

May 22, 2017

Special Meeting

Mayor McNinch called a special meeting of the Denton Town Council to order at 6:00 PM on this date, leading everyone in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

Mayor McNinch asked that the record reflect Councilman Porter would not be present due to a family matter. All the other Council members were presented.

Public Hearing

Resolution #843 - CDBG Grant Application FY2018

Mayor McNinch opened a public hearing at 6:01 PM to receive public comments on Resolution #843 - A Resolution of the Town of Denton approving the application and receipt of financing for a Maryland Community Development Block Grant to be funded by the Department of Housing and Community Development of the State of Maryland. The Town is considering to submit a grant application for up to \$800K to receive funding for the Town to acquire the Southern State Property.

Mayor McNinch asked for comments from the State: there were none

Mayor McNinch asked for comments from the County: there were none

Mayor McNinch asked for comments from the Council: there were none

Mayor McNinch asked for comments from the Public:

Mr. Bill Jesmer asked for more information.

Mayor McNinch read the Notice of Public Hearing aloud and provided a synopsis.

Councilman Lister provided additional information, stating that the Willow's Project that came before the Council was recently turned down for Federal Funding. The building has been condemned due to the condition, and it is a safety concern for the community. The Town put off dealing with this sooner because there was a private developer that was interested, and the proposed project would have removed the blighted building. However, since the Federal Funding was turned down, now the Town has to deal with it. At this time, the Town has an opportunity to apply for Community Development Block Grant Funding to pay to acquire the property and for Strategic Demolition Funds to remove the condemned buildings. If awarded, this will all be paid for with grant funding.

Mr. Jesmer asked who the owner of the property is?

Mr. Donald Mulrine, Town Administrator, provided the owners name.

Mr. Jesmer questioned utilizing tax payer funds to demolish a building that the owner should be held accountable for taking care of, and asked what has the Town done to require the property owner to take care of the safety concerns.

Councilman Lister responded that the Town has followed the regular process for blighted properties, periodically the Town has to step in because of the safety concerns. The Town is applying for grant funds and will look to recover any cost when the property is sold.

Mr. Jesmer questioned if there will be a lien placed on the property.

Councilman Lister said with the Grant Funds, the Town will own the property and may reimburse the grant when the property is sold, if required.

The Mayor asked for Mr. Jesmer to come up to the podium and state his name an address for the record, before continuing.

Mrs. Mary Fowler, of 508 Market Street, asked if this was an abandoned building, how did the owner acquire it?

Mr. Mulrine shared that the current owner purchased it with another developer, and the projects they were working on, did not move forward.

Mrs. Fowler asked Mr. Mulrine if he was personally involved with them as a silent partner in any way, shape, or form?

Mr. Mulrine responded, the answer is no.

Mayor McNinch asked Mrs. Fowler if she was just asking this of Mr. Mulrine, or the Council in general. And explained that the Town is looking at this as a blighted property, that the Town does not see anyone being able to do anything with the property, and it is a hazard, a safety issue and there is an opportunity to get grant funding to resolve.

Mrs. Fowler agreed that it is an eyesore, and that sometimes people acquire property without other people knowing who is involved.

Mrs. Fowler asked who is benefiting from the property, how did the property owner find out about it, if it was abandoned for 20 years.

Councilman Johnson said that she could check on the Maryland Real Property records to find out more information on when the owner bought the property.

Councilman Lister stated there have been several owners since it was a Southern States, with multiple developers, that have been unsuccessful, and for various, different reasons that they have not been able to move forward with their plans.

Mrs. Fowler asked how the Town was going to benefit?

Mayor McNinch stated, the Town will get rid of a blighted property, that the Town would like to see developed. The Town has a developer that is interested and this may help the developer obtain federal assistance for a project of this nature, for a senior or affordable housing project. If the Town can remove the blight, then the project can move forward. The alternative is to sit around and wait, but that will not help resolve the issue. The Town has the opportunity, to seek grant funding that can help get rid of the blight so the land can eventually be developed. The purpose for the special meeting is because the Town just found out about this opportunity and the applications need to be submitted before the end of May to be considered.

Mrs. Fowler asked if this is exclusively for 55+ or low income; and if low income how will it benefit the Town?

Mayor McNinch stated that the project meets the CDBG requirements, and it has to meet the criteria, of benefiting low and moderate income persons; aids in the prevention or elimination of slums or blight, and this is what satisfies the grant the Town is applying for. What happens next, or who buys it from the Town, will be decided later. The objective of the Town is to get rid of the slum and blight.

Mrs. Fowler said she understood, but wanted to know if this is exclusively for low income.

