that it will be helpful to simply know what it is going in the site before a decision is made to annex or zone and there is a range of things that could be going in and she hopes that this will change that. Council member Howard Wade asked if Council would then know the plan before an annexation was ever completed. President Warner stated yes, that is the plan if Council states that is how they would like the flow to happen.

Project D met with Council members two members at a time this past week to discuss their project. This was not done as an open meeting since Council did

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not meet as a whole. President Warner asked if there were any thoughts or questions. Council stated they did not have any at this time.

President Warner spoke to Council and stated that she wanted to discuss how Council seen West Jefferson growing or how they would like to see it grow. She thought it would be great to discuss ideas of what all of Council sees with the Villages growth. Does Council want slow growth or how do they see things in the future. Council member Samantha Cahill commented and stated that what she is hearing is single family homes. She knows that people say affordable homes, but what is affordable right now is not anything that first time homebuyers can afford. Affordable is ranging from \$300,000-400,000. We are seeing it in Plain City and other municipalities around us and the homes are selling like hotcakes. The signs say starting at \$250,000 but most are selling at \$400,000 some even to \$600,000. She would like to see single family homes come to the Village with the intent being that those who are in the currently smaller homes would move up into the newer, larger homes and then open up those smaller homes to first time home buyers or single mothers that are looking for homes. Council member Linda Hall stated that she agrees with what Council member Cahill stated. Council member Jeff Patterson stated that this is what he would like to see too and that the homes will bring other items that the Village wants such as grocery stores. Once we get the homes then the other businesses will have interest in coming into the Village. President Warner stated that she knows everyone wants a grocery store and the Village has tried, but we currently live too close to other grocers and do not have enough residents to bring them in right now. She knows that Kroger is building a store now that is the first one in quite a few years and that is in Jerome Township where the money and houses are. President Warner asked Council if there were a particular type of stores, they could see bringing in. Council member Samantha Cahill spoke up and stated to the audience that the misconception to many is that the Council doesn't want any growth or if we do it is apartments and that is not the case. Builders aren't coming into our Community right now wanting to build single family homes. She herself has two children and she would love to have them move back to West Jefferson but one is in Grove City and one is in Lancaster because there is nothing here for them to buy. If a home does come up for sale it is in contract in two or three days or shorter at this point. It is not that Council does not want homes or turning them down, it's that builders are not bringing them to us. Council member Erica Bogner wanted to state that she agreed with Council member Cahill and wanted to reiterate that Council is hearing from the residents, single family homes. She also agrees that the builders haven't come. The question that she is wondering about currently, is she willing to turn down apartments to hold out hope that we will get a builder that will bring something that the Village wants, not what they want. She knows that the Council currently has a reputation for saying no to everything, but if it's not the right fit once it's built, that's forever. You can't undo that decision. It is smart to plan ahead 10 years and question are those apartments going to be upkeep. She stated she has seen a lot of poorly maintained apartments. With single family homes people are invested in that, maybe not everyone as much as we would hope due to money constraints or there are a lot of retired people in the Village who are on fixed incomes. They would love to get their roofs done but can't afford too. She thinks that a slower growth is needed so that it can be bottlenecked a little until the Village can figure out how to grow with it. Council member Howard Wade stated that he has been around West Jefferson for 40+ years and something that he doesn't see the builders doing anymore is sweat equity or something for the young homebuyers to cut the cost down. He doesn't know if there are any potential people out there that would push those type of builders over to the Village to speak to Council. In lieu of a downpayment, they used to have those type of options available. President Warner stated that she believes

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it is market right now that is driving that. Houses are prices so highly now. She stated she grew up in West Jefferson in the Merriman addition and she thinks her mom paid \$900 for her home and now they are going for over \$200,000 now. She doesn't believe that there is something now for the " young, new homeowner." Costs are so high, and the demand is making the homes go so quickly. She agrees with Council member Erica Bogner that we need to stick with what we want, how we want to grow and what we want to be like in the future. I think the fact that we now are going to try to see the developers' ideas first before annexing or zoning will give more say and more ability, with less issues. Council member Jimmy Little stated that he agrees with the single-family homes, but we have had some discussions that have other items attached to it. He asked if Council has seen anyone coming in with single family homes and what is the likely hood of that right now. President Warner stated that she has seen a couple of builders that have come in and want to build, it's just a matter of where to build. Council member Little stated that we need to look at how culturally we are changing, and he thinks we still need to have some apartments. The apartments that have been discussed on 142 for instance. If you look at how they are addressing items such as accessibility and they are bringing landscaping, ponds and setbacks that have been requested. If you look at our community now, if you are coming in from Columbus you see a used car lot, with U-Haul's, barns and people living in travel trailers. If you come in from the West, you have two trailer parks on both sides and a 1950's style motor lodge that has been turned into apartments. You then go down the street a little farther and you have a resident who has an old gas station that from his understanding has not been held accountable about cleaning up his property. You approach from the South, just as of today and you see an apartment that was permitted in that the backs are facing the main road, the dumpster is out of its place with couches and mattresses all over the place across from the high school. You approach from the North, and you have a dumpster company or if you come from Taylor Blair, you have an auto body shop with cars in disrepair with no fencing around it. He stated he gets kind of confused when Council begins talking about how they don't like this or this, but then these developers are coming with nice landscaping that we can dictate what we want. Look at what we currently have and what can you say about the Villages current state. When you talk about the future, he agrees with houses, but developers aren't just coming with homes nowadays they are wanting to bring other things to keep their profit margins up and you can't blame them for that. If we sit and stay just staunch on just houses, will we ever get those builders and how long will we sit and wait? We still have people who want grocery stores and that won't happen without people. To say that there is a grocery store right down the road is not a very good excuse because he has heard in the past that a Walmart can support a 2 sq mile area and we are 6 miles from the nearest Kroger. If there is enough density that will happen. It is going to take a combination of both homes and apartments to reach that density and with the apartments you are going to get the younger generation that would rather live in an apartment than own a home, you hear that on the tv and radio now all the time that they don't want to care for a home. He was coming back from his sons today and now the newest apartments we have are so close to the road you can't even put nice landscaping in, you would have to put up a wall. He just wonders how this happened. He just wants to be honest about his thoughts and President Warner stated that is what she wanted this meeting to be about. Council member Linda Hall asked Council member Jimmy Little did he know how many apartments are in the Village. He asked are you are counting the ones that have been put in the middle of houses that shouldn't have been put there or what are you counting. Council member Hall stated just apartments. She believes there are 6 or seven in the Village. The Clerk of Council commented in reply to the number of apartments that we have 6 that are considered

