

FARMINGTON CITY COUNCIL
SPECIAL MEETING

A special meeting of the Farmington City Council was held on Monday, November 20, 2006, in Council Chambers, 23600 Liberty Street, Farmington, Michigan. Notice of the meeting was posted in compliance with Public Act 267-1976.

The meeting was called to order at 7:06 p.m. by Mayor McShane.

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT: Buck, Knol, McShane, Sutherland, Wiggins.

COUNCIL MEMBERS ABSENT: None.

CITY ADMINISTRATION: City Clerk Halberstadt, City Manager Pastue.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

11-06-203 MOTION by Sutherland, seconded by Wiggins, to approve the Agenda.
MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

PRESENTATION – RECONNAISSANCE LEVEL ARCHITECTURAL & HISTORIC SURVEY – KRISTINE M. KIDORF

Ms. Kidorf explained that a Reconnaissance Level Survey is the lowest level survey that narrows down some of the potential historic resources. She advised that final decisions are not usually made at this survey level and pointed out that the Downtown Development Authority defined the survey area. She noted forty properties that were photographed and researched in the Downtown. She advised the data was analyzed and properties were identified that needed more study and what buildings could be eliminated. She stated survey forms were prepared on each building with research information and photographs with their recommendations.

Ms. Kidorf stated the history of Farmington is well documented and her job was to take the history and look into resources that are available and put that into context and then find how the buildings fit into Farmington's history.

Ms. Kidorf noted there were several time periods involved in the survey. She stated the first time period was Farmington's founding in 1824 extending to the 1870's. She advised the Crazy Corner Barber and the building next to it were included in this period. She stated the second time period was 1873 through World War II when Farmington was primarily a farming community. She noted there are a number of buildings left from that time period including: the Masonic Hall, the Cook Building and two banks in the downtown. The third period is from the 1820's through World War II that included: the former Farmington Savings Bank, the United Methodist Church, the Warner Dairy Store and Memorial Park.

Ms. Kidorf noted after World War II through the 1950's Farmington had tremendous suburban growth. She stated the DDA was established in the 1960's and there was a significant amount of remodeling done from the 1960's to the present.

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Ms. Kidorf thought transportation would be a theme, but there was not information indicating that it was significant. She stated there were two historic themes established which included suburbanization in Oakland County and commerce. She noted the wide variety of styles of architecture in the City and the Art Deco style of the Civic Theatre. She stated mills were demolished and businesses were established from Shiawassee down Farmington Road to where Grand River Avenue is now. She noted businesses that were located in the City in the 1870's, the 1890's, 1910, 1920's, and the 1930's. She pointed out that Farmington survived the Depression because of its agricultural base. She noted there was significant change in the 1970's with the suburbanization of the surrounding township and the City of Farmington.

Ms. Kidorf noted there were a couple of challenges with the survey including integrity issues concerning alterations made to the corner building. She further noted the former State Bank also had some integrity issues due to alterations to the building and indicated more study needs to be done to see if the integrity issues outweigh the history.

Ms. Kidorf advised the City of Farmington is listed in the National Registry and State Register of Historic Sites. She further advised there are many issues with the National Register nomination that was comprised of two pages, noting now a district nomination the size of Farmington would be sixty pages and would not include contributing and non-contributing buildings. She also noted that the National Registry reflected incorrect time periods for buildings and not enough information was provided from the National Registry to include in the survey project.

Ms. Kidorf stated the former DUR Power Station for the Detroit United Railway and surrounding residential are significant resource areas outside the survey area and the downtown. She advised the DDA wanted to look at the downtown buildings, but there were some residential buildings that were included due to zoning changes. She stated they don't relate to the commerce area of the downtown and would relate back to the surrounding residential neighborhoods requiring further review.

Ms. Kidorf handed out a map identifying: the National/State District, Local Historic District, Survey Area Boundary, DDA Boundary, buildings likely to be non-contributing, and the Intensive Level Survey needed to update the National Register Nomination. She noted the National Register Nomination needs to be redone with an intensive survey.

Mayor McShane asked for a clarification of the actual houses that were included in the survey. Ms. Kidorf responded a few houses on Thomas and Warner Streets and a house on Oakland Avenue. McShane inquired if there were records from the Historical Commission that needed to be reviewed. Ms. Kidorf responded more records could be researched, but there was a time factor involved. She replied to a question from McShane that an intensive level survey would take from 60-80 hours and that more concrete designations can be made from an intensive survey.

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Council member Buck asked for clarification of the National Historic District Designation. Ms. Kidorf replied this district is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and is primarily an honorific designation.

City Manager Pastue stated any redevelopment would not include buildings of historic significance.

