Meeting Minutes

Monday, April 13, 2015 ~ 7:30 P.M.

Louis J. R. Goorey Worthington Municipal Building
John P. Coleman Council Chamber
6550 North High Street
Worthington, Ohio  43085

City Council

Bonnie D. Michael, President
Robert F. Chosy, President Pro-Tempore
Rachael Dorothy
Scott Myers
David M. Norstrom
Douglas Smith
Michael C. Troper

D. Kay Thress, Clerk of Council
CALL TO ORDER – Roll Call, Pledge of Allegiance

Worthington City Council met in Regular Session on Monday, April 13, 2015, in the John P. Coleman Council Chambers of the Louis J.R. Goorey Worthington Municipal Building, 6550 North High Street, Worthington, Ohio. President Michael called the meeting to order at or about 7:30 P.M.

Ms. Michael appointed Tanya Maria Word as Temporary Clerk of Council for this evening’s meeting.


Also present: Deputy Clerk of Council Tanya Maria Word, City Manager Matthew Greeson, Director of Law Pamela Fox, Assistant City Manager Robyn Stewart, City Engineer William Watterson, Director of Parks and Recreation Darren Hurley, Director of Planning and Building Lee Brown, Chief of Police James Mosic, and Chief of Fire Scott Highley

There were 75 visitors present.

President Michael invited those in attendance to stand and join in the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance.

President Michael commented that she understands that this topic is a very emotional and very sensitive issue that has a great deal of meaning to many people in our community. As many people as I’ve seen letters in favor of a pocket park, I’ve seen every bit as many people who have come up and opposed the pocket park. It is Council’s intention to provide an opportunity for the discussion of all the issues in an open and respectful manner; with that being said, the hallmark of our community has been civility and respect; I ask that everyone would honor our tradition of being civil and not having any negative or derogatory remarks made about any individual or any bodies of individuals like Municipal Planning Commission or City Council or something like that. She asked that people treat everybody with respect and that the comments focus on the issues. If derogatory remarks are made towards others, she will ask those making the comments to be searing until they can come back and talk with respect for everybody. With that, she thinks we can bring this together in a way that is positive for everybody.

Ms. Michael shared that the order for the public hearing on this ordinance is as follows:

1) Presentation from Staff
2) Questions from City Council
3) Public Comments
4) Council discussion
Ms. Michael advised since a lot of people are going to have repetitive things to say, that you limit the repetition; otherwise we’re going to have to ask people to be a little bit briefer. I don’t really like to limit anybody, but if you’re saying the same thing that the other person has said, just maybe do a short sentence or two because we have read all of the letters that have come in and we have actually listened to people when they have talked to us. She wants to make sure that the process is done in an orderly fashion. She asked Mr. Greeson to move this topic forward.

REPORTS OF CITY OFFICIALS

Policy Item(s)

Consideration of Land Purchase for Park – 49 E. New England Avenue

Mr. Greeson presented the following PowerPoint presentation.
Agenda:

1) Staff Presentation
2) Public Comment
3) City Council Deliberation and Direction

What direction is needed?

**Consider the following motion:**

Authorize the City Manager to execute a non-binding Letter of Intent (LOI) for acquisition of the subject property substantially consistent with the Term Sheet.
The purpose of briefly talking about the approved development is to clearly outline what will happen, meaning what has been approved to be constructed, if we decide not pursue a pocket park. This helps frame the options for the future of the property in question.

In terms of site characteristics, we will talk about size, trees, and the physical characteristics of the site and show photography.

The acquisition costs are basically a review of the Term Sheet – what terms and conditions the Showe’s will sell the property to the City of Worthington.

We will cover the development estimates for two different scenarios and estimates annual maintenance costs. We will say now that these are very preliminary and not based on any firm design or community process that might lead to different development options. Best guess at this time with what information we have.

And then we had a variety of questions from Council members that we will seek to cover. Things like: How would it be paid for; Do we need an additional park or what does our ICMA performance management data show; where are we on our playground and park improvement cycle; are grant funds available; can we receive donations to help pay for the costs and how does that work?
• Existing R-10 (Single Family) zoning changed to Planned Unit Development (PUD)
• Approved PUD authorizes the construction of a 2,230 sq. ft. two-story single unit condominium with a rear-loaded attached two-car garage

This is the subject area; you’re looking just east of the intersection of New England and High.
The area under consideration this evening is to the east of the red square and it shaded (a pink or reddish color) and represents the area east of the drive access to the United Methodist Church parking lot and where the single unit was approved.

