

**Woodburn Redevelopment Commission**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
**January 30, 2014, 7PM**

The first regular meeting of the Woodburn Redevelopment Commission was held in the gym at Woodburn School on Thursday, January 30, 2014, at 7:00 PM.

**PRESENT:** City Manager Jeff Mikorski, City Council Representative Marti Shamberger, and Commission Members: Mary Angel Blount, Christina “Nikki” Byrne-Hoffman, Mark Furari, Chris Haddox, Kerry Lilly, Tim Mashburn, and Bonnie Witmyer. Councilman Bill Kaweck and Pat Kirby were also in attendance in the public audience.

**APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES:** No prior minutes for approval.

**CORRESPONDENCE:** None.

City Manager Jeff Mikorski called the meeting to order and provided a brief orientation to the Woodburn Commission on the property, background information, and their charge. A summary is as follows.

The Woodburn School property is a 4 acre parcel, containing 3 buildings and 2 acres of park space. It was purchased in June 2013 from the Monongalia County Board of Education for a price of \$490,000, to be repaid to the BOE starting July 1, 2014 for 7 years at \$70,000 per year. The goal of the Commission is to identify a use for the property short term and a vision for the long-term.

BOPARC has money available through its “I.C. White fund”. Monies from this fund are royalties paid to the City of Morgantown and West Virginia University from a land gift from I.C. White’s estate in Marion County. A coal mining company pays advance royalties on the land of \$80,000/yr for a 5 year period during excavation and assessment. The funds are divided 50/50 between the City and WVU. The use for the funds is designated for hospital care and purchase and redevelopment of park property.

**ELECTION OF OFFICERS:** City Manager Mikorski asked for election of officers and described the duties and responsibilities of the positions of chairperson, vice chairperson, and secretary. Elections are as follows: Chair, Chris Haddox; Vice Chair, Kerry Lilly; Secretary, Christina “Nikki” Byrne-Hoffman.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

**Discussion of Establishment of By-laws**

Chair Haddox suggested an annual report to council, with a copy of meeting minutes of each meeting given to the City Clerk. Agenda will be provided 2 days prior to the meeting. Posted on site, at City Hall, and on City Website. Regular meetings were set for the 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday of every month, at 7PM, at Woodburn School. Minutes will be posted the following month when approved by the Commission. Length of the meeting will try to be limited to 1 ½ to 2 hours maximum. This was approved by affirmation by all members. Samples of by-laws will be

provided by City Manager Mikorski. Other by-laws will be pre-discussed via email, and formal by-laws will be established at a later date.

### **Introduction of Members and Others**

**Chris Haddox, Chair-** teaches at WVU and lives in the Woodburn neighborhood. Believes the Woodburn property should stay a public piece of property. He and Patrick Kirby spearheaded visioning meetings, with about 100 people in attendance.

**Bonnie Witmyer-** attended school at Woodburn when young. Now lives in 1<sup>st</sup> Ward, where the old school was torn down. Believes in preservation of the Woodburn school and believes it should be open to Morgantown.

**Kerry Lilly, Vice Chair-** Lives in the neighborhood. Has 2 grandkids and a son and daughter-in-law that also live in the neighborhood. Believes Woodburn should be accessible to people in Morgantown and activities held there should be a reasonable cost. Wants it to meet needs of community, especially children. Says the standards of playgrounds in Morgantown aren't near those of other towns of its size.

**Tim Mashburn-** originally from Florida. Interested in community and believes Morgantown is an example of tenancy versus community, and would like to see a shift away from tenancy. Works at HSC.

**Mark Furari-** has lived and worked in Woodburn for 17 years, self-employed. Believes Morgantown is an economic engine and this project could be supported by numerous donors. The money is out there.

**Marti Shamberger, City Council Representative-** Has lived in Woodburn since 1985. Was a parent volunteer at the school when kids were in school. Has spent 5 years on Council. Would like to see Woodburn as a community center, park for recreation, and community gardens. Wants it to be used for kids and adults. Also sits on the BOPARC board. Wants Woodburn to have more of a variety of program offerings than Wiles Hill Senior Center.

**Nikki Byrne-Hoffman, Secretary-** Graduate student at WVU. Has lived in Morgantown since 2005. She and her husband fell in love with Morgantown and bought a house in Jerome Park a year ago. Other green space besides Paul Preserve in Jerome Park is now becoming housing through Habitat for Humanity. People of Jerome Park are close enough to use Woodburn. Would like to see Woodburn become a multi-use facility, with rec center with office, classroom, and event space, as well as having a playground and community gardens. Would like to see classes offered for arts and crafts, gardening, etc., and new construction should be eco-friendly (utilizing solar/green power, and using green building techniques). Build may be more expensive initially, but will pay for itself over time and ease maintenance costs.

