

**MINUTES OF A WORKSHOP/SPECIAL MEETING OF THE ZION CITY COUNCIL HELD ON TUESDAY, MARCH 23, 2010, AT 7:01 P.M. IN THE CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS, CITY HALL, ZION, ILLINOIS**



Mayor Harrison called the meeting to order.

On call of the roll the following answered present: Commissioners Jim Taylor, Flammini, DeTienne, Shantal Taylor and Mayor Harrison.

**ZION LIQUOR CONTROL ORDINANCE & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

Mayor Harrison announced that this meeting was for the purpose of allowing public comments pertaining to the Zion Liquor Control Ordinance and economic development, and specifically how it relates to a development at Route 173 and Green Bay Road. The Zion Crossings development is currently in foreclosure.

Delaine Rogers stated Zion Crossings is a stalled development, one that has had problems for several years before the economy issues. Unemployment is at a record 14.9% in Illinois. Bear Realty is marketing this corner, which is one of the first things you see coming into Zion. The real estate company, as well as national franchise companies, has indicated gas stations have low profit margins. A national franchise had shown interest in Zion Crossings, but noted competition with the service station across the street outside of the City of Zion, which is able to provide its customers with alcohol. Ms. Rogers stated several companies have shown interest in locating at Route 173 and Green Bay Road, but have been partly turned off by the long-term condition of Zion Crossings. Among these companies are Firestone Tires, Gooseberries, Quiznos, Menards, Tractor Supply, Payless, Roundys, Trader Joes, Famous Footwear, Sendik, Mobil, Rosati Pizza, Dr. Damko, among others. Ms. Rogers stated this intersection is trying to gain momentum, in order to attract other businesses. Ms. Rogers noted other current businesses have requested selling alcohol, including Aldis, Walgreens and CVS, and have been turned down. Walgreens and CVS have located additional stores just outside of Zion City limits, and can sell alcohol at those locations.

Mayor Harrison stated the first Zion liquor license was granted to Applebees Restaurant, which has been a successful family restaurant without problems. National model stores move depending on marketing and revenue, noting the Village of Beach Park has allowed liquor for CVS and Walgreens.

Patrick Walsh advised the city to stick to its standards, noting Walgreens and other stores should have understood that they couldn't sell alcohol when they moved to Zion. Mr. Walsh noted concerns if other developments come into the city, and then are allowed to sell alcohol. Mr. Walsh also stated there is not enough communication from officials on what is going on in the city.

Liane Blanck stated the Coalition for Healthy Communities encourages upholding the ordinances pertaining to the prevention of underage drinking. Ms. Blanck noted the Coalition is directly involved with compliance checks and keeping alcohol out of the hands of the youth and will continue to do so. Sufficient safeguards must be in place, limiting minors' access to alcohol.

Nick Tanglis, Gas Depot Oil Company, stated his company is a distributor of petroleum products, which has considered locating at Route 173 and Green Bay Road. Surrounding communities sell alcohol, and customers want the convenience of one-stop shopping. Mr. Tanglis stated beer and wine are essential components of convenience stores, noting all industries are seeking to compete and survive in this economy.

Steve Mills, Bear Realty and Southport Bank board member, stated Southport Bank is holding this property as a foreclosure. There have been 18 showings on this site, and interested buyers want full service convenience stores. A national franchise, Mobil, turned down the offer to partner with the bank, due to its inability to obtain a liquor license. A total of \$105,054 was paid in property taxes this past year without getting any revenue to offset this expense. An operating convenience store is needed to spur the businesses in the plaza behind it.

Rev. Ken Fielding stated Zion's uniqueness is its strength. When alcohol was allowed to be sold in grocery stores, shoplifting increased. Rev. Fielding stated concerns regarding convenience stores and greater opportunities for crime and problems with youth.

Vidal Anguiano, ZBTHS student, stated concerns regarding the potential for more vice and crime, as well as more opportunities for youth obtaining alcohol.

Eric Walters stated Southport Bank is currently paying property tax, so the City isn't losing tax revenue on this property. Consumer spending is off because of the economy and not because they don't have alcohol sales. Mr. Walters noted other gas stations, which don't sell alcohol, haven't gone out of business.

Mr. Mills stated commercial property is valued based on revenue and what similar properties are sold for. If a commercial property remains vacant, the property and therefore the taxes are based on salvage value. Mayor Harrison stated a commercial business can go before the county tax appeal board requesting a lower rate and lower property taxes.

Cindy Gordon stated concerns regarding drunk drivers and alcohol abuse by children.

Mayor Harrison stated the City Council requested this citizen input in order to gain a better understanding of the issue and to gather public perception. Communication pertaining to Council action takes place in various forms, including newspaper reports, television broadcasts and public meetings. There needs to be better ways to market Zion. Zion's uniqueness is its people, and therein lies our strength. The Council has difficult decisions to make, which are even more difficult given the overall economic condition.

Delaine Rogers stated she believes there are three options for the Zion Crossings project:

1. De-annex this development to the Village of Wadsworth, wherein Wadsworth will allow the sale of alcohol and all property taxes and sales tax will go to Wadsworth, or
2. Since all recent inquiries for purchasing this property have requested alcohol sales, continue at this time to keep this development vacant with no sales tax and probable lower property taxes, or
3. Allow for the limited, controlled sale of alcohol, in order to jump-start the project and this intersection.

Mayor Harrison thanked everyone for their comments, noting all issues will be considered in making decisions.

**ADJOURN**

There being no further business to come before the Council at this time, it was moved by Commissioner DeTienne, seconded by Commissioner Shantal Taylor and unanimously approved the meeting be adjourned at 8:19 p.m. Motion carried.

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City Clerk