This is the existing Masonic buildings that front High Street and this is the approved landscaping plan.
Moving a little to the east you see the drive access in the middle and that is the drive access to the United Methodist Parking lot. New England is to the north, on the left hand side which is west there are two approved condominiums as well as garages for the development which are just to the south. If you move to the east or the right hand side of the drive access looking at this picture, you will see the subject of our conversation tonight which is the land east of the drive access and a landscape plan and a depiction of the proposed single family unit.

Overall site plan
High Street Frontage

This is a picture looking from New England and High back towards the development to the East; and you see the two approved condos on the west side of the drive access behind Dewey’s.
This is looking to the north and the west from the United Methodist Church lot...you see the garages, one of the Masonic buildings as well as the two approved condominiums that are on the west side of the drive access.

These are renderings digitally imaged of what the buildings would look like. This is from across the street; this is on the north side of New England Avenue, just barely east of the parking lot drive access. The blue-grey building that is on the left hand side of the picture is what is approved to be built if we don’t acquire the property.
Site Characteristics and Appraisal

- 49 East New England Avenue
- Approximately 48 x 135 feet
- 6,480 square feet
- Land Appraisers Report from Columbus Appraisal Company estimates value at $100,000

Tree Condition

- Bradford Pear Trees – poor conditions, planned for removal
- Evergreen Trees – okay conditions, planned to stay
- Hackberry Tree – good condition, should be protected
- Scrub Material, Honey Locusts – minimal value, may require clean up
***Designed by our own Shawn Daugherty at my request. This is what I would call a more informal example with mandarin path through the property; some benches that might be of contemplative space and it’s not as formal or structured as a design scenario.
The Citizens for Historic Worthington also had a landscape architect that developed a color rendering of a very attractive park. In this case it represents another good example of how you could approach this piece of property; every piece of property turned into a park has different paths you can take; in this case it’s more formal, English garden type example and has more formal features like a fountain and organized landscaping. I think they are both two pretty good examples of how we can approach this piece of property if acquired.
Development and Maintenance Estimates

Citizen's for Historic Worthington Conceptual Drawing Estimates

Construction Costs - $72,050
- Irrigation upgrades - $2,000
- Landscaping upgrades/signage - $13,000
- Sidewalk installation - $25,000
- Bench, pad, fountain, gate & columns, play area, history walk, etc. - $25,000
- Trash Can - $500
- Contingency - $6,550

Annual Maintenance - $3,900
- Mowing - $1,100
- Misc (snow removal, irrigation repair, trash removal, etc) - $500
- Tree Work - $2,300

Additional Questions

- How would it be funded?
- How do we compare to others with park facilities? What does the ICMA Performance Management data show?
- Where are we on our playground and park improvement cycle?
- Are grant funds available? ODNR Natureworks grant?
- Can we receive donations to help pay for costs? How does this work?
Additional Questions

• How would it be funded?
  – City pays for acquisition and development of parklands through its Capital Improvements Program (CIP); 20% of income tax revenues annually
  – 5 year plan
  – Not currently planned or funds appropriated
  – Need to appropriate funds from the unappropriated fund balance (reserves) in the CIP
  – Projected 2015 reserves = $4,156,657 (below 2015 target of $4,439,674)

Additional Questions

• How do we compare? What does the ICMA Performance Management data show?

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<tr>
<th>Developed Park Acreage Per 1,000 in Population</th>
<th>2012 Responses</th>
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<td>High: 52.1</td>
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<td>Worthington: 12.4</td>
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<td>Median: 7.8</td>
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<td>Average: 11.2</td>
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<td>Low: 0.2</td>
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Additional Questions

• Where are we on our playground and park improvement cycle?
  – Five projects have been identified but not funded in the 2015-2019 Capital Improvements Program
    • McCord Park Renovations ($400,000 – 750,000)
    • East Granville Road Park Playground ($150,000)
    • Selby Shelter House Renovations or Replacement ($250,000)
    • Shaker Square Park Playground Replacement ($150,000)
    • Extension of Wilson Bridge Trail to McCord Park ($750,000)
  – At current funding level, City is falling behind in the replacement of our urban forest
  – Numerous bike and pedestrian projects have been identified but not yet prioritized and funded