**Mary Angel Blount-** moved to Morgantown in 2007 from North Carolina. Has an 8 year old. In contact with a lot of other moms of small children. A member of Green Morgantown. Believes Woodburn should be a recreation center for the whole community. Has a lot of artist friends and is familiar with projects in surrounding areas for conversion to community centers.

Councilman Bill Kawecki and Patrick Kirby also provided an introduction. Patrick Kirby was involved with vision sessions. He is aware of funding resources in the City and is the man to talk to about money for ideas. Chair Haddox mentioned that he is involved in helping communities envision what they become in 23 counties of northern WV. Councilman Kawecki believes when Woodburn School closed, Morgantown lost an anchor for the community. He wants this project to enhance and preserve the sense of community in Morgantown.

### **Discussion**

Chair Haddox opened the floor for discussion of the project, and asked City Manager Mikorski for more background on the building. Manager Mikorski relayed that the building is 105 years old. Tenants help with reporting of graffiti and maintenance issues. Boys & Girls Club currently rents out the first floor for \$1000/mon. Girls on the Run, a non-profit, rents the old principal's office for \$65/month. WVU CAC was looking at leasing the property and couldn't due to costs of preparing the building for prospective use and State Fire Marshal's requirements. Woodburn needs revenue to manage property and pay utilities. City is paying 2<sup>nd</sup> half of utilities until additional lessors are found.

Chair Haddox said he was aware of companies who convert old schools into affordable housing, such as a firm in KY, AU Associates. The school in second ward was converted by Pirelli. He wants Woodburn to have a business model to generate revenue and take care of maintenance long-term and paying for property short-term.

Kerry Lilly mentioned he encourages "keeping of the gift", instead of parceling off. Manager Mikorski mentioned after 7 years, Council resolved that if the property couldn't pay for itself, parceling off would be looked, as to not burdening the general fund. He said \$9,000 has been put into the school by the city, and is to be paid back by revenue from the leases, and said he would provide future financial updates.

Chair Haddox said our first assignment is to articulate visions and use examples given by the community. Commission members voiced desire to tour the grounds. Denny from Boys & Girls Club will also be invited to give his vision for the project. It was mentioned that Boys & Girls Club will be having a Spring/Summer festival.

Ideas were discussed for garden-based learning programs and Rotary/Boys & Girls Club/YMCA/Salvation Army community centers. Mark Furari said his vision is a state-of-the-art recreational facility, similar to a YMCA. He believes it is direly needed in Morgantown and the economy here can support it. He stated his concern that he didn't think there was a demand for more gardens and green space in Morgantown. Nikki Byrne-Hoffman stated the need for gardening space for those who are unable to garden, such as students and families living in apartments, and for those who want to learn more about gardening, such as from possible lectures on agriculture given by those affiliated with WVU Ag School. She raised the possibility that the gardens may be able to pay for themselves, if spaces were rented and paid classes were given. Kerry Lilly mentioned he had very informally discussed the possibility of a YMCA Clarksburg extension in Morgantown and believes that door is open. The YMCA itself is not building new independent facilities. He also said Comcast Cares is a program for community

redevelopment where time and money is invested, and the members discussed that the new Barlett House was an example of their work in this area. Other members also discussed other possible sponsors for a rec center and a previous potential project by the Salvation Army for a recreation center behind Marilla Park. Plans for the Salvation Army project did not fully materialize, so this might be a direction, as well. Both Furari and Lilly believe the business model of the YMCA may be a good place to start if the Commission decides a YMCA-like rec center is part of the vision, as it is effective.

Bonnie Witmyer wanted to know the square footage leased by the Boys & Girls Club. Manager Mikorski said it was 6116 square feet. She asked what other square footage was available. Manager Mikorski will get that information for the next meeting.

Manager Mikorski and Chair Haddox mentioned contacting Susan Sullivan, the City Communications Manager, to submit a press release and put updates on Channel 15 and the City Twitter and Facebook page.

Manager Mikorski responded to inquiries of condition of the school. The roof of Woodburn is leaking and brick pointing should be completed. Commission members wanted a walk-through with a structural engineer to determine what possibilities are available with school's condition. Commission members are also interested in possibly inviting a YMCA representative to a meeting, in addition to having Denny from Boys & Girls Club and the structural engineer give a presentation at a future meeting. The Commission will meet Thursday, February 27<sup>th</sup>, at 5:30 PM to perform a walk-through tour of the grounds and buildings, in addition to holding the regular meeting at 7:00 PM.

Chair Haddox closed the discussion by asking the Commission to be open about possibilities, keeping in mind cost, reception in the community, and monies available. The many options include retail, recreation, housing, office space, classroom space, etc.

**ADJOURNMENT:** General motion to adjourn was affirmed by all members. Chair Haddox adjourned the meeting at approximately 9:00PM.