

MINUTES OF MEDC SPECIAL MEETING

November 7, 2024

MONTGOMERY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

CALL TO ORDER

President Jeff Angelo called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Present: Jeff Angelo – President
Arnette Easley – Vice President
Carol Langley – Treasurer
Ryan Londeen - Secretary
Wade Nelson – Board Member
Casey Olson – Board Member
Dan Walker – Board Member

Absent: None

Also Present: Gary Palmer, City Administrator
Dave McCorquodale, Director of Planning & Development
Sara Countryman, Mayor
Carol Langley, Councilmember
Stan Donaldson, Councilmember
Alan Petrov, City Attorney
Stephanie Johnson, Special Events Coordinator

PUBLIC FORUM

No public comments were made.

REGULAR AGENDA

1. Economic Development Discussion with Brad Stafford

Mr. Brad Stafford, former City Manager for the City of Navasota said he did not prepare a presentation but came to answer questions and discuss what they did and how they did things. Wade Nelson said he thinks everyone has seen what the City of Navasota has done and Mr. Stafford was an integral part of it. He said it is impressive and it happened fairly quickly. Mr. Stafford said in local government time it was quick. Mr. Stafford said he was telling Mr. Palmer it was a lot of luck. He said the way it happened was the City was divided. The City Council and City Manager, two prior to him had made some decisions that split the community and also cost the community a lot of money. When he went in he followed another guy who came in and was in that real bad period where you have the complete flip of Council and so you are doing a total u-turn from what you were doing. When he came in Council still had a few of the u-turn people and some of the new people coming in. He said he is nothing more than just a country boy from west Texas and he walks in, makes friends with everyone and got lucky because they all bought into what they were looking at and trying to do and he could see just like he sees in

this city lots and lots of potential. There was so much there just really untapped. It was tapped back in the 1800's early 1900's and everything was popping and moving and then something happened. They built cities bigger than them. The key was how do they get it back. How do they make their downtown viable or more viable than it was. He was there four years and started talking with the mayor quietly about there is a need to do something in this town. If you want to make it grow we need to do something and to do it we need to make sure city hall is an integral part of downtown. Mr. Stafford said they finally got it in front of Council talking about it and went through the process. They talked and had public meetings and you have the one councilman who sacrifices himself and says is downtown the place to go or should we build it out on highway 6 which was perfect and he did it on purpose. The people rose up and said no we are building downtown and saving downtown. Mr. Stafford said that is how they started and with that they got lucky and timing is everything. They got lucky with the bonds and went in and built city hall and started streetscapes. While they are doing all this they are going to all the Texas downtown associations, the TML, everything they could find for downtowns. They started having meetings with citizens, all their Boards, and City Council trying to get everyone on board to move in a similar direction. Once they showed pictures and they see the landscapes and the streetscapes and how city hall was going to look like the old 1903 city hall people bought in like crazy and got excited. He said then you have to start, and this is the longest piece of all is the economic development side where you start to bring in the businesses that are going to come into town. He said he just went downtown before he came here. You have restaurants and people all over the place and it is 5:30 p.m. and that is very cool because that is what you want. It is how you keep these downtowns going because you have people there during the day but they also stay in the evening. He said that is where they struggled for a long time but now they have night life and things are happening. He said he actually tried to steal one of Montgomery's businesses. Cozy Grape came and talked with him because he was trying to get someone in their city. He tried his best but did not succeed with Cozy Grape obviously but they did succeed with others. He said that is the key you have to get around and talk and talk. They were committed it was going to be mom and pop's and it was not going to be chains. When they attract the Conroe people or the Bryan people or whoever they are attracting they do not want the chains and the outside people do not want the chains. That was their key but as you know the mom and pop's are the toughest because they have a harder time and they do not have the capital. He said he did look at Montgomery's budget and you have some things that they have. He sees there is a downtown facade program and said they used their facade program a lot because they wanted to make it look better. He does not know if everyone knows what it looked like 18 years ago but downtown was not pretty as it was old and had been neglected but the bones were beautiful. The key is you have to have that vision and it has to start here and in City Council and your citizens have to buy into it. The toughest part is to get everyone on board but you are not going to get everyone on board, but if you get enough people on board it gains that traction and momentum because who are your best sales people. The people here are your sales people. He said he can go out and tell everyone how cool you are but when they show up and they walk up to one of you and ask where do you go to eat and you say Conroe you did not sell anyone. He said he started with their staff and started doing the salesmen training. If someone asks you were to eat and you do not know you make something up, but you are going to eat here in this city and are not going to Bryan, College Station, or Brenham.

Jeff Angelo asked Mr. Stafford how did he get people coming in from Conroe, Anderson, College Station, or Bryan and asked if there was some type of concerted marketing effort. Mr. Stafford said yes there was. Jeff Angelo asked if that was part of their plan. Mr. Stafford said yes. Jeff Angelo asked him to take him through the process of where he started and like phase one, two, and three, and the time line for that. Mr. Stafford said they started internally and

making sure their sales people were on their toes. Not only with staff, but once they finished getting staff going they went out into the public and started the Navasota University or Citizens University, not sure exactly what it was called now so people could get excited about what is happening in the city. You sell what you are doing and you make sure that your product is the best and that these people understand it. They started there and once they got that done every chance he got to be on a radio interview in Bryan, College Station, on the television and he tried everything to get in the Houston television market and occasionally they could get on but it was hard and they did everything they could. He told staff they will not turn down an interview and they were sending things to the media. Mr. Stafford said you do a press release. They started having concerts downtown and started pushing it and all of a sudden KBTX started showing up wanting to interview them. Then he started getting the mayor in front of them. The mayor even took his own money and started a coffee shop downtown as they did not have one and even paid to have a mural painted on the side of the coffee shop. Jeff Angelo asked of the businesses they brought in which ones really kicked it off and people started showing up in droves. Mr. Stafford said he thinks Classic Rock Coffee was the one that first kicked it off right off the bat because it appeals to people in his age group, late fifties that love classic rock music, like to drink coffee and go to a cool little town. It is also the people that have a little bit of extra spending money because their kids have all moved out. They also had antique shops and then all of a sudden they started getting boutiques and that really brings people in. He said he spent a lot of his days walking downtown asking people where they are from. There were people from The Woodland, Montgomery, Conroe, Bryan, Brenham. Everyone tells you Brenham has the best downtown and people were coming from Brenham to go to Navasota after they started pushing and they started finding them. He said you would not believe the people even today that say they had no idea what was going on downtown. They remember it from 20 years ago and start looking at it and coming back and having girls weekend, the guys come down and now, especially with the hotel, they are starting to see a lot of people traveling to SCC football coming in. He remembers the first year the Aggie's played Alabama at home. He thought he was in Alabama because he never saw so many Alabama flags in his life in their downtown. It said it was cool because they spent a lot of money on that and they actually marketed to the SCC the first year the Aggie's were in ACC. Mayor Countryman asked what did that cost. Mr. Stafford said he does not remember exactly because it was so long ago but they used EDC funds and H.O.T. (hotel occupancy tax) funds. He said it paid off and it is still paying off that they did that. On the other marketing end of it they found a guy who created the Navasota Magazine. He said they had all of these mailing addresses to anywhere in the Houston market. They concentrated in Montgomery, Conroe, The Woodlands, and anything on the northwest side of Houston and spent a lot of money shipping these magazines that had interviews with their citizens and business owners talking about how great Navasota was. A lot of the stuff they did back then he does not think they are doing anymore. This is how they really started hammering people to come find them and see where they are. Then Mr. Stafford had the opportunity to be a presenter at the TML conference and ended up presenting multiple times. He said he still would if they asked him because he loved what they did and how they did it. He thinks Navasota is a cool city and he still lives there. He retired and then went to work for Bleyl Engineering for a couple years and then went to work for the City of Bryan as the Director of Parks Recreation and Facilities.

