The Board of Commissioners met in a WORK SESSION MEETING with Mayor Orndorf presiding. Members present: Hewitt, Sooy, Romanik and McQuade. City Solicitor, Brock Russell was also present.

Salute to the Flag

The Salute to the Flag was led by Mayor Orndorf.

Open Public Meeting Statement by City Clerk

“This meeting is being conducted in accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act of 1975 and was advertised, posted and made available to the public as required by Statute. The Municipal Clerk is directed to include a statement in the minutes of this meeting.”

Additions and Changes to the Agenda

Jeanne Parkinson, City Clerk, reported that Presentation by Steve Durst was added to the agenda and a Resolution authorizing a Closed Session was also added, but was removed today and will be rescheduled to be held on February 15, 2022.

Presentations

Steve Durst addressed the Board of Commissioner and stated that he has a very brief, conceptually vague, but broad concept to present to them this evening.

Mr. Durst advised that Pastor Myers reached out to him and informed him that there were interested citizens of Millville, both from businesses and various church groups that have an interest in revitalizing the city noting that Millville and many towns in comparison to the size of Millville are experiencing tough times and are in need to find new sources of revenue and vitality.

Mr. Durst indicated that retail commercial is toast in the United States and is over. He stated that the commonality in Millville, which is the Walmart and the internet and between those two forces there is 40% and rising every day of retail sales that are being done in that fashion, which is killing Main Street in every town with a population between 30,000 and 100,000 people in the United States.

Mr. Durst stated that he does not believe that simply revitalizing small downtown stores is going to attract visitors and referenced New Hope that people visit at least once a year to see the various attractions it has to offer. He indicated that the City of Millville could be another New Hope, but better, because Millville has a fabulous airport, where activities could be offered such as hot air balloon, bi-plane rides, P-51 rides, among others that could emanate from the use of the airport. Mr. Durst also mentioned the City of Millville's beautiful historic scenic river where activities can be offered such as river cruises, dinner cruises, kayaking, canoeing and tubing along with many others.

Mr. Durst indicated that the City of Millville could attract visitors and families to Millville as he previously mentioned above and build a campground with different levels of camping from roughing it to small cottages or B&B’s and emphasized that Millville is a destination for recreational and sporting events.

Mr. Durst stated if his company is involved that the city will never be called upon to spend a dime and he would finance everything that is approved 100% with the bottom line being that his proposal is synergistic with his company being able to provide solar development services to all of the schools and indicated his company could save the school board $69 million dollars over a 40 year period, which equals to approximately $1.7 million a year.

Pastor Myers addressed the Board of Commissioners and indicated that they will use existing facilities in the City of Millville, such as the racetrack, field of dreams, the Wheaton property, the river and advised that they realize that the foundation of everything for downtown would center around the people they could attract to visit. He further stated that they have considered the demographics of downtown and indicated that they would determine what should be located downtown in the
redevelopment rebuilding process based on who they bring in and taking into consideration that Millville has many sporting facilities, baseball and football fields and they could tap into some of those high school, college sports level traveling teams, etc., which would attract visitors into Millville.

Pastor Myers further stated that as they develop the demographics it would automatically tell them what to do downtown. He stated that they are utilizing the zone affect, which would represent different areas of the city and stated visitors could spend the weekend in Millville and in the evenings, they would be walking in the downtown area.

Pastor Myers stated they have had conversations with the Police Department to make sure that they are on board in the event that this is approved by the governing body, so people can visit feeling safe and know that if they are walking the streets, they will get home that night.

Mayor Orndorf thanked Mr. Durst and Pastor Myers for their presentation this evening and asked if there were any comments by the Commissioners.

Commissioner Hewitt reminded them that the governing body does not make decisions or entertain suggestions for or on behalf of the Millville Board of Education.

Mr. Durst responded that yes, they do realize that but advised Commissioner Hewitt that the governing body also must realize that the same taxpayers who attend the Commission Meetings are suffering like taxpayers all over the United States and they are not interested in that division of responsibilities as the politicians are. The same taxpayers are paying for the civic cost, police and so forth and are also paying for the schools and the bottom line is the schools could use the $700,000.00 dollars a year initially, up to $1.7 million dollars in savings and they could use the tax shelter from the tax equity side of that deal.

Mr. Durst stated he is proposing doing something that is comprehensive, not in a niche and he realizes the separation of powers with the governing body and Board of Education, but at the same token the proposed plan is synergistic with his company providing the alternative energy to the Millville Public Schools.

Commissioner Hewitt advised Mr. Durst that he will have to reach out to the Millville Board of Education with Mr. Durst responding that they will do that, and they understand the process and he is not here this evening asking the governing body to make a decision.

Commissioner Hewitt questioned if they had discussions with the Millville Police Department and if so when with Mr. Myers responding yes and that the discussions took place in December and they personally met with the Police Chief.

Commissioner Hewitt responded that he would meet with the Police Chief and touch base with him noting the discussions took place prior to him taking office.

Mayor Orndorf indicated that there are many questions to ask, because the presentation was vague and understands that it is a conceptual idea, but suggested that Mr. Durst provide the governing body with information that has more specifics. Mr. Durst responded that he will provide the governing body with more specifics and focus on the first elements such as maybe the river and the New Jersey Motorsports Park.

Discussion took place between Commissioner McQuade and Mr. Durst regarding the maintenance problem with the solar panels that are at Lakeside School with Mr. Durst responding that they were not from his company and asked Mr. McQuade he would like to meet with him to discuss the issues. Mayor Orndorf interrupted and advised them that the issue they are discussing should be addressed with the Board of Education.

Commissioner Hewitt stated he would like it on record that this commission is moving and are in discussions with developers and he personally doesn’t think any of his fellow commissioners are going to entertain anything touching certain Millville property, because discussions are in place.

Commissioner Hewitt concluded by thanking Mr. Durst for his presentation this evening.
Public Comment

Mayor Orndorf declared the public comment portion open on agenda items only and asked if any person present wished to be heard.

Anthony DeSantis addressed the governing body and asked what is the rate Synergy is currently selling the electric for with Mr. Durst responding that Synergy did the Wastewater Treatment Plant in 2013 and the savings averaged $140,000.00 to $150,000.00 a year and indicated the plant has been improved, so it is a bit of a moving target, but based on the original annual cost of $287,000.00 a year for electric it was reduced to about $137,000.00 or $150,000.00 savings, which could be verified by the City's finance department.

Mr. Durst further stated that his company typically represents that they save about 1/3 off of the existing electric bill.

Mayor Orndorf stated that she believes Mr. DeSantis was asking what the rate is with Mr. Durst responding that you would have to know what the bill is with Mr. DeSantis responding that the average bill in Millville is about $.16 cents a kilowatt.

Mr. Durst responded to Mr. DeSantis that Synergy would save a minimum of 1/3 with Mr. DeSantis asking Mr. Durst if he is trying to tell them that it would be under $.10 cents a kilowatt with Mr. Durst responding that he is not trying to tell him, he is telling him.

There being no further comments Mayor Orndorf declared the public comment portion closed and asked for comments by the Commissioners.

Commissioner Hewitt commended the Public Works Department and Public Safety Department for a job well done during the snowstorm.

Commissioner McQuade also commented on a job well done by the Streets and Roads Department in clearing the roads.

Public Comment

Mayor Orndorf declared the public comment portion open and asked if any person present wished to be heard. There being no response Mayor Orndorf declared the public comment closed.

Adjournment

There being no further comments the meeting was adjourned subject to the call of the chair. All were in favor. None were opposed.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeane M. Parkinson, RMC
City Clerk