Additional Questions

• Are grant funds available? ODNR NatureWorks grant?
  – Grant funds could be available
  – NatureWorks Grant
    • 75% reimbursement
    • $264,000 available for Franklin County
    • Purpose: Acquisition or development of public outdoor recreation or recreation support facilities
    • Must be fully ADA compliant
    • Would also be a fit for other uses in Worthington, such as acquiring land for trail facilities
Additional Questions

- Can we receive donations to help pay for costs? How does this work?
  - As a political subdivision of the State of Ohio, the City of Worthington can receive tax-exempt donations
  - The City receives donations from a variety of sources
  - Donations for the park can be placed in the Special Parks Fund and utilized for the park

Next Steps

- If motion passes, the following will need to occur:
  - Prepare and execute LOI, discuss Purchase and Sale contract
  - Additional due diligence
  - Survey and subdivision documents
  - Approval of ordinances authorizing:
    - Purchase and sale agreement
    - Appropriation of funds
- If motion fails, development can move forward as approved.
Questions From Council:

Scott Myers: You put a slide up earlier outlining some park priorities and those were wishlist items above and beyond what’s already been appropriated on the standard maintenance cycle, is this correct.

Matt Greeson: Correct. I’m not sure I would define them as wishlist items, somehow I passed that. They are things we’ve identified as part of a plan like the Wilson Bridge Road trails; part of the Wilson Bridge Road Corridor; is it a necessity, no.

Scott Myers: My point is that we are already on a maintenance cycle for all of our parks.

Matt Greeson: That is right and so a couple of these would fall more into that category, we’ve been trying to replace playgrounds in reasonable increments as equipment ages; there are a couple of these items on the list. East Granville and Shaker Square that would be the early 1990s version of the playgrounds.

Scott Myers: We actually had a discussion earlier this year where we agreed to borrow money to get that cycle caught back up.

Matt Greeson: Things like the Selby Shelter House would be both a need and a want. There are some necessary expenditures to make on that building if we’re going to continue to use it the way want to use it.
Bonnie Michael: Yes there was memo that we saw today that said this is a summary of, and if I remember right, the memo also mentioned that McCord Park is a push back, we were hoping to do the renovation of McCord Park this year and that’s being moved back. Heischman Park got moved back a couple of years because of not having sufficient Capital Improvement Funds, is that correct.

Matt Greeson: Heischman Park we decided to bond this year, so next year; so it got pushed out and moved back up because we moved it into the bonding cycle. I suspect this list will change as we move through the planning process and then it will be measured against reality when we go through the Capital Improvement funding process.

Rachael Dorothy: How did we get to the PUD; the original zoning for this lot had several different zoning categories. Is that correct.

Matt Greeson: It did. The property on each side of the drive access had a split zoning; if you ignore the drive access, and just think of an imaginary line there. One side it was zoned AR-4.5 which is a multi-family designation that would allow for a couple of units on the west side and then on the east side of that, it was zoned R-10 and there you can see it. (on the aerial you see the reverse L-shaped AR-4.5 and then the R-10 which is a single family designation. So the density approved in the PUD is consistent with the original zoning, had they come through the process doing what we call straight zoning without us encouraging a PUD to help make sure everything was considered as a comprehensive development rather than as individual pieces, then they would have been eligible for a unit on the R-10 and two on the AR-4.5, but that would have also required probably the Board of Zoning Appeals to approve some variances for lot coverage and things like that.

Rachael Dorothy: Currently the access we have to the parking lot, that’s not zoned that way, is there any easement or right-of-way access that is legal.

Matt Greeson: I’m going to ask Mrs. Fox to reply to that question.

Pam Fox: Today there is nothing currently in place to allow for public access through there; however, we have been talking with the Showe’s, and as part of the PUD development process we are going to be asking Council to approve a lease agreement substantially similar coterminous type of lease that we have the Methodist Church parking lot.

Matt Greeson: So one of the outcomes of all of this is that we will have a structured relationship for that drive access.

Comments From The Public:

Mary & Brian Arthmire, 189 Franklin Ave., commented I’m in favor of a pocket park in downtown Worthington. We walk downtown for dinners, ice cream, and the farmer’s market.
often when the weather is nice. We have two little girls so we’ve often done picnic dinners on The Green since eating in a restaurant with little ones can sometimes be challenging. While The Greens has the space, it is loud since it’s right on the street. There are a lot of great shops for adults downtown but not really anywhere for kids to play.