Arnette Easley asked in the process how business friendly was the city to businesses that want to come in and establish a business to bring that revenue in. Mr. Stafford said that was a big deal and when he first got there everyone said no one is coming to Navasota because the city is not business friendly. They then brought in a consultant who did some surveys for them and talked with different people and he walked the streets with the consultant. They asked a lot of

questions and received good feedback. They found out that they needed to change some ordinances and change how they dealt with people and they did. They did a total turnaround and made sure their staff was extremely friendly and helpful. They were very lenient to get these people in here and they did all they could to get them here. Wherever you go, people will tell you the city is the hardest to deal with and it is true because it is government. You need to have rules and regulations but you can work with people. However if a business comes to town and sees you are not taking care of your city they are not coming because they think you will not take care of them. Mr. Stafford said his door was open to anybody anytime that wanted to talk and he would work with them. He would go look at their property or give them an idea. He said you get them moving and before you know it they either sale or they start complying completely. You have to make a huge effort to win these people over and have them understand that we are in it for the people. You need to make sure they are taken care of.

Jeff Angelo said if he is hearing correctly, the formula is a) get a plan b) work the plan with cooperation and enthusiasm of the downtown businesses, pull together the resources to recreate the facades to give it the look you are wanting in the plan and then start trying to drive businesses to the downtown area. He said he does not think it is going to be a huge stretch to get businesses downtown to want to participate. Mayor Countryman said they already have. She said they now need to execute the plan. Mr. Stafford said you need to look at your codes and make sure people are doing what you need them to do to keep the look and the feel. Also you need to get a sign ordinance. He asked how many times have you had your head handed over to you over signage. He said they did twice and had to do their sign ordinance over twice. It is much better now and much more business friendly but it took some time. When your elected officials all have their vision, city staff have their vision, the citizens have a vision and somehow you have to get it to where you can make it all work. The sign ordinance was probably the worst thing but the best thing he ever did. Mayor Countryman said something they learned when they went to Texas, downtown in Navasota at the hotel a few months ago, was you all wanted a mead. They sent out 200 letters to every winery within 50 or 100 miles of here and what did you get. It was a building the city owned and the mead that the bee farm out here now has mead and they are killing it. They just had their grand opening. Mr. Stafford said that started when he was there and they did the same thing with restaurants, sending letters to mom and pop restaurants in the Houston market, Houston, Bryan, College Station and would find people. Another thing he did was when he was on vacation if he found a place he really liked he would ask them if they ever though about coming to Navasota. He continued saying everyone here has to be the salesperson because you never know when it is going to click.

Jeff Angelo said, first steps, next week they have a stakeholders meeting with all the downtown businesses along with the consulting firm they have retained. They have sent out surveys, collected the responses and now it is time for everyone to come together and complete the vision. They have a long-term directional signage and some city scapes, things they have already put together on paper but they have to get buy in now. He asked what were your first steps and what did you do. Mr. Stafford said to get to buy in you have to listen. Do not tell them you are doing this. You have to listen to them and your citizens because everyone is going to give you bits and pieces of what they have a vision of for downtown. You have to be able to mold your vision, their vision, and everybody's vision is into this one place. People are going to complain about parking, and he is sure they already do, because there is no parking down there and it is tough to walk down there. Those types of things, such as trash, as trash is a big deal. They put trash receptacles everywhere, added benches and sold some street scapes. He said you attract people when things are pretty and you also attract new businesses because they look at it and say these people love their city, they care and want to be here.

Jeff Angelo said Wade Nelson mentioned at the last meeting of bringing in developers that have a stake in the city is important. Mr. Stafford said it is very important. Wade Nelson said you have to partner up. Mr. Stafford said there is one he tried to partner with for years and never made it work but they wanted to. There were others through that they were able to bring in and work with. Some of theirs were just housing developments because those guys put money in too and they also bring in people to town that are going to spend money in your downtown that are going to attract another business to come in. He said if you look at Rail & Rye they own multiple buildings in the downtown and they fixed every one of them up and have a business in every one of them. They do not own all the businesses but they fixed it up and rented and that is where it is a key. You need someone who has the money to come in here and not only buy the building but to fix the building up because that was their problem. They had all these people that owned the buildings and they did not do anything with them and so they started selling. Wade Nelson said partnering with the prominent owners in the area is the key because the City does not have the funds to go out and do it on their own. Mr. Stafford said correct. He said take Railroad Street where you have the hotel, Rail & Rye, Red Board Tavern, the attorneys office. What you do not see is what is in the alley. He kept listening to them because they were getting flooded from the alley because water was getting in, utility lines are not large enough, and poles are starting to lean. They went to Council and told them this is what we are going to have to do to get these people to go ahead and buy and really do what they need to do. They went in and spent around \$300,000 and replaced every utility line, water, sewer, and gas. They worked with the phone company, the power company and got everything replaced in that alley and put as much of the power underground as they could and the city paid for all of that but now you see what we got on the other side. He said they took advantage and took advantage of every grant opportunity they could. The downtown flooded and they received some hazard mitigation money. He told Council if these guys are flooding we need to redo Railroad Street and redo the drainage on Railroad Street and that is how Railroad Street was beautified. They used the hazard mitigation money to beautify the street and improve drainage and improve the drainage in the alley. He said he does not have exact numbers on what they did but they leveraged all of their bond money with grant funds for downtown redevelopment funds and any CDBG funds they could get to use downtown because you only get those every three to four years. One thing where he made a huge mistake when you are talking about the plan. Too much of the plan is here and he does not work there anymore. He said he told them that was a mistake because the vision that he had in his head and he could tell the Mayor and Council but they have businesses that are working and doing their thing but he said for their next block that we are going to redo here is what we need to do, here is why, and here is where and it got lost when he said he was done. The last bit they did was in the process when he left and some of the things that did not get done was because they were in his head.

