



City Council Meeting Minutes
Public Hearing #1 – Northern Tazewell Enterprise Zone Boundary Expansion
Monday, April 17, 2023 at 6:30 p.m.
In the library meeting room at Five Points, 360 N. Wilmor Road, Washington, Illinois

Call to Order Mayor Manier called the Public Hearing meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. with a quorum present.

Roll Call Present: Alderpersons Adams, Blundy, Brownfield, Butler, Dingedine, Schone, Stevens and Yoder

Also Present City Administrator Jim Snider, City Engineer Dennis Carr, Planning and Development Director Jon Oliphant, Public Works Director Brian Rittenhouse, Finance Director Joanie Baxter, Police Chief Mike McCoy, Deputy Police Chief Jeff Stevens, City Treasurer Abbey Strubhar, City Clerk Valeri Brod, and City Attorney Derek Schryer

Public Hearing: At 6:30 p.m. Mayor Manier opened the Public Hearing for the Northern Tazewell County Enterprise Zone Boundary Expansion. Mr. Oliphant provided that there was a February meeting approving a special use for Miller Custom Welding’s property located at the southwest corner of North Wilmor and Jefferson to allow for the expansion of his business onto the undeveloped parcel. He stated that neither of Mr. Miller’s properties are in the Enterprise Zone which was applied for in 2014 and certified by the State in 2015. At the time, consideration was not given that these properties could be rezoned for non-residential use. Mr. Oliphant explained that the intergovernmental agreement the City approved in 2014 provided the allowance of the Enterprise Zone and we currently have 2.58 square miles out of a maximum of 4.75 square miles. The Enterprise Zone, including the other jurisdictions, allowed for 15 square miles in the Enterprise Zone in 2015 and was increased to 16 square miles a few weeks ago. Mr. Oliphant went on to explain that this request allows for a boundary expansion application to DCEO for these parcels to be added, and a revised ordinance and intergovernmental agreement that the City and other jurisdictions will need to approve. Mr. Oliphant hopes to have the application to DCEO by the end of May and they will need about 90 days to complete the review. We should hear back by later this summer.

Mayor Manier opened the floor for public comments. None were provided.

Mayor Manier opened the floor for comments from Council.

Alderman Blundy asked Mr. Oliphant what does it mean if a property goes in the Enterprise Zone. Mr. Oliphant shared that there are up to four incentives; 1) a five-year property tax abatement which takes effect upon completion and close-out of the project which means the owner would pay the pre-improvement assessment, which in this case would just be the land in the undeveloped parcel. Then, at the end of the five years, they would pay the reassessed value which would include the property improvements; 2) a sales tax waiver on the materials that are permanently incorporated into the property; 3) a 50% utility connection fee reduction; 4) a 50% reduction in the building permit fee. Mr. Oliphant explained that we are sometimes working against the State of Illinois and this is an incentive that a number of municipalities have that is really beneficial to small business.

Alderman Blundy asked if this benefits the City.

Mr. Oliphant shared that it does as it allows a small business to expand and at the end of the five years, the assessment will be increased and we will see the result of the property tax improvements.

City Administrator Snider shared that in Illinois, we compete with surrounding states because costs have risen and it’s cheaper to operate in other states. We are seeing it with Boeing and Caterpillar moving out of state because this is not a business-friendly state. This is one of the tools to help municipalities keep economic development. Mr. Snider shared that we do not control all of these benefits as some are offered by the State and this is a matter of the boundaries being updated when there are additional properties and owners want to grow and add jobs. It is a benefit to economic development.

Alderman Blundy asked if the special use permit falls into commercial or light-industrial.

Mr. Oliphant stated that it is a pseudo-commercial or industrial but it is zoned for commercial use.

Alderman Stevens stated that this Enterprise Zone extension took her aback. She stated that she looked back in the Council Report from February 17, and noted that Mr. Oliphant wrote that he was working on applying for an extension and something about it being approved later this summer and it didn’t mean anything to her at the time because she would hear more about it later this summer. Alderman Stevens stated that she went to the PZC meeting on February 1, for the rezoning and didn’t see any issue with the rezoning and special use and there were no descriptions of light assembly, commercial or light-industrial. The first reading for the rezoning request was on February 6. Alderman

Stevens stated that in between the first and second readings there was a Council memo where Mr. Oliphant said he began to work on this application. She then looked at the map and couldn't tell if the Katy T's property was part of the Enterprise Zone because the Enterprise Zone runs along BR 24 and Cummings because that's where we have commercial. Alderperson Stevens stated that she asked the mayor why Katy T's was included in these two properties and Mayor Manier responded that they haven't asked. Alderperson Stevens stated that they received a really good map with this public hearing and it shows Katy T's as part of the Enterprise Zone. She then stated that they have not heard anything about this process and it has not been talked about at Committee of the Whole and it hasn't been explained. Alderperson Stevens stated that on the Square we have the Enterprise Zone and TIF and she understands that you have to pick one or the other.