If the city buys the pocket park and develops it, to something more, there are a few potentials as to how I see it being used. For my family, it’d be a great place for our picnic dinners. After shopping at the farmers’ market, my kids want to eat the food and it could be a nice, out of the way, place to sit. I would think visitors to Worthington may also use it for the same since the primary parking area is back that way.

Whenever I have new coworkers who are relocating to the Columbus area, I tell them about why I love Worthington. One thing I’ve always stated is that what you see is what you get with Worthington. It’s not really changing in style, density, or traffic. If you like what you see, move on in! However, with big projects like the condos, I worry about what the city may become. I do not want to see the area become denser with buildings, resulting in lost green spaces. Please purchase the pocket park.

**Peggy Barnum**, 120 W. Clearview Ave., explained that the pocket park would benefit all of the residents of Worthington. It’s a small consolation for the destruction to Worthington greenspace and historical relics you have already approved. It’s regrettable construction continues to diminish what used to be a nice little town. This body has already ruined my neighborhood by approving an illegal lot split and allowing a build of cheap too large house on a too small lot; we can’t let that continue. At least a little green space could be preserved this well.

**Michael Bates**, 6560 Evening St., stated I’m not opposed a pocket park or greenspace, but what I am opposed to is the City purchasing the property for that use. I don’t believe at this point with all the projects and initiatives that the City has underway, that spending $150,000 for a very limited use is worth tax money.

**Tim Fisher**, 175 New England Ave., commented I have lived in Worthington my entire life and I walk by that area all the time. I’m in favor of the pocket park, I think it would be a great opportunity for the people to enjoy here in Worthington. I would like to see it preserved. I think it would be a great opportunity if we could allow this to happen; it would be a great place for people to relax and bring their children and enjoy the scenery. I would appreciate it if the City would strongly consider purchasing the property as a pocket park.

**Jim Keller**, 670 Morning St., shared that I think the pocket park that is being proposed would be a hidden gem in Worthington with one correction that it would be far from hidden; it’s right adjacent to our downtown, it would get heavy foot traffic every time the weather is nice and there’s a farmer’s market on High Street, so it would be a wonderful compliment to the downtown area.
I was astounded that Olde Worthington Business Association which I just recently learned didn’t see the benefits.

Peter Kleinhenz, 634 Morning St., stated City Council Members, thanks for giving me the chance to voice my support for building a small park on East New England in place of another condominium unit.

My wife and I moved to Old Worthington three years ago and with a two year old daughter and another child on the way, we plan to stay for a long time raising our children here. I suspect we are like many other young couples in the community, whom were attracted to live here because of the community's pleasant balance between green spaces with mature trees and a vibrant downtown with historic charm. We feel it is very important to maintain this balance and fear that overbuilding could jeopardize this.

My wife and I do support the concept of economic development to keep our downtown vibrant and to attract future young families. We just feel it needs to be done with significant consideration for maintaining balance and historic integrity. We feel that maintaining this green space as a pocket park will help provide this balance to the overall Showe project. We hope you view my family as an example of the young families that are new to the community, or those families who are currently considering Worthington as their future home and are choosing to live here for similar reasons.

Natalie McCarthy, 100 E. New England, indicted we are a young family and though we are new to Worthington, we have adopted it as our home.

We are young professionals who moved here from the dense and developed Short North for more space and a family atmosphere.

Our goal in supporting the park and contributing to its development is to help ensure the preservation of the historic charm of the downtown we fell in love with, which is only 2 blocks from where we live.

We think the park will help create the needed balance between the charm of our downtown and the dense development that is about to engulf it.

With that said, my husband and I, along with other members of this audience are ready to partner with you in the development of this park.

We are ready to write checks and donate $25,000.00 to this cause and are committed along with the CHW (Citizens for Historic Worthington) to raise $10,000.00 more if that is what is needed to make this park a reality.

All we need is your yes vote to move forward. Thank you for your time.
Jamie Moore, P.O. Box 534, stated I am here on behalf of the Old Worthington Business Association now called the Old Worthington Partnership.

The Old Worthington Business Association would like to thank you for the thoughtful leadership over the past few months regarding the Showe Development(s) and your commitment to the long-term health, growth and progress for our historic downtown.

With that in mind, we have concerns regarding the recent discussion of the public purchase of the vacant lot on East New England Avenue that is part of the proposed Showe Development, (currently planned for one townhouse unit) to be used as a “pocket park.” The Old Worthington Business Association does not support the use of this valuable land as a pocket park.