Wade Nelson said they have land owners and developers that want to do something. How do you incentivize your property owners and developers to do what you would like to see them do. There is a way to incentivize and help them get there. Mr. Stafford said you use your economic development incentive packages that you can come up with. He said they did some things where they would talk them into doing for example you want to redo this, well I want the sidewalk and I will pay you back 50 percent of the sidewalk, or I need you to do this and we will give you that. Mr. Stafford said so you are helping them but it is really not a lot of help, but some. A lot of times a lot of people are just looking for is what you buy in, what the city buys in. Wade Nelson said yes because they want an easy path to do the right thing and they do not want you on their back the whole way. Mr. Stafford said correct, they want the city to be a partner. You have a development agreement with them and get it going and then you go work with them, the

code enforcement or the inspector. If you do your inspections the inspector needs to understand to work with people. Do not just walk up there and red tag them and then go on about your business. Walk up and ask them to show you what they were doing. The inspector has to meet code too. Wade Nelson asked how do you incentivize the business. If you are helping the developer get there how do you incentivize the business to come here. Mr. Stafford said he does not think they did a great job of incentivizing people to come other than just letting them know it was a great place to live, a great place to work, the taxes were reasonable, and the utility rates were reasonable, and we will work with you and promote you. They used their EDC to do a lot of promotion of their downtown which helped them. They bought billboards and then they (the business) would put a little money in and they (the city) put the majority in. They would help them by giving them a little money to do a website and the businesses loved it. They even got people to help them do a website just to try and help to get their word out. It was little. They did not have a pile of money. Wade Nelson asked if Rail & Rye was their prominent land owner. Mr. Stafford said the funny part is he (Rail & Rye) came in four years before he retired and when he came in he sat down with him and started talking and that is when he decided he was buying all these buildings. The buyer was around 32 years old but he had a great vision. He asked Mr. Stafford what he thought the city needed and they worked with him. There were a lot of struggles because his contractors came in and did some squirrely things but they just kept staying with it. His partner got mad at them a few times but he would always go down there and really try to keep it smooth. Mr. Stafford said he made a lot of effort to make it work because he was committed and they were going to make it happen. He kept reminding staff they had to work with them and sometimes staff gets frustrated when you start pushing so you have to explain to them the bigger picture. As far as an incentive, he did not really get much incentive other than \$100,000 worth of work in an alley that benefitted him tremendously. Wade Nelson said it is really a partnership and egos go to the side in order to work together. Mr. Stafford said they are not in this for the recognition but are getting it for the city. The key is we are the face so we have to be out there being nice and we have to be the ones working through those issues. He had to sit down with a lot of his staff because when he first got there they were just use to being the hammer. He also said he thinks they created the nicest group of people at city hall and then their city staff were willing to work with people and work through the problems. When a business owner would come in and want to do something they would sit down with all of their directors like public works would be in there, the inspector, the city manager. They would all be in the room with that person when they came in and said we want to do "x" whatever it is and then they just went through it. They asked all of us questions and he pretty much told them if you do not tell them they have to do it here they do not have to do it because we are famous as cities of you start building and get right here and you are ready to open the door but, oh wait a minute you forgot to do this. What you tell them that is what you are stuck with so you better tell them everything now and it is only fair. Dan Walker said you should not shut a business down because it is costing them a ton of money every time you mess up. Mr. Stafford said our mess up should not cost them anything. We all mess up and no one is perfect. We are all going to make mistakes. If you make a mistake you work through it and figure out how to get them opened up again and sometimes it is easier said than done, but you can do it. Staff has to do a lot of thinking about being creative of how we get these people to where they want to be up front and you cannot lay it all on one person. The whole staff has to be thinking through every day. You have to be friendly and always have an answer.

Jeff Angelo said it sounds like you had a good leadership culture and it transferred to your staff or team and co-workers. Everyone was operating from the same playbook which he thinks is probably their first challenge. We have to get everyone working off the same playbook. He said he thinks it is important. These people seem really overburdened right now. Stephanie Johnson

is brand new and he knows what she is going through. It is just so much and there is not enough staff to really get these jobs done. There is not a place to put staff. They are at a catch 22 but he cannot imagine they are the only ones that ever went through this. Mr. Stafford said it is never going to get easier. He said government is tough right now. He built up a staff and then had to lay them off, but when you build up that staff and have them all going in the right direction and everything is good then all of a sudden the tap runs dry it is pretty tough. They had cleaned up the city pretty good. There was no dead weight but they had a lot of people but then all of a sudden the price of oil goes up and all of his companies out in the industrial park quit buying gas. He then started realizing they were going to be \$2 million short. You cannot finish \$2 million short when you do not have very much money to begin with. They did everything they could to cut, cut, cut, and could not cut anymore so they had to cut the most expensive piece. He said the hardest thing he did was promise citizens they would not see a change in service and they laid off 25 percent of their staff. Wade Nelson said Rail & Rye obviously was integral as far as attracting hotels or did they do that all on their own. Mr. Stafford said it actually all started around the same time. He said all those buildings right there and then the building across the street that is Circle P, about three years before all of those were bought he had this guy from Austin come in wanting to buy every bit of this to redevelop it and do a hotel. He was working with him and the man from Austin convinces all of those business owners that he is fixing to buy them out and comes to him and says a good city manager would spend a good chunk of money in getting those buildings bought. Mr. Stafford said well I guess I am not a good city manager because I am not going to do that because that would be illegal. He said he bashed and bad mouthed him but also helped clean up a couple of businesses that were in there because they were convinced they were fixing to sale so they started cleaning up and getting everything ready to go which made it attractive for these other people to come in. Mr. Stafford said he is actually his neighbor and is a good friend of his to this day, but he was just tired of working and wanted to retire so he sold it to them and sold them three buildings. The hotel did not have a roof and was full of pigeons, owls, and rats and these people had this vision. They walked in and there were two buildings where the Red Board Tavern is that was part of it and then the hotel. On the third floor these people had built their residence but the rest of the place was junk. These people saw this and they bought it. His name is Steve who is an attorney in Houston and he was buying it because he was going to retire and just put his office in it. Then all of a sudden he thought he could make it a hotel and his wife said yes she thought he should. Mr. Stafford said he is glad someone had the vision and the money to go in and do that and that is the key. If you can find those people and then you start working with them and then that is where you go in and spend \$300,000 on an alley way or do whatever you can.

Mayor Countryman asked what is the occupancy of the hotel. Mr. Stafford said there is hardly anyone staying there on the weekdays. Wade Nelson said that is what we would be. Mr. Stafford said as long as they know that they can accommodate. He said they did the restaurant because they wanted to have something else for people to do. They have their coffee shop; they do music and do different things for people to come in during the week if nothing else to buy beer. He said he thinks a lot of people go to the speakeasy. There are always people in there. The funny part is he does not know a lot of the people that are in there and he has lived in Navasota almost 10 years but that means it is really good. He said that is where you make your money when people come in from out of town and spending their money.

Jeff Angelo asked what do you think is the biggest attraction you were able to put in that just really sets the city apart from other downtowns. Mr. Stafford said he thinks it is just the feel of downtown. When you go to Navasota you feel like you are in a Hallmark movie and the same thing could happen right here. You feel like you are in that Hallmark movie. People are friendly

