

The Woodburn School Redevelopment Commission

Annual update 2021

The City of Morgantown Ordinance Sec.162.01 established a Woodburn School Commission in September 2013 with the following purpose:

“The function of the Woodburn School Redevelopment Commission is to watch over and advise the City Manager and City Council regarding present and future development of the former Woodburn school property, programming, financing of projects, and operations of the property as whole.”

2021 Commission members: Chris Haddox Chair, Evan Fedorko, John Trumble, Marti Shamberger, Ross Justice, Marly Hazen Ynigues, Ron Dulaney, and City Councilor Danielle Trumble.

In 2021 the available space at the Woodburn School site was rented to the following entities: **M.T. Pockets** (a non-profit organization local theatre company) located in the former multipurpose building; **Friends of Deckers Creek** (a non-profit organization dedicated to improve the Deckers Creek Watershed) located in the auxiliary building; **The Pop Shop** (a non-profit music academy) located on the second floor of the main school building. In July, new tenants **The Shack** and **The Mountaineer Home School Hub** shared space on the first floor and basement of the main building. *It is important to note that all of these entities provide services to citizens from all over Monongalia County.* The continuation of the Covid-19 pandemic had tenants re-evaluating their programming. The City Administration worked with tenants on their lease payments. The Commission had recommended that the Boys and Girls Club items in the building be removed prior to construction since they were no longer tenants.

The year began with the completion of Phase 1 improvement in the building with the installation of the elevator. The elevator gave access from the basement level up to the 2nd floor. The development of a butterfly garden was discussed with Michelle Furlong a butterfly expert. A location was selected in the front of the building with planting to begin in the spring. Due to exterior construction on that part of the site, Marchetta Maupin Director of Urban Landscaping for the city recommended that the planting be delayed until 2022.

Phase 2 began with electrical upgrades, and the construction of new bathrooms on the first floor in February. An energy audit was done on the building by WVU professors. Discussion about future playground improvements continued. The paint of the playground equipment was tested for lead and found to be negative.

The Commission discussed the merits of having an informational packet on the building which could include the size of space available, amenities, and utilities for prospective tenants.

The Commission was approach about considering the possibility of food gardens on the hillside of the property. Discussion included the possibility of planting berry bushes and fruit trees as

part of a therapy garden project. Consideration of this possibility was kept for the future pending the playground improvements

City personnel and volunteers cleared out the space that was previously occupied by the Boys and Girls Club. Leases were signed for two new tenants, The Shack and the Mountaineer Homeschool HUB that would occupy the space in the main building.

Discussions were held about the possibility of a mural to be painted on the exterior wall of the gym building facing the playground. The City Director of Arts applied for grant funding for this project. An artist has not been selected to date.

Current and new City Councilors along with the City Manager were given a tour of the property. The Commission sent a letter to the City thanking them for their investment in the site.

Discussion about renaming the site was held over several Commission meetings. The Commission decided to recommend to the City that the site be renamed "*The Woodburn Community Complex*".

The kitchen in the basement of the building passed the inspection by the Mon. County Health Department.

The Commission requested that the remaining roof repairs be addressed before winter. The Commission was also notified that designated trees and overgrown shrubs would be removed from the property.

The Shack Board of Directors decided to break their lease and they vacated the building.

The Commission developed a Mission Statement and a Vision Statement.

The Mission: "*The Woodburn Community Complex is dedicated to sustain a space for pursuits that enhance the quality of life for the Morgantown community*".

The Vision: "*The Woodburn Community Complex is to provide Morgantown with space for people and organizations to support individual and community growth, service and wellbeing*".

Marly Hazen Ynigues and Ross Justice were thanked for their service on the Commission as their terms expired.

The Woodburn site is an anchor to the Woodburn community. It consists of 3.76 acres which includes a 100+ year old school building, an auxiliary building and a multipurpose building surrounding by walls that were built by the CCC. The picnic tables on the front lawn are used by tenants and neighbors to enjoy the view of the Deckers Creek vista. The playground consists of a half basketball court, older playground equipment and a 1/10th of a mile paved walking trail.

Despite its age, the Woodburn school building and surrounding property provides a value to its neighborhood and community that cannot be overstated. The programs running out of this location continue to serve children in Monongalia County with safe and educational after-school and extracurricular activities. Woodburn is known as Morgantown’s “Arts Neighborhood”. It is fitting that groups such as M.T. Pockets and the Pop Shop should choose to mold young minds, expose them to the arts, and shape the next generation of thespians and musicians at such an appropriate venue.

The City of Morgantown has already taken a giant step forward in bringing the Woodburn School into this century with ADA improvements. These facilities rightly allow those with disabilities and special needs access to the excellent programming available at the school. It is important to note, however, that there is still much to be done to make necessary repairs at the school, and maintain the structure so that it can continue to serve our community. We are closer than ever before to realizing the full potential of this historic property, and the commission takes great pride in the wonderful work being done there.

DRAFT