To be successful, pocket parks need to be intentionally and thoughtfully located – not just placed on left-over land. They need to activate space and contribute to downtown vibrancy. This location only makes sense if it is fronted on by active uses – not attached to a residential side or back yard. We are concerned that the interest in a pocket park in this location is not because of any identified or pressing need for a park, but to prevent development of a residentially zoned lot. We believe this parcel should be developed to contribute to the City of Worthington.

For pocket parks to be successful they must be additive to the community. They must be programmed with intention, functionally designed, appropriately funded, well-constructed and beautifully maintained. We are unaware of specific thought or intention beyond the initial purchase regarding the use of this land. We must ask ourselves, “What would this pocket park be used for?” and “What is its benefit to the community as a whole?” To activate the space, should it be used as a children’s playground, a dog park for downtown residents, a community garden, or some other functional use? Would the desired use be most appropriate in this location? In our opinion, the needed use for a pocket park on this site must be identified, strongly considered and supported by the entire community prior to purchase. And even with an identified desired use, this site should be evaluated with other potential locations, and other publically funded priorities.

We all know that the cost of new parkland does not start and stop at the initial purchase of property. We understand this is an unforeseen potential purchase for the City of Worthington and funding for the purchase would either have to come from the city’s capital improvement funds, dip into the reserve portion of the funds, or a project already planned for 2015 would have to be delayed or canceled. Besides the initial purchase price there are design and construction costs along with yearly maintenance costs. The Old Worthington Business Association does not feel that this is the most appropriate or strategic use of limited city funds at this time and location.

For the reasons outlined above, the Old Worthington Business Association cannot support the purchase of the vacant land on the south side of New England Street for use as a pocket park.
Worthington is fortunate to have an abundance of open greenspace set out as such in the original plot of our city. The four-quadrants at the heart of our city are well used, programmed and maintained greenspace that meet our needs and for which we are proud.

We respectfully submit the above thoughts and position for your consideration.

Ms. Michael asked Ms. Moore if she would let the audience know who the members of the Old Worthington Partnership are. Ms. Moore replied the Old Worthington Partnership is made up of 10 board members currently consisting mostly of Worthington residents and they represent residents as themselves; people who live, work, play and enjoy Worthington, we are certainly not a board of developers and real estate agents. We are a pretty round group representing the City of Worthington including the merchants.

John Reiger. 970 High St., shared I am a retired History professor from Ohio University who lives in the Toll Gate community behind the Orange Johnson house.

I am here this evening to urge you to support the presentation of the proposed pocket park green space on East New England Ave. If it not saved through purchase, then that area will be overcrowded with new buildings and the charm, beauty and historic identity of Old Worthington will be diminished. Isn’t it enough that condos have to be wedged into such a small space? Must the entire area of open space be developed?

Please support the safeguarding of Worthington’s Historic District by saving this small, but precious piece of land that already contains large trees and which would require only a minimum amount of maintenance.

Thank you for giving me this chance to speak.

David Robinson, 195 E. Dublin-Granville Rd., stated my wife Lorraine and I both grew up in Upper Arlington and wanted to move here to Worthington six years ago when we got married; although we appreciated very much growing up in Upper Arlington and getting the education we got, we fell in love with the Historic District here in Worthington and have only confirmed our move here throughout the years since we’ve been here.

I didn’t know what it was called when I first saw it in Upper Arlington, but I when it saw it, I knew I didn’t like it. It was large buildings being erected along Treemont Rd. and Lane Ave., I’ve since learned that it’s called New Urbanism and when I first saw it I thought it was just crazy that they were building those type of structures in Upper Arlington. It was totally out of character from the community I grew up in, I felt like it was someone’s brain child that just didn’t get what the Upper Arlington experience is all about.

So when I first heard of the Showe Development project being proposed and then got some visuals, I felt alarmed that the Historic District which as I see is the “golden goose” of Worthington; and incidentally the limitation Mr. Greeson of the analysis that you provided
was (and I know you all are Council people and you have to look to the whole City) and I understand that, but looking at averages and talking about the city as a whole misses the vital point that we’re talking about the Historic District. It’s a 4x4 very unique, special piece of property that’s on the National Register of Historic Places, we’re not talking about building condominiums at Wilson Bridge and 270; we’re talking about a unique piece of property from the age of Jefferson, so I not only feel that this is an incredible value and a responsibility to maintain for future generations, but it makes us different than any other community in central Ohio. It’s the “golden goose.