and it is easy to walk. You feel like you have left the hustle and bustle. Jeff Angelo said that is really what we are talking about here. Dan Walker said but you dealt with TxDOT and all the other things that we have to deal with also. Mr. Stafford said yes, TxDOT is right through the middle of downtown. Wade Nelson said we have FM 149 and SH-105. SH-105 and TxDOT want to raise medians throughout town. Mr. Stafford said of course they do. Wade Nelson said someone is getting money under the table and it is everywhere you go now. He said it will pick up from Lone Star Parkway to Lone Star Parkway and all the way through Dobbin. Mr. Stafford asked seriously that far. Wade Nelson said yes and it will go to Navasota eventually. Mr. Stafford said they are actually going to widen from FM 249 into Navasota within the next few years. Mayor Countryman asked about the sidewalks. Mr. Stafford said he promises that sidewalks in this town will make a difference. Mayor Countryman asked even on SH-105. Mr. Stafford said yes. He said the big thing is you need to look at this as long, long-term so you start building this out for long-term. No one in this room may not see the final product. Ryan Londeen said they have a plan already for the smaller downtown and have to start there. He said they have done plan after plan and have never broken ground except for the small sidewalk on Clepper Street. We have a downtown plan where we want to increase the aesthetics starting on McCown but now we are waiting to do all the underground stuff and it takes time. Wade Nelson said the problem is you get so narrow focused on one thing and TxDOT passes you up and says we did not hear from you and we are going to do what we want to do. You have to stay ahead of it. Jeff Angelo asked if they can get sidewalks in downtown. Mr. Walker said absolutely. Jeff Angelo asked if that is what they need. Mr. Stafford asked did you say you were working on infrastructure like your utilities. Mr. Palmer said they are in the process of doing a strategic plan for the downtown and thinks out of that is going to come a lot of the initiatives that are in the Texas A&M comprehensive plan which has a million recommendations in it and they have to get it done in digestible chunks and identify the priorities to start working on. Mr. Stafford said they had a comprehensive plan and is a little more comprehensive than he could swallow so they paid some money for a professional to come in. They had to have a focus and they got it focused and that is when they started. When they started in their downtown you said sidewalks. Well they put in water, sewer, and gas, then sidewalk, street, curb, and gutter if it needed it. He said sometimes they were only doing a block at a time but that is what they could afford. They would go out and leverage with CBDG money or hazard litigation money. You have to figure out all the ways that you can leverage that to get your water, sewer, sidewalks, curbs, and gutters. If you are doing one block at a time, you are doing one block at a time. Wade Nelson said that is what they are doing. It just takes time. Ryan Londeen said on TxDOT thing they have been putting sidewalks on their highways. He said he thinks they do not need a comprehensive plan to encourage them to use sidewalks if they come in but thinks they do need to talk with them. Mr. Stafford said you do need to partner with TxDOT. Wade Nelson said that is what he is saying, like medians. If you want those irrigated and landscaped they are not going to do it unless you tell them to. They will not plan for it as it will be solid concrete. Ryan Londeen said they need to get with them ahead of time to communicate that with them in the design. Mr. Stafford said if you look even outside of downtown Navasota you will notice there are turnarounds and bridges. Those were not there. He started getting complaints of the two-way frontage roads. He started thinking how are they going to do this because he knows they are going to come at him with one-way frontage roads and sure enough that is the first thing they did. The problem is the city will not let us do it. He asked why do you say that. Well, because we have tried before. Mr. Stafford said well let us do this. Why not give us turnarounds and all the bridges, make them decorative and make this look good and then give me a cross walk to the school. They did all of it. He said their decorative stuff was through the Navasota Beautiful which had won the governor's community achievement award and they award you a

certain amount of dollars from TxDOT to use toward the project on a highway. They were able to get the turnarounds and crosswalks by negotiating.

Mr. Palmer asked Mr. Stafford if he could speak on some of the funding mechanisms used. Mr. Stafford said they used general fund money, bond money, and CBDG money. Ryan Londeen asked if CBDG was for the drainage. Mr. Stafford said no it was hazard litigation. Mr. Palmer said they could not use CBDG money. Mr. Stafford said he thinks you can still do downtown if you can. There may be somewhere you can go. Mr. Stafford said the scariest thing he did was convince a city that had been in a battle over the last bond they passed to build a golf course. He said let us do a bond. They did the bond and did it right to where they had enough money to do a lot of street work. Ryan Londeen said he thinks the problem here is a bit different as they have so much growth that every penny of the bond money that they can get goes straight back into capital improvements projects. There is almost always no money going back into the downtown area. Mr. Palmer asked if they used revenue bonds or EDC backed. Mr. Stafford said it was general fund backed. He said they used Certificate of Obligations (CO) and it was specified it was downtown. He said they got EDC behind them and got EDC to put some money into certain things they wanted to do that were extra but they did a CO and their bond covenants made sure that it was all downtown stuff. It was not for anybody else. Mr. Palmer asked no special assessments. Mr. Stafford said no. He said as he mentioned early on there was a lot of luck involved. He sold it to the City Council and then City Council sold it to the public that they were going to increase taxes by 12 cents and they increased taxes by six cents. One of their biggest detractors when she came in and they did their public meetings to show what they were doing because they actually asked them do you want CO's or General Obligations (GO's). Not one person in town asked for the vote. They did not want the GO's. They said go CO's. It takes too long and cost too much money to go GO's. The biggest detractor and she is was on Council whenever he got hired and he swore she hated him. He does not know if she did or not as she is passed away now but she sat in a meeting and said Navasota needs this. Do not put that up to a vote. He said he told the City Secretary you better write that down. Not one person asked them to put it to a vote but they did a whole lot of leg work to get out there in front of them and show pictures of what their vision was. Mr. Palmer said heavy community engagement. Mr. Stafford said yes. They did not have not one town hall meeting at city hall, not one on purpose. They went out to them, to the VFW's, churches, schools, libraries, and went everywhere they could go that was not a city hall so that they were not intimidated. He said that helped to get that passed too. When they built that city hall people stood around and watched all the time. They shut down the streets and people got their lawn chairs and watched them. He said it brought their community together and that was the goal. When they have Texas birthday bash and all those things they are at the lawn of city hall for a reason. It is a gathering place and on purpose because they did not have a gathering place. Wade Nelson said creating a city center. Mr. Stafford said yes. He said it changed peoples attitudes and the community changed. They got a lot more pride in the city and they started bragging instead of calling them nasty names. Arnette Easley said with a lot of collaboration with the businesses and bringing them in, what was the timeline to bring it all to fruition. Mr. Stafford said it is still happening. Wade Nelson asked about the timeline for when it started looking finished. Mr. Stafford said it was whenever they opened up Railroad Street which would have been four years ago. Wade Nelson asked from the time you started to that point. Mr. Stafford said 12 years. Mayor Countryman said she feels like they are a little bit ahead of what the plan was. They have their stuff somewhat together and are not starting from zero. Mr. Stafford said yes. He said his deal was he would sit in these town hall meetings and hear all about Brenham and Bryan and you have to remember we were 10 years behind. They started 10 years before we started having this conversation and that is where

you all are, but you are ahead and you have some stuff going. They have to understand this will not happen tomorrow. It takes all of us time to build this up.

Jeff Angelo asked how did the businesses benefit at the end of the day and did the city benefit from a tax point. Mr. Stafford said everybody benefits because more traffic drives more sales tax and more restaurant sales. They benefited because of the amount of homes that had been built in Navasota in that 20 years. He said when he got there they were averaging five permits a year and then for years they were at 100 permits. They had more permits than Brenham. He said it is enthusiasm and that was the whole key in his mind. He said he does not know anything; he got lucky but enthusiasm really gets you going. When people see you believe, they believe and it just builds that momentum and it keeps growing.

