

**CITY COUNCIL WORKSHOP MEETING
AUGUST 23, 2011**

Call to Order

Mayor Merrifield called the workshop meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers, Franklin City Hall.

In Attendance

Councilor Andreozzi, Councilor Bowers, Councilor Audet, Councilor Feener, Councilor Trudel, Councilor Starkweather, Councilor Clarenbach, City Manager Dragon and Mayor Merrifield.

Absent

Councilor Boyd and Councilor Sharon.

Discussion concerning Options for the Bessie Rowell School

Manager Dragon stated the school board has voted to close Bessie Rowell School and once the building is no longer used as a school it becomes the property of the City and under the control of the City Council. The school has moved a majority of, if not, most everything from the building. The summer programming appears to be over. She advised that she did contact the school to see what their plan was but unfortunately they have not had a chance to have that discussion or a formal vote. The School Board Chair advised he would put that on the September agenda to have a formal vote. Councilor Bowers asked why the School Board is waiting until September to discuss this. Chair Yonaitis commented that they were going to winterize the building and close it down for the year but after having a conversation with the City Manager and listening to comments from the Council he stated he would go before the Board with options the Council is considering. Manager Dragon stated one of the things that she had heard was the possibility of the school keeping the building, winterizing it for the year and keeping it for awhile yet. As the City discussions have moved forward, we were looking at a timeline what happens when they are done using it, what happens to the building so we were moving forward under the assumption that it is going to be the City's issue once they are done using it for school purposes. Councilor Andreozzi commented that during a budget workshop the Council did say that they wanted

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to leave money in the school's budget so that they would be responsible to winterize and take care of it. At that time we did not set a timeline even though we ask for some kind of clarification, it was left at that and in light of that she stated she can understand where the School Board having not gotten directly any other communication from us would think they are winterizing it and that is to take care of it for at least this budget year. Councilor Bowers questioned they want to keep it over the winter. Manager Dragon stated she believes that was a discussion they were having about keeping it and winterizing it. Councilor Bowers stated according to State Statute as soon as they no longer use that building for a school which is right now that building reverts to the City. Councilor Andreozi stated she would like it on the record and read from the July 18 School Board Meeting minutes "Discussion was held regarding who is responsible for the current Bessie Rowell School Building, what may need to be done and some of the potential uses. The School District and the City are working together through this process."

Manager Dragon stated she has currently been looking at three options: The sale of the building; closure/winterizing the building; and possible reuse of the building.

Sale of the Building – Manager Dragon spoke with Karl and Joe of Norwood Realty Group on July 6th. She sent them all the information about the building, the tax card, the square footage, the map and the current layout of the building and asked them to evaluate it for a potential sale and how would they market the building. They did express concern about the possible limited reuse of the building because of the zoning as the zoning is residential. Unless the zoning was changed, they felt the best use for the building would be some type of multi-housing, (apartments, and condos). She stated she had a conversation with Norwood after that explaining that Franklin already has a lot of affordable housing and the prices of rental property in Franklin, they suggested looking at assisted living but then looked at the assisted living that is already present in Franklin and that appeared not to be a great option either. It was left at that and told them if the Council decided that selling the property is the route they would want to pursue, that they would work with the City and look at how to move forward and potentially market the building.

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Closing the Building – Manager Dragon commented that during the budget process there was a discussion with the school about the closing of the school and winterizing it and they had a number that she recalls was between \$10,000 - \$15,000. She stated she was hoping to get from the school some sort of backup as to how they arrived at that number. Manager Dragon advised Brian Barry did go and speak with Chuck Norris with the school and has been very helpful. She advised a month ago when they did a tour of the building Mr. Norris informed them that at least four windows have been broken since the announcement of the closure and the kitchen area has been broken into. There is concern about continued vandalism if the building should remain vacant.

Manager Dragon advised she asked Brian Barry to be here tonight if there are any questions related to the building as he has been through the building several times; he has looked at the heating system, the roof is relatively new and new windows. The building is in good shape.

Reuse of the Building – There are a variety of options for reuse. Manager Dragon stated she has focused on one that has gained support from organizations in the community that would be involved. These organizations do not conflict with one another and they also add benefit. The proposal would be to create a Franklin Inter-Generational Center which would house the TRIP Center, Tiny Twisters, Parks and Recreation, FBIDC, Planning, Zoning and Assessing and Code Enforcement.

