

**VILLAGE OF SCHOOLCRAFT JOINT MEETING
VILLAGE COUNCIL, PLANNING COMMISSION, DDA
MARCH 25, 2010**

The Joint Meeting of the Village Council, Planning Commission and DDA held at 442 N. Grand Street, Schoolcraft, Michigan was called to order by President Dan DeVries at 7:00 p.m.

ROLL CALL:

Present: President Dan DeVries, Trustees: Clark, Barnes, Dailey, Carlin, Tackett, Commissioners: Brown, Rozeboom, Willis, Graber, DDA Board Members: Reynolds, Peart, Hartleib, Stamper.
Absent: Gunnett, Miller, and MacPhee.
Also Present: Village Manager Cheri Lutz, Village Clerk Faith Akert, Joyce Steeby, Sue Stamper, Russell Lee Barnes, and Pat Temple.

President Dan DeVries expressed his thanks for those in attendance and stated that the meeting would be an informal meeting of Village Officials and Board members to discuss Village strategies and direction for the upcoming years; and to plan for a mission/vision statement for the Village of Schoolcraft.

President DeVries led discussion asking the following questions:

- What do we want to be as a community?
- Who are we as a community?
- Where are we going as a community?
- How do we plan to get there as a community?

Dan Hartlieb provided input on strengths and weaknesses of the community identified as follows:

Strengths

- Easy access to US 131 and I-94.
- Visibility.
- Close proximity to Portage and Kalamazoo.
- Community Spirit and Celebrations.
- Quaint Community.
- Streetscape Enhancement.
- Easy Rail Access.
- Village is close to farmland.

Weaknesses:

- No sanitary sewer.
- Businesses need to be more diversified.
- Downtown lacks luster.
- No large industrial companies.
- Foreclosure of businesses and homes in community.

COMMENTS FROM BOARDS:

Bret Willis had the following comments:

- He stated that all communities are dealing with decreasing revenues and taxes.
- He stated that the community should still strive to move forward.
- He stated the sanitary sewer is important to the community.

Wes Schmitt had the following comments:

- He stated that decreasing revenues and taxes are out of the Village's control.
- He stated that the former Village Council did not want to work with the Federal Government when grant funding was available in the mid 50's.

Deb Reynolds has the following comment:

- She stated that the issue of sanitary sewer has been ongoing for a number of years, and that lack of sanitary sewer is hard on the business community.

President DeVries had the following comments:

- He stated that the Village needs to prepare for sanitary sewer and needs to determine how to get there.

Rich Peart had the following comments:

- He stated that he is a big supporter of sanitary sewer and we need to make plans now –so we can have it in the future.
- He stated that he is concerned about vacant stores, and that more businesses will increase business of the existing businesses by drawing more people to the community.

Village Manager Cheri Lutz had the following comments:

- She stated that many municipalities hire consultants to assist in marketing strategies, or hold workshops for business owners.
- She stated that many of the businesses that come to Schoolcraft are “pop-up” businesses and that they seem to lack a business and marketing plan.

President Dan DeVries had the following comment:

- He stated that Schoolcraft could work with local colleges to assist in marketing the Village of Schoolcraft and the business community.

Jim Stamper had the following comments:

- He stated that many businesses in the community are struggling to stay alive.
- He stated that the Village of Schoolcraft is not perceived to be “business friendly” because of restrictive zoning requirements.

Dan Hartlieb had the following comments:

- He asked if the Village has a handout to simplify zoning rules.
- He stated that the Village staff does not advocate businesses.
- He stated that AGS does not promote the Village of Schoolcraft.
- He suggested working with Southwest Michigan 1st.

Tim Brown had the following comment:

- He stated that signage is a problem for all businesses.
- He stated that AGS provides information regarding building, electrical codes, and ensures that businesses are able to locate within specific zoning districts.
- He stated that AGS is not enforcing arbitrary rules, but is enforcing National Business and Safety Codes.

President DeVries had the following comments:

- He stated that the mission statement could include that the Village is friendly to businesses.
- He stated that the residents should have a say in what it takes to make Schoolcraft “business friendly”.
- He suggested inviting AGS to a DDA meeting.

Trustee Tackett had the following comment:

- He stated that AGS is hard to work with.

President DeVries asked if there is any interest in making the Village of Schoolcraft a Green Community?

Tim Brown had the following comment:

- He stated that the concept of a green community is a hot issue and people are interested in it.

Dan Hartlieb had the following comment:

- He stated that the Village needs to promote recycling, and to make rules for people to do it.

President DeVries asked for comments on Community Events.

Manager Cheri Lutz had the following comment:

- She stated that she would like to see more cultural events such as music in the park and art fairs.

Bret Willis had the following comment:

- He stated that he would like to see movies in the park, and to have fund raisers linked to the activity.

Tim Brown had the following comment:

- He stated that the City of Parchment would be a good model to look at.

President DeVries had the following comments:

- He stated that the 4th of July Celebration defines the Village of Schoolcraft.
- He stated that the Village Manager is benchmarking what other communities do.

Trustee Tackett had the following comments:

- He stated that he has plans to have Music on the sidewalk this summer.

President DeVries asked for comments on the economic downturn which affects the Village of Schoolcraft and its ability to provide services.

Wes Schmitt had the following comments:

- He stated that the Village should work toward educating its citizenry about costs of services.
- He stated that the Village should ask for citizenry input.

Tim Brown stated that the Village should put a positive spin on services, but emphasize that cutting services will be a necessity.

Village Manager Cheri Lutz had the following comments on her memorandum Regarding programs, services, and social networking as follows:

- She stated that the Village has supported the Annual Walk for Warmth Program for many years through the adoption of a resolution but has not actively sought out funding for the program.
- She discussed the Online Transparency Report Card submitted by Trustee Gunnett.
- She stated that the Village should consider uses for the vacant lot on Hayward Street, and indicated that she would like to see the lot sold and monies donated to the DDA's Streetscape Project.

- She presented the idea of creating a Facebook account for the Village of Schoolcraft.

Additional Comments:

Josh Graber had the following comments:

- He stated that he likes the idea of a Facebook account for the Village, and thinks it will need to be monitored.
- He suggested that the Village highlight one of its businesses in the quarterly newsletters.

Rich Peart and Wes Schmitt stated that they hear good comments about the Village's Newsletter.

Deb Reynolds had the following comments:

- She suggested the possibility of raffles for fundraisers.
- She inquired about hanging banners across US 131.

Dan Hartleib stated that he appreciates having a joint meeting.

President DeVries had the following comments:

- He stated that there could be ways to capitalize on the 4th of July Celebration.
- He stated that he would support joint meetings two times a year.
- He asked the committees to keep informed, work with each other, and to get to know each other.

ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting was adjourned at 8:35 p.m.

Faith C. Akert, Village Clerk

Daniel P. DeVries, Village President