Dan Walker asked what type of tidbits would you throw out there while you were doing these projects. He said they have a lot of talk around here and not a lot of action. Are you coming in and doing signage or something like that and saying look at this vision. Mr. Stafford said you better do a press release, you better do signage and go to the Lion's Club and talk about it. Any opportunity you get you go and talk about it. We have this business coming to town, we have this happening, we are doing these sidewalks and medians, we are working with TxDOT. You have to go and be your sales person. You all have to be the ones telling people, sitting in front of others saying we are doing this. Here is a press release, this is happening and here is what it is going to look like. He said they put up a sign saying your tax dollars at work. Some of it sounds cheesy but it really works because people think you do not do anything.

Wade Nelson asked what kept them from doing TIRZ. Mr. Stafford said City Council did not want to. He said he wanted to do a TIRZ for years and he could never convince them. Council said they were doing good the way they were. Mr. Stafford said he understood but they would have more money if they would do this. He said they have a TIRZ now but it is over on the east side. Wade Nelson asked if Brian used TIRZ. Mrs. Stafford said yes. He thinks it adds to your financial abilities. Wade Nelson said you can do more things in the same time frame. Mr. Stafford said if they did not want to do one but they were willing to pass a bond or budget the money that is fine. Wade Nelson said but then you are worried, you are relying on the public. Mr. Stafford said it still goes around in Navasota today. They only care about downtown. You can prove to them day in and day out well have you seen the street work we are doing over here and have you seen the park work over there, but because the focus was downtown that is what people like. They like your downtown. The downtown is for everybody. He said when you get down to it where is your most productive land. It is downtown. It is the most tax productive land you have and it is producing all types of revenue in a much smaller space than Walmart or Brookshire Brothers.

Mr. Palmer asked if Mr. Stafford has a ballpark of how much he leveraged bond wise in that span and how much you borrowed. Mr. Stafford said he thinks city hall was \$6 million. He thinks they did an \$8 million bond but it has also been 15 years ago and the world was a whole lot different when they did that price wise. He thinks they did an \$8 million bond because they wanted to make sure they did all the streets around city hall and a parking lot because all they heard day in and day out was parking, parking, parking. They added 150 parking spaces and they are still complaining about parking. Wade Nelson asked if they already owned the land. Mr. Stafford said strategically yes. What happened was when he went to the mayor way early he said they need to do a big city hall because their city services were scattered in three or four different buildings and some were ugly. He said you all want a developer to come to town but we make him go to three different buildings before he can get all his permits which makes no

sense. The mayor agreed and strategically they started looking around and talking. The old police station that used to be where city hall sits the city owned that half but did not own the back half, the south half of that block. They went to talk to that owner and he sold it to them for a really low price because they told him what their vision was. He said they held it for about two years before they unleashed the big plan because they wanted to make sure they had the land that they could do what they wanted to do. He said he can look back today and tell you all these things he would do different if he was doing it as he writes a lot of things down he has in his head to this day. He still knows all the things he wants to do and he would be glad for them to write down what he says. Jeff Angelo said we could use what is in your head. He said the thing is he spent a lot of his time listening to the people. He loves to talk with them so he would just go sit and talk and they tell you everything and tell you what they want. If you just listen they will tell you exactly what they want and then you can start piecing it together and say this is what our town is going to be and you ask them what do you want to be. You have people say we are going to be Fredericksburg and I ask why do you want to be Fredericksburg we are Navasota and they say yes, we want to be the Navasota of Fredericksburg. He would say let us just be Navasota and build us out and that is where they went. As you start talking with them their vision starts to change. Everybody has their favorite place and a lot of what we have is a vision that came from The Woodlands. We spent time in The Woodlands driving around and walking up and down the streets and they got the builders that built in The Woodlands. Harvey Builders built a lot of their stuff and they are all over The Woodlands. The whole time they were walking through there saying we have all this. We have everything they have. We just need to clean it up. Wade Nelson said it is looking like it belonged all along and blending in but creating that walkability and that feel of the town center. You can do everything in one place. Mr. Stafford said the unbelievable part to them was when they started all the events on that lawn and how many people show up and just love it. He said during covid everyone cancelled their fireworks show except Navasota. They had fireworks and the Journey Tribute band and they filled downtown up. He said they did a lot of work to make that happen because he went to Council and said we can either fall flat on our face or we can be heroes. He said he does not know what that is going to look like when we do this during covid and luckily all but one of them thought like he did and they did it. He said they took some chances. He said they spent tons of money as the Texas birthday bash is not a cheap event. You get a lot of people and every hotel is full and every restaurant is selling food like crazy and all the boutiques were selling clothes. He heard they are talking about moving it out of downtown and he is so disappointed because he does not want that to happen. Mr. Stafford said the way they sold that to the City Council was they went in and said we need to spend \$125,000 to make this happen and we are going to bring in the best bands they can find and it is going to be a show. It is not going to make us any money the first few years and then after three years they started charging and started getting money off of the beer sales. We said you could sell beer but we get a percentage. The city never got their money back in cash but got it back in hotel tax, sales tax, and you get it back in just good will. Citizens want things like that. They want to have something to do and they want to do it at home. There were so many people who would catch him and say this is so great. I never dreamed I would be able to do this in my backyard. He said it helped them to have an architect that helped them with their vision. They helped them to say you need that courtyard. You have to have the professionals. You have consultants and people that can really get you through that and then your vision. He says it over and over again but it takes a lot of enthusiasm. The way he is he was always an enthusiastic person and was the biggest cheerleader for Navasota from the get-go and still cheer for them pretty hard. He thinks that gets you in the door with a lot of people because if they feel like you love it then they can feel that and they want to be a part of what you are doing. He said he loves to talk about what they did. Jeff Angelo said he should because he has done a remarkable job and have inspired them to see what is possible.

Sometimes you just need to see what is possible to know how to move forward. Mr. Stafford said everything is possible. Jeff Angelo said when you are dealing with government though it just feels like you are stuck in mud all the time and so they want to get out of that rut and get back on firm ground. Mr. Stafford said you still have to go through those processes but you can make it work. You have to stay after it and you can speed some things up. Jeff Angelo said he thinks they are starting to build the pieces now. Mr. Stafford said to get your lawyer to figure out a lot of ways to speed things up.

Jeff Angelo said he gave them a lot and they just need to take it and digest it with this upcoming meeting. Mr. Palmer said he thinks after coming out of the vision session they will have a little better understanding of at least what the downtown vision is and what they want. Mr. Palmer said he is going to follow up with Mr. Stafford as he has a lot of questions he needs to ask him. Ryan Londeen said some of the funding mechanism options would be nice although it is expensive to take out loans right now. Mr. Palmer said he would like to ask him more about how they marketed and branded, what consultants they have used and how they do the retail recruitment. Jeff Angelo said there was quite a concerted effort from a marketing standpoint. Mayor Countryman said everyone was on the same page too and that is helpful when you have everyone pitching the same idea and same agenda and everyone is selling it.