Administrator Snider stated that TIF would supersede the Enterprise Zone.

Mr. Oliphant shared that you could not receive the abatement part of the Enterprise Zone if you are in the TIF.

Alderperson Stevens stated there was a Northern and Southern Tazewell County Enterprise Zone meeting and asked where it took place.

Mr. Oliphant explained that it is an annual meeting amongst each of the zone administrators, who are unofficially labeled that because there is only one official administrator. They get together to talk about any Enterprise Zone items and this was already mentioned to them.

Alderperson Stevens stated the Council was not asked if Mr. Oliphant could apply for this and it is something that staff just did.

Administrator Snider stated that this was brought forward by email and it is a 100% complete administrative function. He shared that the zoning and special use requests were brought forward to Council and was discussed and Mr. Oliphant had shared that the application would be forthcoming. Mr. Oliphant also reported in March that this was forthcoming. Mr. Snider stated that this is not an unusual situation where the Council spending money or having an agreement uses the administrative process, using a professional planner. Mr. Snider also stated that Mr. Oliphant should be applauded for his effectiveness for bringing this to completion to benefit the owner of this property and bring economic development to the City but, instead we have discourse saying "I was not told" and that is not the case. This concerns Mr. Snider because it undermines staff, Mr. Oliphant's professionalism and it has totally been articulated. Mr. Snider stated that for staff to read this on Facebook undermines staff's ability to do their job. Mr. Snider also stated that in his 26 years, this is a completely administrative process and Council has been informed every step of the way. Any concern expressed that "I wasn't told" or "I wasn't included" is disingenuous.

Alderperson Stevens stated that she went back and said that she wasn't aware and that it was there, but there is a difference between putting it in writing or discussing it as a group. She feels when things are discussed as a group people learn and in her opinion a lot of this would have been avoided if there would have been a Committee of the Whole discussion explaining this process. Alderperson Stevens said she is not saying anything negative about any staff member because she values every staff member but as she is trying to figure out what is going on it is helpful to have something discussed in public because you hear more things than you can find out than by just reading. Alderperson Stevens continued by stating that the property is going to be added to the Enterprise Zone but the building hasn't been built yet, but the Millers already own property in an Enterprise Zone so they can build this building on the other property off of Cummings and Freedom Parkway. She thought they would encourage that type of business as a catalyst for other people. Her biggest concern is not having a public discussion as a group.

Administrator Snider clarified that the Millers are private owners and they can choose where they would like to build.

Alderperson Stevens stated that we are adding another property and we already gave an incentive for the special use for the C-3 and it's basically a shop but the special use allows for fabrication and we have already given them an incentive.

Administrator Snider asked Alderperson Stevens to clarify how that is an incentive.

Alderperson Stevens said it is because they were given a special use.

Administrator Snider shared that there were no funds given we were not incentivizing, it is the point of economic development.

Alderperson Stevens again stated that they already own property and this would have been helpful to have a Committee of the Whole discussion.

Alderperson Brownfield stated that communication from staff was excellent, he appreciates the work on this and they moved this forward which is what they were supposed to do. He stated that the constant trying to micromanage staff and putting it out on Facebook is ridiculous, work is not getting done and he is worried we are going to lose staff because we are micromanaging staff. He went on to say that Mr. Snider's job to take care of staff, not Council's. He doesn't understand why this is turned into a big deal and this is a great opportunity and to make suggestions that the Miller's should build somewhere else is insane. Alderperson Brownfield stated that it is the Miller's property and they get to build where they want to. He feels bad for staff and said he wouldn't want to work for this group.

Mr. Oliphant clarified that the original agreement that was approved grants the City of Washington up to 4.75 square miles and we currently have 2.58 square miles. This expansion including both parcels would expand it by .0037 square miles, which is certainly well within our allowable range, if approved by DCEO.

Alderson Dingleline applauded Mr. Oliphant for all the work and stated that this criticizing and undermining staff week after week has to stop. We have talked about these things.

Alderson Schone said he agrees that Mr. Oliphant has always done a good job and this is included.

Alderson Adams stated that he agrees and doesn't see where there was any confusion. Mayor Manier thanked Mr. Oliphant and stated that Mr. Oliphant does not work for all that are seated at this table. He also clarified that Council only has authority at the council table and if they have an item, they should contact Administrator Snider.

At 6:48 Mayor Manier closed the public hearing.

Adjournment At 6:49 p.m. Alderson Schone moved to adjourn; Alderson Dingleline seconded. Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

Valeri L. Brod, City Clerk