Manager Dragon stated Tiny Twisters has been seeking a new home and had come before the City Council to support CDBG Grant application which was originally \$500,000. They were looking to get a new building of their own. The cost were quite high to do that so Tiny Twisters so they began to consider other options. When it came to light that the school was going to be closed conversations with Tiny Twisters took place to see if the school building might be an option for them. Tiny Twisters is very excited about the possibility of being located in the building and were able to amend their grant should this become a viable option for them. To upgrade and change the building for the needs of the Center, also upgrade the existing playground, create a new playground for smaller children, create a key card security system, purchase security cameras, and a

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generator for the building as the Fire Chief had expressed interest in possibly using the building as an emergency shelter. A generator cost about \$90,000 and this would be a way to get that funded should this move forward.

If the Parks and Recreation Department were to relocate to this building, in their current location they have some ADA issues and they are not able to use the second floor and it is cost prohibitive to do the things they would need to do in order to make use of that space. She commented by locating in the same building with Tiny Twisters they could be a one-stop shop for drop-off when kids are dropped off at the Center, they could also be dropped off at Recreation Programs.

The Commercial Kitchen is something the City has not had before could create a whole host of possibilities and the stage area not on for the Recreation Center but also for other organizations looking to use the space and some potential revenue opportunities.

Manager Dragon advised she has had a conversation with the TRIP Center and they were thrilled with the idea of co-locating. Manager Dragon stated other communities such as Meredith and Concord have done a similar thing.

Manager Dragon stated taking a model from Claremont for economic development that has been very successful locating FBIDC in the same in the same building as Code Enforcement, Planning/Zoning and Assessing would create a one-stop shop for someone interested in developing in Franklin. Additionally, the Planning/Zoning and Assessing located on the upper floor of City

Hall has many files that are putting quite a load on the floor and the upper floor is not ADA accessible.

Manager Dragon commented that one of the existing things about a project like this is the ability to solve a whole host of problems. She stated there are lots of possibilities from the shared space. The kitchen being a commercial kitchen opens up a whole host of opportunities for revenues, wedding, catering, etc. Manager Dragon stated she realized no matter how great or creative or out of the box it might be, if the numbers didn't work, it wouldn't work. Manager Dragon

provided spreadsheets prepared by Director Milner concerning estimated costs as to how much it would cost the City to run the school as a center and how the City would be able to charge each organization to offset those costs while trying to keep the City's cost close to the same as to what the City is already paying to run the Recreation Center. She stated her goal was to bring in all the organizations and keep the cost that the City is already spending which is approximately \$25,000 for the Rec Center and transfer those monies to the school building and keep it level. She stated right now it is at about \$20,000, a \$4,000 increase.

The remaining piece of the puzzle would be to find an organization that would be a good fit for the current recreation building. She stated Head Start is looking for a new home and they are paying very high rent. The problem with that is they need a kitchen.

Manager Dragon stated she needs guidance from the Council. She stated she feels this is a great idea for the City to create this Center but if the Council is not interested in this reuse of the building she does not want to spend a lot more staff time in creating leases, running numbers, etc. She further stated Tiny Twisters is going to need a place at some point; their current lease has an extension to next June, 2012 but they need to start planning now as to what they are going to do and if this is not a viable option for them they will need to begin pursuing other options.

Manager Dragon commented one of the good things about the building, the building is flat that is ADA accessible, has many entrances and exits, some common area and the way it is proposed we have it grouped in a way that would work for everyone so that if someone was coming in for economic development purposes they would come in at a door near the end of the building and FBIDC, and Planning & Zoning would be located. The main entrance door would be where the Recreation Center starts, and using the recreation software that we already in place that is used to schedule events, we would use that same software to be able to schedule the multi-purpose room, the stage area, and be able to post what is taking place in the Center.

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The TRIP Center is located next to Tiny Twisters and the reason Tiny Twisters is located in this spot is a door is there so they would be able to get out to the playground and as part of the grant another playground is being created for the smaller children that would be fenced in. The reason for locating the TRIP Center next to Tiny Twisters is so they would be close to the kitchen. This would be less than what the TRIP Center is currently paying for their space. This is also more economical for Tiny Twisters than having their own building. THE FBIDC organization is currently paying \$6,000 and that money is actually being paid by the City would be rolled back into this project.