McShane asked about resubmitting an application to the National Registry. Ms. Kidorf replied a whole new nomination would have to be submitted to replace the existing nomination. She stated areas that have had an intensive survey completed are the Detroit Economic Growth Core, private developers who want tax credits, and volunteer groups, but it is rarely city-initiated.

Mayor McShane asked if there were comments from the audience.

Mary Sue Munter, 33309 Oakland wanted to make sure the home next to Heeney-Sundquist Funeral home was in the Historic District.

David Cornwell, 33104 Grand River, expressed concern about dates on the National Registry. Ms. Kidorf stated there was no justification for previous dates before the arrival of John Power in Farmington. She indicated a request was made to the State for a copy of the National Registry and she will share it with Council if she receives it in the future.

Doug Peterson, 33209 Oakland, asked if there were any opinions on the houses in the Historic District. Ms. Kidorf stated the house on Thomas Street has made a lot of changes and it will have to be determined which houses are contributing and non-contributing.

Laura Meyers, 33601 Shiawassee, asked what would be gained by doing an intensive survey with the National Registry since it would still remain honorific. Ms. Kidorf replied the benefit would be potential tax credits. Ms. Meyers noted there was a problem with the dates from 1600 to 1824.

Buck responded that he felt there should be caution in using a tax credit for motivation to expand the district. He felt the motivation should be the historic character of the City. Buck asked Mr. Cornwell if the 20% tax credit was motivation to make improvements to his building. Mr. Cornwell replied it could be, but needed specifics on eligibility requirements.

Mayor McShane stated if an intensive survey was done it could result in a tax benefit that might encourage business improvements, provide clarification on Historic Buildings and aid in providing a clearer identity for the City.

Buck stated he did not want to focus solely on the tax credit and lose character as the primary motivation. McShane stated the tax credit and character are both important.

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Knol noted the boundaries need to be cleaned up and noted the areas that are not included in the boundaries.

McShane stated it is important to designate which buildings are contributing and non-contributing.

Discussion followed regarding historic homes included in the DDA survey. DDA Director Knowles stated those particular homes are currently residential use, but are zoned for parking purposes. Discussion continued regarding parking in the DDA Historic District.

Ms. Kidorf recommended that the City investigate the tax credits that could be achieved.

FEEDBACK AND IDEAS FOR ICSC – ANNETTE KNOWLES

Annette Knowles, DDA Director, stated that they are involved with International Council of Shopping Centers (ICSC), a networking organization comprised of real estate developers, property owners, and national retail chains.

Director Knowles discussed two conferences recently attended by DDA Board members. She stated they attended the Chicago Deal Making Conference as a fact finding mission to determine if future participation would be beneficial. She stated the ICSC is primarily used and communities go with the aim of discussing and solidifying development in their downtowns. She stated the conference is for marketing actual or proposed profits and properties that are available. She noted they were told not to attend the conference if your primary purpose was to promote your community.

Director Knowles stated research is done in advance of the conferences in order to meet with certain people to discuss your community. She stated developers are looking for a certain rate of return in an investment in a downtown and noted many hurdles. She stated they would rather look at Greenfield property. She noted there must be enough people to staff a booth at these conferences. She noted a suggestion was made that there be a tour of the downtown with local commercial real estate agents who are interested in the area.

Councilmember Knol asked if the DDA was interested in holding a tour of the downtown area to bring in developers or brokers. Ms. Knowles responded it would be part of the responsibility of the Main Street Committee and would consider adding it to the budget.

Councilmember Knol asked Director Knowles how the property owners would be involved. Director Knowles stated they are putting available properties on line and notices would be sent out. Knol stated that during the tour property owners could assist in describing their building and areas where changes could be made.

McShane asked if volunteers were still needed for the Economic Development Committee. Director Knowles responded that volunteers who are proactive are needed.

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Councilmember Sutherland noted there needs to be preparation in order to attend these conferences and be clear about the incentives the City has to offer. Director Knowles replied there is no roll call of incentives at this time, but some Downtown Development Authorities have grant programs or tax incentive financing.

Buck felt it was great to have representatives at these conferences.

McShane thanked Director Knowles for her presentation.

OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Dave Cornwell, Farmington business owner, stated as a member of the National Association of Broker Real Estate Executives he contacted members to obtain feedback and they advised that Michigan was not on their radar screen. He noted there was a minimum requirement of 25,000 square ft. in order to develop a building. He noted it is an up hill battle and that there are areas in the downtown that do not meet this square footage criteria.

COUNCIL COMMENT

There were no Council comments.

ADJOURNMENT

11-06-204 MOTION by Buck, seconded by Knol, to adjourn the meeting. MOTION CARRIED, UNANIMOUSLY.

The meeting adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

JoAnne M. McShane, Mayor

Susan K. Halberstadt, City Clerk

APPROVED: DECEMBER 18, 2006

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