

CITY OF UNION
Economic Development Committee
August 19, 2020 (via Zoom Videoconferencing)

Members in attendance:

Jeremy Ramage, Commissioner

James Collett

Jeff Bowman

John Cole

Steve Harper, BCPC Union Representative

David Plummer, City Administrator

Melissa Hinkle, Communications and Operations Director

Bob Jonas, Boone County Planning Commission

Mayor Larry Solomon

Meeting was called to order at 6:02 p.m. by Commissioner Jeremy Ramage.

Transportation Update: Administrator Plummer advised that the Mt. Zion project is making progress but there are still issues with the water line on the Gunpowder side of the project, and crews are still addressing the landslide on the hill on the Hathaway side of the project. Work has been completed on the new medians near the city building with traffic forced into a right turn in, right turn out onto "old" Mt. Zion Road. The little stop signs along the multi-use path, have been covered and are expected to be lowered to 4 feet in an attempt to discourage drivers on the highway from stopping on Mt. Zion in those locations. This has been a source of many complaints and much confusion among residents.

Boone County Planning Update: Mr. Jonas updated on the Urban Forestry Commission Request for Proposals (RFP) regarding the beautification of the Mt. Zion corridor. MKSK has finalized their proposal and it was formally adopted by the Urban Forestry Commission. Administrator Plummer will share the proposal with the group and shared a screen shot of the proposal during the meeting. Mr. Jonas noted that the design has a lot of flexibility in the types of plantings and locations that can be used along the corridor, and there is more of an organic look and pattern to the designs. He suggested the city coordinate with Kris Stone from the Boone County Arboretum to review the planting listings to narrow the suggestions down to a few types to utilize in the corridor area. Mr. Stone has a great deal of expertise and knowledge of the area and what types of plants will be most successful, yet be lower maintenance and upkeep and still provide a cohesive and well-designed look. Administrator Plummer will touch base with Mr. Stone to set up a meeting when the proposal has been reviewed by the commission and areas to attack first are identified.

New Business: Administrator Plummer presented a PowerPoint on a proposed bench/trashcan proposal for the City of Union. He presented a bench and trash can option to the group, which was discussed. The decision to include benches both with and without backs and armrests was recommended, to accommodate those who like backless, armless options to use with strollers and with dogs for accessibility. Trash cans with a lid or covering top were also recommended, as water entering the can makes trash removal difficult and labor-intensive, and lids also prevent blowing trash and animal intrusions as well. Plummer presented a proposal for pricing of bench and trash can adoption, along with the recommendation of a five-year sponsorship plan. The group liked the pricing structure, but also wants to consider a longer-term plan possibly. The group noted that there was likely to be little interest in sponsoring the trash cans from corporate or private sponsors, and perhaps the city should consider financing those cans as a service to the citizens and in the interest of keeping the corridors neat and clean. Commissioner Ramage noted that the city could have as many as 26 benches along Mt. Zion and US42, if benches were placed every ¼ mile. The group recommended looking at a smaller number as an initial start for the program, and expand if there was interest. Plummer also noted that sponsoring trees could be included in this program, and given the cost of the landscaping designs proposed by MKSK, could be well received to help offset costs. Plummer and Hinkle both noted that several cities had run very successful tree adoption programs that generated many tree plantings in other municipalities. The tree options seem to appeal more to private individuals who are often looking to memorialize a loved one, as they have a longer life span and seem to be more of a fitting life tribute for many. The group was very enthusiastic about this idea, and recommended working with MKSK and Mr. Jonas and Mr. Stone to identify areas where this program would be best utilized. Most of the group felt this would be very well received by citizens and could generate immediate impact for the city.

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Director Hinkle presented a PowerPoint on the HonorBanner Program. Commissioner Ramage had presented at an earlier meeting, the idea of hanging banners on the light poles on US42 and Mt. Zion to honor those in service or veterans. Director Hinkle noticed banners doing this in Erlanger, and located the HonorBanner organization, a 503C charity located in northern Kentucky, who provides this service to cities at no cost. This charity designs, prints and solicits all of the funding sources for the banners, based on criteria that the group and the city agree to in contract. The organization provides the banners and the brackets to hang the banners to the city for no cost, and the only expense to the city is to hang the banners. This idea was very popular with the group, and Director Hinkle will get with the HonorBanner president and the city attorney to finalize an agreement and present that agreement to the EDC and to the commission for approval. Pending the transfer of the Mt. Zion assets (right of way and light poles), it

is hoped this program can be operational and the first banners hung on Veteran's Day of 2021.

Administrator Plummer provided an update on the Small Business Grant program, which will be funded by CARES Act funding. This program has six applications, with requests varying from a few hundred dollars to the maximum request of \$5,000. The city will have access to \$426,000, so the group discussed the potential of having another round of grants to help small businesses. Mr. Cole also asked if the funding could be used to provide wireless access for local students or help fund other expenses at the local schools due to COVID. Administrator Plummer thought that this funding could not be used for those expenses due to the restrictions set by the federal government, but he would review the grant and state documents which addressed the funding distribution to see if other uses could be identified, so the City can keep as much of the available funding in the city and used to help the local economy.

Commissioner Ramage noted that Buffalo Rings and Wings had a successful soft opening last weekend, and they held a nice ribbon cutting ceremony on August 17.

Mayor Solomon updated that Casey Ward from Midland Retail has informed the city that the old SugarFire location will be leased to a new tenant who is putting in an upscale restaurant and bar in that location. The old Kroger liquor store has been leased to a Deli, which will also take the space of the old Domino's Pizza storefront as well. A beauty salon will round out that section of the out lot at the old Kroger, which will bring that area again to full rental, with only Flipdaddy's still vacant. All of the remaining out lots at the new Kroger have been rented and are occupied.

Wednesday, September 16 at 6 p.m. was set for the next meeting date. The location (either virtual or face-to-face) is to be determined. The public is invited to attend.

The Meeting was formally adjourned at 7:21 pm by Commissioner Ramage.