Councilor Bowers commented that he thinks this is a great idea, we need more information and the numbers need more work plus he stated he would like to see commitments, a written statement that these organizations are actually interested in locating in this center. Councilor Bowers stated what needs to happen first is what the Council decides they want to do with the building, sell it, mothball it or reuse it. Mayor Merrifield commented there are two councilors missing but there is a majority that can express their ideas. Councilor Andreozzi asked if the Council should decide to reuse it, what the thinking as to when that would start is. Manager Dragon stated it looks like in November we will have the answer on the CDBG Grant. If the Council would want to move forward, there are organizations that could move in right away. The TRIP Center is very excited and it did not seem like it would take them very long to get out of their lease. She stated it would take some time because leases would need to be in place, draft language, create the actual floor plan, where desks would go, etc. It would take a lot of planning and would take several months. She stated she would think the building could not be occupied before December or January.

Councilor Andreozzi stated her concern is that we also need a plan as she stated what if we wanted to reuse it; she did not feel it could be all gotten together for everything and have all the figures and commitments before the winter starts. If Tiny Twisters is a key point of it and their grant is the key thing that will allow them to do it, that will not be determined until November; construction and whatever they would need would take a few months plus if they are making a lease with the school for the year, then they have to keep that commitment. She stated the other part is needed as leaving that building unattended for the winter

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will be a disaster and we don't want to have to be heating/maintaining it that will be extra costs that are not in the City's budget. Manager Dragon responded Tiny Twisters has a lease through next June extension but can get out of the lease at any time between now and then so they are not tied into next June. They are very anxious to get out and the changes that the grant is bringing are so minor; the rooms are lined up really well, there is very little needed to make this work for all the different organizations. There is not much needed in the way of construction but hoping to take advantage for the grant funds for some security items, the playground, and upgrades.

Councilor Feener commented the concept is good and he stated he has a real concern mothballing the building because of vandalism/weather. He stated his concern is a commitment from Tiny Twisters and the TRIP Center as that is the only way this concept would work. He also stated we need to know from the school when they will finally turn the building over to the City. He further stated that if they had monies in their budget for winterization, those monies should be turned over to the City to be used for the re-outfitting of the building. Councilor Feener stated his biggest concern is that the City would have a vacant building where the Rec Center was.

Councilor Audet stated what bothers him is the City still does not have a starting point. He stated we do not have a market analysis on the building from experts. He stated there is no base to know what the building would be worth.

Councilor Andreozzi commented that having a presence in the Rec Building is very important for Odell Park. If no one is there, there will be a lot of vandalism. Councilor Clarenbach commented the School District will no longer be using Bessie Rowell as a school; we have 150 vacant homes in the City. Paul Smith School will hold 900 students, and looking at the classroom size and the number of class rooms they are close to being maxed out. Once that happens they will be looking for an addition at Paul Smith School. The School District needs to be aware that once the building is turned over to the City, in all probability it will never be a school again as it appears it would either be sold or reused for other occupants. He stated the combined used of the building is good; he stated he is not opposed to selling it either. Councilor Bowers commented that he attended

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some of the school meetings and they were aware that once they moved the students from Bessie Rowell to Paul Smith that Paul Smith would be close to being full. He stated some of this discussion as premature as the Council first needs to make the decision as to what they want to do with the school.

Mayor Merrifield asked if the Councilors would be willing to have a show of hands as to which direction the Council wants to take with the Bessie Rowell School. He asked how many Councilors would be interested in selling the building as a first priority: 3 and 4 in favor of reuse of the building, however, Councilor Andreozzi commented that her vote for reuse is qualified because if someone were to come and offer a large amount of money for the building she would be in favor.

Councilor Feener commented affordable housing and assisted living are two things the City does not need. Councilor Andreozzi did express a concern that should the 150 empty homes in Franklin become filled and numbers of children increased in the school district, we would not want children in a school environment that is not conducive to learning.