I thought we’re not going to kill the “golden goose” probably with a single shot or with a hatchet, we wouldn’t do that; but I think the “golden goose” we risk killing by plucking its feathers one by one through variances, split lots, new buildings; before you know it 5 or 10 years from now we don’t have a “golden goose”, and the very reason why supposedly we want to build buildings and have people move here, they’re not going to have a reason to move here, the goose is gone. It has to be protected absolutely and that is what I felt when I saw the development project proposed; the park in my mind is a way of salvaging some balance to the project; the project if it is fully developed will increase the impermeable area of the property from 40% to 60%, it’s a 50% increase of the impermeable area and this little bit of land is a way of introducing some balance, it’s that basic; it’s a way of introducing balance and my hope is that in listening to us tonight that we can also introduce some balance into the very process about how we got here in the first place and by that I mean, my experience with this project began in December when I went to an ARB meeting and heard citizens testifying and I felt like there was a glass wall between the citizens and those sitting on the dais; they made eloquent appeals and from what I could see ARB had already made their decision, it was not a public forum in the true sense of the word. If that was supposed to be democracy in action where the citizens have the ability to petition their elected officials and exercise their freedom of speech, it was not that.

Freedom of speech involves not only being able to say words but it also entails the power to be heard and to possibly have your thoughts translated into public policy, that was missing. Ms. Michael asked are you saying that people did not have a chance to state their thoughts and their views at Municipal Planning Commission meeting. Mr. Robinson replied that’s exactly what I’m not saying. Ms. Michael commented you said their thoughts at Municipal Planning Commission meeting did not agree with some of the ideas that was raised at the meeting. Mr. Robinson said that’s not what I’m saying.

Mr. Norstrom commented you have already have your mind made up that we don’t listen to the people. Mr. Robinson replied what I’m saying is that the decisions have been made before hand and outside of the public realm. Keep in mind that the developers had spoken with City staff for 10 months, almost 1 year before it became public in September, and I tell you, hats off to Sunny, Kay, Suzanne and Ellen four citizens that hustled up and in a matter of two weeks gathered by going door-to-door 137 signatures asking the Council to slow down and consider a different way of moving forward on this project. Now if those citizens and others had not fought tooth and nail every inch of the way, this project would have been
approved with little comment and genuine consideration from the public in the fall, I have no doubt about that.

My appeal to you is please introduce some balance into this process because it felt to me in December like it was being steam-rolled and since I’ve got engaged from what I have seen City staff talented, dedicated professionals non-the-less have been working largely to implement and expedite the development process. These are staff that ultimately answer to you and hopefully we as your constituents, you ultimately answer to us. I feel like our paid City staff actually has been working against us, it’s crazy, but it’s true. I mean I don’t know how many hours staff has spent trying to develop arguments in favor of the park that they have communicated to you versus how many hours have they spent developing arguments against the park. Ms. Michael commented to be honest we have not made any comment one way or the other, basically it has been here are the facts and we’ve asked for information on particular topics and costs and numbers, there has not been any recommendation one way or the other from City staff.

Mr. Robinson replied I understand they would not be that direct, nonetheless. Mr. Norstrom asked do you have anything else to contribute. Mr. Robinson replied I think I do. Mr. Norstrom commented anything new other than just repeating what you have repeated. Mr. Robinson shared one last thought a public park that is the preservation of green space to me seems very much in tune with where we as a society are going. By having a park in the heart of the historic district, a humble little pocket park it will be conveying to visitors that we get it, that green space is valuable in many ways that are not always measurable and that it reflects the value of the citizens. In closing please approve the park and let the citizens fund the development of it.

Lorraine Robinson, 195 E. Dublin-Granville Rd., shared if you were to see many of the existing public parks here in Worthington that we all enjoy today, at some point in that parks history decisions were made about that land between buildings or green space; and the question of how many parks in Worthington per resident or per square mile does not always provide an automatic answer. In my neighborhood Pingree Park and the E. Granville Park are within a stone throw of each other. I don’t know the detailed history of how either of these came about, but they each presented an opportunity for the City and the City wisely acquired these parcels and they’ve been what they are and they each offer something different.