Ryan Londeen asked whatever happened to why they shot down the TIRZ idea. Mr. Palmer said since he has been here it has not been shot down it is just they have to get some legs on that thing. Mr. Palmer said he does not have experience in Texas TIF district development. He said he thinks they are ripe for exactly that. They have to find a way to generate money to put back into the downtown area. Mayor Countryman asked where do they tax the east side and then put it in the downtown or they have to tax the area. Ryan Londeen said it goes back into the area and then goes back to district. Mr. Palmer said it is setting up a Board and getting the people that are in that district to be on the Board. It is a process. Mr. Petrov, City Attorney said you can do it a couple ways. He said you can have like an add-on tax, an extra district that has an extra 10 cent tax that is devoted to that area or a true TIRZ is in increment where they pay the same tax rate as everywhere in the city but as it gets redeveloped and the assessed value goes up you haircut it at the top and that money is devoted to the district. Ryan Londeen said he thinks that would be a good idea because they are not having to fight over capital projects. He knows there are other needs outside the city, but the EDC, we really love our downtown and think it is helpful. It would be good if they could focus on money that is there and then the rest of the money could go to capital improvement projects. Mr. Palmer said he thinks they need to dedicate one workshop to talk about all of the options and determine which ones are best because he is thinking special assessment, TIF district, and TIRZ but they have to pick something. Mr. Petrov said there are all kinds of vehicles. Jeff Angelo said they at least have some direction and are very close to getting a vision and already have some drawings. He said they just need some action. Ryan Londeen said some of it is just getting mired but they have to do the boring stuff first like McCown Street. It would be great to get that going just so they could show the rest of the residents they are serious about this but you do have to do the boring stuff first. Ryan Londeen asked what is the status on the water, sewer, and drainage efforts on McCown Street. Mr. Palmer said he would have to get an update on that as he does not know off hand. For him it is about getting the plan and then trying to find out the funding mechanism and start putting some street scape plans together, an actionable plan and actual construction drawings. Ryan Londeen said they have construction drawings being developed for McCown and that is like the pace they can mess with because it is not dealing with TxDOT. It is our area and so that is a great start. They just need to make sure they do not lose focus and sight of that. Dan Walker said they just need to get the foundation down first like the water, sewer, and

drainage done. Jeff Angelo said he thinks that is done. Casey Olson said they have not done the waterlines yet. Mr. Palmer said he will get an update and send it out to everyone. Jeff Angelo said he thinks they are pretty close to getting to step one. He said they have done a lot of work and are very close. They have done the hard stuff. This was perfectly timed because we are going to have to market this downtown. He said he thinks they are hungry for them to just be able to do something and so when we say we are sorry you have not seen it but we have been dressing for awhile but now we are ready.

Mr. Palmer said they have their joint meeting coming up with Kendig Keast Collaborative and will be doing the interim ordinance amendments which is exactly what he is saying. We are looking at our ordinances and getting everything ready for the type of development we want to see. He said they have the vision session with the downtown to get that five year strategic plan together for downtown and then he has an update for you on the retail recruitment part of that where Retail Strategies is going out and marketing them to some of these businesses. He said those are all pieces Mr. Stafford talked about and of course their biggest two things are funding and just band width, building the capacity to do the work. Those are the two challenges and they are not insurmountable, they just have to address them. Jeff Angelo said he thinks once Stephanie gets past these next few events she will get some breathing space and she knows what to do. You cannot just ask someone to walk in and take over four or five events and having never participated in any of them. He said plus we need some of our community to come together and help rally with it like with folks who have done it before. Mr. Palmer said do not sit on the sidelines and throw grenades but get involved and start helping out. Jeff Angelo said that is right. We are trying and actually have people who are trying so let us give them the support they need to make a difference.

2. Discussion on Licensing of City Trademark and Logo

Jeff Angelo said to tell them what they need to do to make the historic trademark historic. Mr. Petrov asked what exactly do you want to do with it and correct me if I am wrong but the City did register that. Mayor Countryman said they registered the birth place of the Texas flag. Jeff Angelo asked if they are under any legal obligation to do something with it in a specific amount of time. Mr. Petrov said no. Mayor Countryman said it is just that anything that is marketed with that on it they get a piece of the pie right. Mr. Petrov said not automatically. He said because you registered that you can do a cease and assist if someone else is using that so you can stop other people from using your trademark and that is the benefit of registration. He said you can license it to people to use and that is how you get a piece of the pie. For example if I am Walt Disney and I have my Mickey Mouse and ask all license companies to stick it on t-shirts and I have a licensing agreement with them, for every t-shirt they kick back a percent to me. Mayor Countryman said Kroger sells the stuff to the schools. We should have them selling stuff for the City and getting it from Kroger and HEB. Ryan Londeen said when HEB comes through have them start selling special products. Jeff Angelo asked how do they start that in terms of a licensing agreement. Mr. Petrov said you have to have someone willing to actually create the product and market it. Jeff Angelo said they have talked with three companies who want to participate in that but if they are doing the sales they are selling to the retailers so that would be us selling. He asked if that is who you cut the licensing deal with, those sellers. Mr. Petrov said yes. He said you can do it a couple of ways. You can do a licensing agreement depending on what type of volume you may be thinking about. For smaller volume deals you might just say pay me \$500 and you can use this on as many coffee mugs as you want to try and sell. If you think they are going to be selling a million coffee mugs you might want to do a buy fee. Jeff

Angelo asked if you could do it on a scalable type licensing deal to where you start out with a \$500 licensing fee. Mr. Petrov said and if you have a certain volume then you start paying an additional percentage, yes. He said it is all in how you structure the compensation section. Jeff Angelo asked how do we go about starting to give companies an opportunity. Do they just reach out to them and say this is what we are looking at and how would you like to participate. Casey Olson said they draw up a contract for how they decide they want to do it and just hand it over to them and say this is what we want to do and if you want to sell it then sign. Mr. Petrov said they can provide fairly simple licensing agreements. The key is finding the people who want to participate in that and want to do the leg work. Jeff Angelo asked if we have the artwork for that. Mayor Countryman asked for the birthplace of the Texas flag. Jeff Angelo said yes. Mayor Countryman said they were using the goat. Jeff Angelo said maybe have someone draw something up that is a little bit more professional. Carol Langley asked if the City has it on their letterhead. Mr. Palmer asked if she meant the birthplace of the Texas flag. Carol Langley said yes. Mayor Countryman said no this is it right here. Carol Langley asked if they have that logo right there somewhere. Mr. Palmer said digitally they have the logo. He said it is just a jpeg. Stephanie Johnson, Special Events Coordinator said it needs to be branded with specific colors and needs to be a vector file. Jeff Angelo asked if that was a vector file at one point or do we know. Mr. Palmer said no. Mayor Countryman said this was done like 10 years ago. Jeff Angelo said we need a graphic artist to review it because he would like to it in a couple of different ways and not just one way. He said maybe by their next EDC meeting he can present some different ones. Mayor Countryman said that would be cool to have the logo be coming from SH-105 the hill coming down with the big Texas flag and rooftops of commercial businesses. Ryan Londeen said they can hire a copy center and give them a bunch of different ones and they can sell different formats. Jeff Angelo asked Stephanie to make a note. Mr. Palmer said do not scare Stephanie with this stuff because he wants her focusing on events. He said he would handle it. Jeff Angelo said to send him a note to remind him and starting Monday and he will get on it. Mr. Palmer said because we are a city we have to get three quotes. Jeff Angelo said he will get three quotes. He said once they get the logo, the brand and whatever they decide on and get the City to put together a licensing agreement, what is everyone thinking. Something simple like a \$500 licensing agreement. Carol Langley asked why would you do \$500. She said small businesses are not going to go for that. He said he was talking about the wholesale companies. Casey Olson said the wholesale company making the product that will pay the licensing fee and they will try and sell it. Jeff Angelo said then they will sell it to the Kroger's of the world so if they sell 1,000 t-shirts they way more than made that. Carol Langley said she misunderstood. She did not think they were going that way. Jeff Angelo said it is better to go that way because then they can focus on one company that is actually driving the sales for the City. Mr. Petrov said they might take the product to a couple different stores because Kroger is not going to enter into the licensing agreement. It is the guy who is making the product. Jeff Angelo said what they will do is create a scalable environment so they start out with just a small fee and once they hit a certain benchmark then it just becomes piecemeal after that. He said then they are not out anymore but at the same time if the logo pops and we are starting to see things jump then we should be compensated for that. Arnette Easley asked how they would monitor the progress on that. Jeff Angelo said they have to send a monthly report. Mr. Petrov said that is how you typically do it. Jeff Angelo said he will work to try and push this along and at least have some merchandise and once they get some swag they can put it on everything such as keychains. Stephanie Johnson said her suggestion from the background she has been in is she would do two logos unless you are going to use one logo for the entire City. She said when you are