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apartment complexes and that the last one was built in 1997 other than Redwood which is currently being built. She was asked to research this during the last Presidents term. The Clerk also stated that all 6 of the apartments are currently full. All of the existing apartments are currently age restricted or income restricted other than Redwood or West Chester. Council member Erica Bogner stated that couldn't be correct that Chapel Square is where she and Vice President Hall lived or live and there were not restrictions. Chapel Square is actually considered and noted on the Auditors website as a condo and not an apartment so those were not added in the research. Council member Jimmy Little stated that the offers that are coming in now are offering modern facias and look nice. We have a lot of dismals, non-updated buildings in our area. Vice President Hall stated that we should be able to have those places cleaned up and Council member Little stated that no one is getting that done. Vice President Hall stated that she agreed that we need investments in West Jeff and not an apartment in West Jeff. Council member Little stated that he doesn't like it either but today's younger generation like apartment living and that is what they are looking for. He also asked Council how we are going to draw younger families in town to our schools because our school system is having issues with not having enough kids. We can't be waiting and hold out forever because our school system is having issues and had to do open enrollment in order to get more kids in. Where are young people living? The older people aren't moving out because they like it here but if we choose to do houses only, are we going to start campaigning for house builders to come here? Council member Erica Bogner asked President Warner if West Jefferson has ever considered buying farmland when they want to sell. President Warner stated not since she has been here, and she does not think that the Village would use taxpayer money to buy up land for development. That is crossing a line. We look after resident's tax dollars. What if we were to buy land and then couldn't develop it and then we are wasting those taxpayer dollars. Council member Bogner stated that she continues to hear residents say, why are these the projects and she tries to remind people that West Jeff cannot control who is buying the land. The Village doesn't pick the people to buy and bring the proposals. Council member Samantha Cahill stated that farmers are not selling to residents or just anyone, they are selling to developers for millions of dollars. At this time one of the residents began speaking and this was not a Public hearing or meeting that residents were open to speaking at, so the Clerk of Council had to ask the President to refrain from having the public speak. All of these items in discussion would be brought up at a Regular meeting of Council and the public could speak there or at a public hearing. Council member Erica Bogner wanted to refer back to a comment that Council member Little had made about some areas of West Jeff not being maintained well. She asked if we have someone in the Village who is responsible for seeing what is in violation. Multiple Council members stated that Kristie West is our Building and Zoning Code Enforcement Official. If something is brought to her attention or a complaint is made, she will go out to enforce the matter. Council member Little stated that the point he was trying to make is the developers are willing to up their game and come in and do upgrades and landscapes that we currently don't even have. President Warner thanked everyone who attended and thanked Council and stated this is something we can start building on. She stated that she believes that changing the way they do the process such as not annexing or zoning until they have seen the developers plan will be helpful in the future. It was not on the original agenda but was added that morning that Council would be entering into Executive Session due to Sunshine law item # 3 pending or imminent court action. Assistant Law Director asked President Warner if he may add a second reasoning to go into Executive session in order for him to discuss an item that would be handled in Executive Session as well. This item would fall under

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Sunshine Law rule #1 to consider the appointment or compensation of a public official.

President Jen Warner asked for a motion to enter into Executive Session for the reasons of Pending and imminent court action and also for considering the appointment or compensation of a public official. Motioned by Samantha Cahill and seconded by Linda Hall.

All in Favor

Motion to exit Executive Session and return to the Special meeting of Council. Motioned by Jeff Patterson and seconded by Linda Hall.

All in favor

Motion to Adjourn at 8:17 P.M.

Motioned by Jeff Patterson and seconded by Erica Bogner.

All in Favor


Tisha Edwards
Clerk of Council


Jen Warner
President of Council