A pocket park on E. New England would balance the new construction that is planned there and would indeed provide something the Village Green with its constant traffic does not. The City is in a position to protect what is unique and special about Worthington and take positive action when development threatens that uniqueness. If the Developer retains the plan we will see a condominium squeezed onto a too small lot. Fortunately the Developer is willing to sell and so the City should not miss this opportunity.
Gary Schmidt, 263 Franklin Ave., commented I’m not really against the park, however I am not sure it’s really needed. I like the urban infill plan proposed and approved by the Shoewe family, and we are lucky to have them as developer of the historic Lodge. We have to expect infill projects to occur in Worthington if we are going to grow as a community, and I think this project strikes a good balance between preservation and growth. While I am sympathetic about the desire of the direct adjacent neighbors to preserve open space, I’m okay with the pocket park provided the cost doesn’t take money out of the maintenance and improvements of existing public parks in town.

I would rather see the condos because they fill a need for new type of housing and meet Comp Plan. City has enough public open space in this part of town, and I would rather see us spend Park $$$ on improving existing parks.

Ellen Scherer, 112 E. New England Ave. shared that we residents, many of us supporters of CHW and OWA, welcome this discussion and consideration by the city to purchase the property at 49 E. New England Ave. as a small park to complement historic Worthington’s business and residential district placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2010.

Evidence of the importance of this issue is clear and a matter of record since the community learned of the E. & W. New England Avenue project. Prompted by the size of the project we reacted to its mass and footprint overwhelming historic buildings & green space in the district. In support of a small park aka pocket park:

- 135 residents signed the original petition
- 155 residents supported the ThisWeek ad; 13 residents letters to the editor were printed.
- 64 people attended the 2 public forums held by Citizens for Historic Worthington.
- 50 letters, emails, calls were sent and made to the city favoring the park; 6 of those opposed the park.

These figures do not include the many emails sent to individual council members’ and the many conversations with city officials, nor the communications sent to them between mid-September and December 2014.

Hundreds of hours of work by dedicated citizens have been given to raise these questions. These are important questions for all communities and our decisions have far reaching effects on the quality of Worthington’s residential and economic life. Taking the long view, the purchase of the land for a park is a bargain.

Many residents have expressed a willingness and good faith commitment to raise park development funds. With a minimalist approach development costs and maintenance can be kept at a minimum. An example I’ll submit with these comments is the Benjamin Hanby Park, a very minimalist pocket park in a city to the northeast of us.
This relatively low cost pocket park is an investment in our community’s strengths; it’s a sign of community vibrancy and smart planning. A small park in the historic district demands little of our infrastructure dollars, enriches the lives of those who visit, live and work here. It puts a stamp on our values.

In a timely manner, we ask and deserve a roll call vote from our City Council following the discussion and consideration of the park purchase.

Be For The Park, Vote For The Park! Thank you.

Suzanne Seals, 123 E. New England Ave., commented it just occurred to me when we talk about development, it always seems to be about buildings and I think a lot of here this evening would like for it to be about parks. I don’t think we could ever have too many parks, I understand it’s a financial issue, but in terms of quality of life and what we value in Worthington, I would like to see all of our neighborhoods be honored with parks and I think as our neighborhoods are increased and as the density increases it’s even more important that we have parks.

I can think of no more worthy use of that small piece of land, it’s called a leftover piece of land and I’m not quite sure why because the price on it is $150,000 and I don’t think that’s leftover. I think it’s a very valuable piece of land, I think it does a lot to create vibrancy in our community. Those of us who live close to Worthington we see what Market Days are like and it’s very crowded and as we have these additional condos being developed downtown, we definitely space where people can spread out. Along that line I want to stress again we’re not asking for this park for us, we’re asking for this park for the City of Worthington, that’s our Hallmark, that’s where people come and visit; and we want it to be a pleasant place that accommodates folks at any level, so this is not for those people who live in Old Worthington, this is for our City.

There are many benefits to a park:

Financial – I’ve read that property values go up when they are placed close to a park. I also know that in many cases a residence costs the city more than it pays in taxes, so if we don’t have a condo there we save a little bit of money perhaps.

Sociological – A green space with benches and picnic tables invites friends, and family to gather and relax; it will be a place where people can rest, relax, visit – all contributing to a welcoming environment in Historic Worthington.

Physical and Environmental – We’re losing 10-15 trees, maybe 15-20 on the Snow House lot, so by giving us some green space where we can let a canopy of trees grow, I think we begin to maybe preserve some of what is so valued in Worthington.
We have spoken about Worthington being on the National Register of Historic Places, we need to honor that, we need to protect that; that’s valuable for the businesses, that’s what brings people here. We need to honor our tradition of green space and canopies of trees, we need to keep our downtown beautiful and walkable. It just occurred to me that walkable doesn’t mean just having sidewalks, it means there is something to see.