branding you want someone to know you by looking at it. Mr. Palmer said if you are going to try to find three vendors and get three quotes we are thinking it is going to be a little bit expensive so we want to bring that back to the next meeting and talk about that. Ryan Londeen said they need to figure out if it is just a logo or is it like a whole branding package. If we are getting quotes we need to be consistent with them all. Dan Walker said you have to also look at signage and things like that. Ryan Londeen said he thinks they have to do it right and get qualifications from several different people. He said a graphics designer can create a simple little logo or they can create a whole branding package where they tell you the font and color and when to use them, what is the sub color, what is the primary color. He said that is more expensive. Jeff Angelo said that is okay because they are not spending money on anything anyway. Ryan Londeen said you have to specify on the catalogue of things that we want and we want this product here so we can get quotes. Carol Langley asked if there is a logo on the signage. Jeff Angelo said when they get done with it, it will work everywhere. Carol Langley asked if that was on the signs they already talked about and is there something on it. Jeff Angelo said there is something on it. Mayor Countryman asked if they have been made yet. Jeff Angelo said no. He said he will look at all those just to make sure because they do not want to reinvent the wheel. If they can just say they already have the colors and everything else that we would need we might as well stick with it. Arnette Easley said if they are going to have three logos the birth of the Texas flag will be one of the three. Casey Olson said the trademark is the birthplace of the Texas flag. Jeff Angelo said these are all just drawings so once we get a logo we need to keep in mind that they already created all this so we do not have to reinvent the wheel too much. Ryan Londeen said he thought they were going to have some signs. Casey Olson said he did too and thought they were going to decide on a couple and say build these first. Mr. Palmer said he thought they did that at the last meeting. Jeff Angelo said he does not know what they did at the last meeting. Mr. Palmer said he will find out about the signs and email it out to everyone along with McCown Street progress.

Motion to approve the grant request for Wreaths Across America for \$853.00 as presented was made by Casey Olson and seconded by Carol Langley. **All in favor. (4-0).**

3. **General Updates on Economic Development Initiatives**

Mr. Palmer said this packet is the retail recruitment update and the flyer is just an update on the downtown strategies upcoming vision session. It has the project schedule on there and basic information you can look at and see a quick update. In the packet is a lot of the analytical stuff and also has an ongoing recruitment list of people they are talking to. He said to take a look at that list and if there are things you do not want them focusing on or businesses you think they should be focusing on, send those to him and he will send it to them and get them on it. Jeff Angelo asked what group is the list on. Mr. Palmer said it is four pages in. The Commission continued discussion on different businesses that would be good to bring into the City. Jeff Angelo said they would review the list. Mr. Palmer said just send the list to him individually and he will get it to them but they can talk about it. He said he will keep this as a standing item on the agenda. Jeff Angelo said Mr. Palmer needs to find out where we are with respect to the sign package. Mr. Palmer said he will get them an update on that and the McCown Street progress and email it out so it can be on the next agenda as well. Casey Olson asked if these are businesses they want to put in downtown. Mr. Palmer said no they are talking to them about

coming to Montgomery or even the region. He said if we cannot get them here it would still be beneficial to get them around here.

Jeff Angelo said he thinks they have some really good intel and asked if there is anything they can do to support you better to help move things along. Mr. Palmer said right now nothing to do with what Brad is talking about but we really do need help with the events. Jeff Angelo said they are all working together with Stephanie right now trying to anyway but it would not hurt for everyone on this Board to try and give a little bit of support to her. Let us get through these next few weeks and then Stephanie will be on the other side after the 14th right. Stephanie Johnson said they have the Lone Star Dance, Light up the Park, Movie Night, the Christmas Parade, and the Snow Party. She said she feels very comfortable with all of the events but has some concerns with the parade because that is an event that takes 12 to 16 weeks and they are going to pull it off in literally six or seven weeks. It is possible and they are going to make it happen but she is going to need their help. Jeff Angelo said Stephanie Johnson is their new Special Events Coordinator and she is working closely with Mr. Palmer and he knows Mr. Palmer has to be relieved because she is pretty remarkable. He said we have sat down and had great conversations and Mayor Countryman has as well. He wants her to talk about what she has done in the past but more importantly what she sees for the future. He said he is very grateful because they put a lot of effort in recruiting and finding the right person for the job. He has told her over and over again she is beyond the right person for the job and we are grateful to have her.

4. Introduction of Stephanie Johnson the City's Special Events Coordinator

Stephanie Johnson said it is good to be here in Montgomery. She is very happy and blessed and thanked everyone for the opportunity. She said her goal is to exceed your expectations but with that is going to come time, patience, and preparation because she is only one person. It has taken a bit to get acclimated to all the wonderful people in the community and she has met with just about everyone downtown. Everyone is eager to help and offer their expertise for this event. There are a lot of events and a lot of people that have planned the events so it is just learning the standard operating procedures for each event, but they are in full swing and they have the Lone Star Dance this Saturday and Light up the poles decorating begins tomorrow. They are sold out of poles and had 47 poles. She said in looking at what they did last year, she does need help with the contest for the businesses and the residents and she also needs judges and Stephanie Fox has offered to help her with that. Mayor Countryman said for the judges you do not ever tell who the judges are because they could be city employees, they could be elected, they could be residents or businesses. They drive around and look at the businesses and homes and pick out three. She said she does not know if it is the same judges or different judges for the poles in the park. Stephanie Johnson said she does not have anyone signed up for that and she does not have time to market that. Mayor Countryman asked you mean the poles. Stephanie Johnson said no it looks like on the registration job form there are poles they can sign up for but there is another registration for a contest for residents. Mayor Countryman said residents love Light up the Park and that is where they announce the winners. Carol Langley said an announcement goes out to tell the residents and the businesses to get your lights up and your decorations out. Mayor Countryman said you put it on social media and tell them to have it done by December 2nd. Jeff Angelo said we still do not have any judges. Mayor Countryman said we have a month to figure that out so it is not a big deal and said she could provide some names. Carol Langley said the judges are not a problem. Jeff Angelo said you need to tell them what they win. Mayor Countryman said they usually get \$75, \$150, and \$200 and give them checks at Light up the Park.