Councilman Lister stated that it is too early to determine that; there is no sale set up, no definite project in place. At this point, what is available in front of the Council is the opportunity to get State monies to deal with eliminating the slum and blight and remove the threat to the community health and welfare. The guy that previously submitted an application for federal funding is still interested. The Town will try to work with him, but nothing is locked in. The developer interested will still need grant funding for his project, and may or may not get awarded. At this point the Town needs to take a responsible course

of action and deal with the emergency needs and safety of the people to get the issues resolved.

Mrs. Fowler questioned the Town applying for a grant for the owner?

Mayor McNinch stated that the Town is applying for a grant to purchase the property and remove the blight.

Councilman Lister clarified, that funding is being requested for the acquisition of the property, and, also for the removal of the hazards. Once funding is awarded, the Town will reach out for a contractor to clear the land and remove any hazards.

Mrs. Fowler questioned, if this is only to purchase the property and remove the building, what is the Town going to do with the property?

Mayor McNinch said that the Town plans to remove the hazards and then sell the property.

Councilman Lister added, that the Town's goal is to resolve the issues on the land, and get rid of the land.

Mrs. Fowler questioned when the Town owns something, who is the Town.

Councilman Johnson responded, the Town of Denton, and that this is for the community.

Mr. Bill Jesmer commented on the amount for demolition, and inquired about having the fire department do a control burn.

Councilman Lister, having been a former fire chief, explained that it is not a building that can be burned. It is mostly concrete construction. They have looked at this previously for training, but the roof is unsafe and does not meet regulations.

Mayor McNinch shared a conversation she had with the CDBG representative on her concerns and questions she previously had, and it was strongly recommended the Town apply for the grant.

Mr. Jesmer asked, does this also include the other outside buildings?

Mr. Mulrine confirmed that the grant funds cover the removal of everything on the entire site.

Mr. Jesmer questioned how much the property will be purchased for.

Mr. Mulrine shared that the Town will negotiate a price, if the grant funds are awarded.

Mr. Jesmer shared his view on making it a park.

Councilman Lister explained, part of the CDBG program is that the Town will work to sell the property. If sold within 5 years, the Town will pay back the grant funds, so that another agency can utilize the funds for another project in some other community. If the property is not sold, then after 5 years the grant may be waived, and the Town can do what it wants with the property, without the obligation to repay the grant. The Town does not want to own the property any longer than to get the demolition completed; and keep the property on the tax roll.

Mayor McNinch talked about the Sharp Road Park Project and the Town's efforts in working with different youth organizations to finalize the build out.

Mr. Jesmer mentioned he noticed the new website is up and questions having projects on the website so that everyone can see what is going on.

The Mayor said absolutely, and as the website evolves, the public will see more stuff available on the website.

Councilman Lister mentioned that the Town does not have an IT Department, and staff will work on adding more to the web, as time permits.

Mr. Jesmer said that he understood and provided some suggestions for some additional contents on the new site.

Mayor McNinch thanked Mr. Jesmer for his feedback and stated that they needed to get back to the CDBG hearing item.

Mrs. Fowler mentioned that she does not have a problem with the grant, but that she is suspicious what the Town will do with the land. She stated that when she was clearing her land, someone with the Town approached her and said that her land would become the new park, and she does not want that to happen.

Mayor McNinch thanked her for her comments.

With no further comments, Mayor McNinch closed this public hearing on Resolution #843 at 6:24 PM.

Introduction and adoption of Resolutions and Ordinances

Resolution #843- CDBG Grant Application – FY2018

A Resolution of the Town of Denton approving the application and receipt of financing for a Maryland Community Development Block Grant to be funded by the Department of Housing and Community Development of the State of Maryland.

Councilman Lister made a motion to adopt Resolution #843, seconded by Councilman Branson.

In discussion, Mr. Mulrine shared additional information on the Willows Project.

With no further discussion, the Mayor called for a vote on the motion on the floor to adopt the Resolution.

The motion passed unanimously.

Resolution #844 – DHCD Strategic Demo Grant Application

A Resolution of the Town of Denton approving the application and receipt of financing for a Strategic Demolition & Smart Growth Impact Fund Project in Denton, Maryland to be funded either directly by the Department of Housing and Community Development of the State of Maryland or through other departments or agencies of the State of Maryland. This grant application is seeking \$150K for the demolition to remove the buildings.

Councilman Branson made a motion to adopt Resolution #844, seconded by Councilman Lister.

In discussion, Mr. Mulrine provided an overview on what demolition is anticipated and included in the amount being requested.

With no further discussion, the Mayor called for a vote on the motion on the floor to adopt the Resolution.

The motion passed unanimously.

With no further discussion, Mayor McNinch adjourned the meeting at 6:31 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

*Mr. Donald H. Mulrine,
Town Administrator*