Councilor Trudel inquired if the City Manager has considered moving all of the office in City Hall as he feels it would be more feasible to have all the offices under the same roof. Manager Dragon commented that she thought about that but she stated she had to make the numbers all work and lots of meetings are held in this building (Planning, Zoning, City Council); and there is something to be said for having your City function in the downtown area within walking distance, like the Post Office, like an anchor to the downtown. Councilor Trudel expressed concern about the maintenance costs for the building and how that would be distributed. Manager Dragon stated a number has been put in there, \$32,200 and allocated a capital expense of \$20,000 which is part time services from grounds. She stated everything is estimate at this point and everything must be finalized but she was attempting to determine how much would it cost and come up with some estimates.

Councilor Audet expressed some concern about having the TRIP Center, Assessing Office, Planning and Zoning and in the middle of that tiny children. How is that

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going to work? Councilor Feener commented that working in other communities that have had to combine a senior citizen center with childcare centers has worked very well. The seniors actually enjoyed mixing with the children. Manager Dragon commented it has been done in Concord and Meredith. Mayor Merrifield commented he could imagine a lot of collaboration between Tiny Twisters and the TRIP Center. Manager Dragon also stated the section of the building that would be Tiny Twisters is secure. She further stated they have talked to the TRIP Center and how great it would be if some of the elders would volunteer with the children and things they could do together.

Councilor Starkweather commented he likes the concept but is concerned about the added work for building and grounds and the current Rec building being vacant. He expressed concern about security for Odell Park. Manager Dragon commented that the money included in the plan would increase the part-time person in grounds back to a full-time position. Councilor Starkweather asked if Norwood Realty had given any value on the building as to what it would be worth if put on the market. Manager Dragon advised that with the Norwood Group we did not get past residential because the idea of putting residential in there appears not to be a great idea. She stated we could have them up to do a market analysis but if we are not going to sell the building we wouldn't need to pay for a market analysis.

Councilor Andreozzi stated she works in an office where there is a playground right outside and it is only used in the summer time for on nice days which is fortunate but the noise is very distracting and advised that should be taken into consideration with the plans for this building.

Councilor Clarenbach stated he would like to sell the building but doesn't know in this economy if that is feasible, leaving the building vacant is not a good idea so the option would be to find occupants for the building but he does not see how the City can add another building to its inventory.

Councilor Feener commented that concerning the commercial kitchen what is there should stay there and the school should be advised of that. Manager Dragon commented it appears they have already removed a couple of items but

in the grant there are funds for the commercial kitchen. Since then they have been requested to leave everything in the building.

Councilor Feener commented he feels the center would be the best use for the building and it takes care of a lot of needs within the community and he further commented moving Planning/Zoning and Assessing will finally have them ADA accessible. Councilor Bowers commented we need to give this concept of a center a chance and if on down the road it won't work, we can always put the building on the market then.

Councilor Andreozzi stated she would want to see a commitment of number of years from those who would occupy the building and that would be the end. If 5 years is the figure then they must commit to 5 years but know that could be the end. Stacey with Tiny Twisters commented that Tiny Twisters does not want a short-term lease; they are looking for something 15 to 20 years.

Supervisor of Building and Grounds Brian Barry stated he was at Bessie Rowell last week and there is a commercial stove in the kitchen and they did remove a freezer and refrigerator, a commercial dishwasher is also there. Councilor Starkweather inquired of Mr. Barry if there is anything at the school that needs immediate attention. Mr. Barry responded he did not think so, the heating system is a 1995 gas fired boiler and one of the boilers is a dual purpose burner and fired by oil; electrical panels have all been upgraded to a breaker system; the roof was replaced in 2008; the gym floor was replaced in 2007; and the windows were replaced in 2009. The interior has all been freshly painted and the parking lot has been reclaimed; structural it is sound.

Motion made by Councilor Feener that the City Council directs City Manager Dragon to go forward with the multi-use concept for Bessie Rowell School. Motion seconded by Councilor Bowers. 5 Yes votes, 2 No votes. Motion passes.

Councilor Andreozzi stated the removal of the snow off the roof needs to be figured into the maintenance costs.

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Other Business

Manager Dragon commented that the last meeting she had requested a decision concerning courses and the cost for the courses in accordance with her contract and she stated she needs to have those approved before the course begins and the on line class begins September 12th.

Motion made by Councilor Feener that the City Council approves Manager Dragon's NBA courses, motion seconded by Councilor Bowers. All in favor, motion passes.

Motion to adjourn made by Councilor Bowers, seconded by Councilor Bowers. All in favor, meeting adjourned at 7:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sue E. May