Stephanie Johnson continued and said there is Movie Night which will be November 16th and is all taken care of. The Christmas Parade is December 14th and the Snow Day will be on

December 21st. Jeff Angelo said let us focus on the Christmas Parade for now and asked Stephanie Johnson what does she need specifically. Stephanie Johnson said she needs a description of the volunteers and what they are going to do. The worst thing you want is to have people come out to volunteer their time and you cannot tell them what their job is. She said she cannot write a description for the volunteers. Mayor Countryman said she would get her some help. She said Becky may not want to work it but we can get some knowledge transferred from her. Cheryl Fox has done it as well as Jennifer Skinner. Stephanie Johnson said time is of the essence because she still needs to schedule a meeting for the departments to come together so they can have a briefing about everything so she can have it all together in a matter of three or four days. She also has to schedule a meeting for the participants of the parade. She said she has already met with the Lion's Club. Jeff Angelo asked if it would be easier to have a Zoom meeting. Stephanie Johnson said it says when you are registering for the parade there will be a mandatory pre-parade meeting. Mayor Countryman said that is usually the week before the parade. Stephanie Johnson said people are calling her wanting to know what is going on and she is so knee deep in the big stuff that she does not have time to respond to hey I forgot what my pole number is. She said they need more information about the parade. She wants to focus on the big things and she has to prioritize her day for what she is doing. Jeff Angelo said we knew you were going to be dragged into a fire hose. Stephanie Johnson said yes, but we are going to pull it off. Jeff Angelo said as far as the questions that are coming in for Light up the Pole generally there is a map that lists the sponsor for that. Stephanie Johnson said they get a confirmation email too but if they registered two months ago people forget and she understands. Jeff Angelo said why not send out the map that shows everyone who is participating and have one of the secretaries do it. Stephanie Johnson said a person today did her a huge favor and emailed everyone for her, but for the Christmas Parade she is starting to get a lot of questions and she has told them to please be patient. Jeff Angelo asked if they could put it on social media. Stephanie Johnson said it is already on social media. Jeff Angelo is saying just about general information. Mayor Countryman said let us get Becky, Cheryl, Jennifer, and Stephanie together because they have done this before. Jeff Angelo asked if they have talked to Santa. Stephanie Johnson said yes he is confirmed for Light up the Park and also for the Christmas Parade. She just needs to find a vehicle for the Grand Marshal. Mayor Countryman asked who is the Grand Marshal. Jeff Angelo said Robert Morrison, Headmaster for Montgomery Christian Academy. Mayor Countryman said if Montgomery High School is going to the playoffs they need to do something for them in the Christmas Parade and have them behind the Grand Marshal. Stephanie Johnson said there are a lot of schools participating. She needs someone to volunteer that knows this parade to be over the schools, the horses, the creative floats and then there are the jeeps. Mayor Countryman said we could put on social media if anyone would like to volunteer to help put on the Christmas Parade. Stephanie Johnson said there is a social media post that goes out for volunteers that she needs to follow-up on. She does have a spreadsheet of four or five people. She has a to-do list she goes by and does it every day and the good thing is she is crossing items off the list. As she meets with more people though her agenda gets bigger but that is to be expected. Jeff Angelo said it will start to wane a bit as they get to the end of the year and you will have some breathing room. Stephanie Johnson said she just wants to make sure she does everything she needs to as far as all the moving parts for the parade because it has been around for a very long time and it is very important to this community. The people that have spent many years planning and organizing this we want it to flow and we want it to appear to be flawless to the outside. Jeff Angelo said he will help volunteer when he can and he will actually be playing Santa starting at 1:00 p.m. but the parade will be over by then. Stephanie Johnson said she needs to also get with the bus barn because there are buses that pick the kids up at the high school because that is where everyone parks and then brings them to Brookshire Brothers and they walk across the street. She said she has the horses somewhere else. Jeff Angelo said Chief Solomon will know all of that. Stephanie Johnson said she has a meeting with him tomorrow. Jeff Angelo said he thinks she will get clarification. Casey Olson said Chief will know as he sets up everything. Stephanie Johnson said she knows they are working on the ICS and she will be going with Lieutenant Belmares on Tuesday to meet everyone from

Brookshire Brothers and to show her around. She said she wants to know ahead of time about parking and where to park and to let everyone know that is passing through that the road will be closed for an hour and a half. She wants everyone to be prepared as much as they can and said she will also need a parking map for all the parking areas. She wants to be able to promote that and send it out to all the participants in the parade with the rules and regulations. Jeff Angelo said he has 70 parking spots. Stephanie Johnson asked if they could use that. Jeff Angelo said this time yes since they do not have an event going on that day. Mayor Countryman said she will also ask Chris Cheatham about parking. Stephanie Johnson said also if there is a way to use the one off Clepper and on the other side of the administration building. Mayor Countryman said they always let them use that. She said they will even rope it off for them. Stephanie Johnson said this is the kind of information she needs. Mayor Countryman said the parking on Clepper on the other side of the school is for the horses and trailers. Mayor Countryman said you have many people that have knowledge of all this. Stephanie Johnson said they need shuttles and someone asked why not hire the bus drivers do it. Mayor Countryman said for the school you cannot just hire them. They have to be at the school activity because of the insurance. They would shuttle all of the cheerleaders and band from the high school which kept a lot of theirs out of here. You could not shuttle people because of insurance. Mayor Countryman said Larry Jacobs said they could use his on Clepper too if they wanted to. Dan Walker said also to consider if it will be raining or not. Jeff Angelo said it is rain or shine and it has always been that way. He said one year it was so cold but it still went on without a hitch. Jeff Angelo said people love it and no matter what it is going to go on. Stephanie Johnson said she just wants to make sure it flows well because they have a lot of participation, a lot of different groups and categories. Jeff Angelo said he thinks her eyes will be open and her volunteer base will come together when you put out the help sign tomorrow as well as with the Mayor's help. Mayor Countryman is really good about mobilizing the people. Stephanie Johnson said she thinks meeting with Chief tomorrow too will help. She said this is not her first rodeo but it is her first parade. Jeff Angelo said not to worry about it. They will walk her through it. Jeff Angelo said they will be roping off Prairie as they always do so anyone who is parking needs to get in by a certain time or they are not going to make it. Jeff Angelo asked if they use to have signs for parking. Mayor Countryman said yes and thinks Public Works has the signs. She said Chief has digital signage that could also help with parking. Jeff Angelo said they know there is designated parking and that needs to be on the map and put on social media. Mayor Countryman said Becky created a map like that and highlighted all the parking areas and said she will talk with Becky about it.

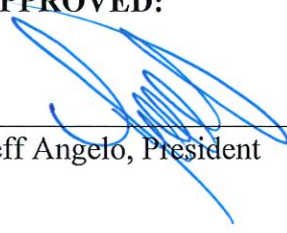
BOARD INQUIRY

Jeff Angelo congratulated Ryan Londeen and says he knows how hard it is and how it was quite a struggle to get that. Ryan Londeen said yes it took three years to get the historic marker. He is trying to work on the other houses on College Street to help them get their markers up. Jeff Angelo said he did a great job and thanked him for that.

ADJOURNMENT

Jeff Angelo adjourned the meeting at 8:07 p.m.

APPROVED:



Jeff Angelo, President

ATTEST:



Ryan Londeen, Secretary