

May 16, 2024 – EMPIRE VILLAGE COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING

The meeting was called to order at the Empire Township Hall at 7:00 p.m. Upon a roll call members Bacon, Dye, Palmer, Rademacher, Walton, and Webb were present. Chase had an excused absence.

The purpose of the Special meeting, was a presentation from Renovare, concerning a Site Feasibility Analysis Update for the Village. Jill Ferrari, Renovare Development LLC was introduced by President Palmer.

Ms. Ferrari provided a brief introduction of *Place Strategies* and *Renovare*. Renovare is willing to provide a plan and a toolbox of options available should a developer express interest in developing land in our village.

A schematic of the current DPW Building and possible improvements made to the building to improve utilization of the space was displayed should funding or grants become available.

Discussion was opened to the community by asking the question, “what is needed in Empire?” Comments included: grocery store, workforce, affordable and senior housing. Limitations to growth were discussed, limited land available, lack of a wastewater system and “shovel ready plan”. Ferrari mentioned that the State of Michigan has infrastructure funding available for such projects that could be potentially tapped into and Renovare could assist us in those projects.

Housing has been identified by the state as a priority due to the Inflation Reduction Act. If the village has a Site Plan and Feasibility Study ready, it will be steps ahead in pursuing grants. Land options for consideration: the old schoolhouse, the hardware store and other current vacant properties in the Village.

Ms. Ferrari referenced the Redevelopment Ready Community; this would provide the Village with a set of actions that could provide a good framework to analyze and make the village more open to development or redevelopment should opportunities arise. If requested, Renovare could help with thinking through how this might look in Empire. The Planning Commission is currently engaged “Redevelopment Ready Community Essentials (Lite)” process. Community forums are needed to identify and prepare the village to use RRC tools that are available to us.

Utilizing public input sessions, Renovare can get a better idea of what village residents would like to see in the community and will help develop a priority plan for the village.

The question that needs to be answered by the Council at our next meeting on May 28, 2024, is “do we wish to move forward with the contract with Renovare and finish what was started?”. The original contract (\$70,000) has been invoiced through \$50,000. It would be revised by updating the scope of their contract (in red) as follows:

- *Data Gathering
- *Site Visit and Interviews
- *Conceptual Site Plans (Support Concepts for the DPW and Field Trip Locations)
- *Work Sessions for Economic Development Priorities

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- *Community Engagement
- *Present Proposed Concepts with Development Tools
- *Connect and coordinate

Public comments in addition to what was already discussed includes: a powerful internet connection, senior housing that will allow our aging populations the ability to stay in Empire, workforce housing, missing middle housing, and amenities that will encourage families and younger residents to make Empire home.

What is a plan of action the Council could use to go before the council on May 28, 2024? Prior to finalizing the plan, Renovare would like to talk about: Do we want to finish our contract with Renovare?

- Renovare will work beyond their original timeframe to complete the new scope, not to exceed \$70,000. The timeline will be extended based on a new scope of work to be presented.
- Ms. Ferrari will update the proposal, based on tonight's discussion
 - Renovare would like to know the current status RRC Essentials enrollment process.
 - Work would align with the Village Master Plan process
 - Updates regarding the Asset Mapping Group process

Ms. Ferrari emphasized Empire is in a good position to move forward if it is willing to invest effort in working the RRC connection, improvements to infrastructure and analysis of options available.

ADJOURNMENT at 9:00 PM

Sue Palmer
Empire Village President

These are draft minutes for approval at the May 28, 2024, Regular Council meeting.