As a family there are often opportunities to do something or buy something that we didn’t plan on or we didn’t have in our budget and we think Oh no, this was not planned, can we do this. I think flexibility is really valuable in providing an opportunity that you didn’t expect and I would hope that City Council and the City can see their way clear to seize this moment and make some changes in the budget to purchase the park; as we’ve said the citizens are ready to develop the park.

Jim Seals, 123 E. New England Ave., commented as my wife Suzanne was walking by me, she said “be nice.” So I’m just going to say I don’t think I can improve on anything she said. Thank you for your time.

Kathy Moran, 124 Hampshire Cove, Painesville, Ohio, indicated I am a Landscape Architect for Yard Master of Columbus; I was raised 15 minutes from Worthington and I spent Saturdays at the Worthington Library and of course virtually every Saturday at Worthington Hardware with my Dad; and so I do understand and know this community and have an appreciation for it. As a Landscape Architect I was asked by Tim McCarthy to give a small opinion about what’s going on here.

Such eloquent speakers have spoken this evening there is very little for me to add, other than I have done many community parks, pocket parks and they really do tend to bring the community together. It’s not also a great place to play and a destination for various activities, but it’s a wonderful educational experience for sustainable education for children. It’s literally a breath of fresh to get a pocket park in a community.

Kay Warren, 6657 Evening Street, commented I think those of us who live in Worthington and Old Worthington have really valued the uniqueness of our community. We love the beauty and the green space; and I think we want to try preserve that for our children, grandchildren and future generations. Once you lose something you don’t get it back and I think that’s what a lot of us are really concerned about here.

I don’t if you’re familiar with the book “The Lorax” by Dr. Sesuss, but maybe we have a lesson we can learn from that book, because at first they cut down one tree, then another, and another and pretty soon there were no trees left; and once they’re gone, they are gone. So I think maybe I want to give the last word to Dr. Sesuss. “But now,” says the Once-ler, “Now that you’re here, the word of the Lorax seems perfectly clear. UNLESS someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It’s not.”
**Tim Strawn**, 5938 Tetlin Field Dr., New Albany, Ohio, stated I am a member of New England Lodge #4 and a past Master of that organization and chairman of the committee which has been addressing unfortunately our need to sale our very historic property. You may recall I spoke to City Council on the occasion of the consideration of the original Ordinance; and I really stand here tonight with two purposes: (1) to commend you and (2) to ask you a very simple question or leave a thought with you; I certainly want to reflect the comments that were in the ad that we placed in The Worthington News last Thursday and thank the Municipal Planning Commission and the Architectural Review Board and the City for it’s very thoughtful considerate deliberate review of the Showe proposal. We’re proud to have found the Showe’s right here in Worthington and to partner to help us maintain and preserve the history that our building reflects and our proper place in this community as its oldest organization.

Mr. Strawn explained we’re proud to have found the Showe’s right here in Worthington and to partner with to help us maintain and preserve the history that our building reflects. We are very proud of the Lodge’s history and the way that it is closely intertwined with this city’s history. The same names: Kilbourne, Griswold, Buttles and others that are important in the Mason’s history are important in Worthington’s history. They gave their lodge guidance and structure in its early days just as they did the same for Worthington. They are proud that they are the first and oldest organization in Worthington and because of that distinction that they led the community’s Bicentennial Parade in 2003. They are proud that their historic temple was one of the first significant buildings in the center of town and that it remains today an icon in this city. They are proud that over the years they have been integrally involved in the city’s life, its growth and development, and have been a good a worthy corporate citizen. Thus today they are also proud that they have found right here at home, in Worthington, a developer worthy of their selection to respectfully and creatively repurpose their properties, especially their historic temple with genuine concern for its history, fraternally significant recognition as the oldest continuously operating Masonic Temple west of the Alleghany Mountains, just as their lodge holds that same distinction among Masonic Lodges and iconic meaning to the community.

As I mentioned in January, I would reflect that we find it somewhat interesting about the development of this interest in the parcel being referred to as a pocket park, which by the way we never considered it extraneous or left over land. Mr. Strawn reiterated that they are very proud that after nearly eighteen months of showing their property to nearly twenty different perspective buyers they have entered into a purchase agreement for their property with the Showe organization. By the way, just so members know, virtually all of those other potential buyers would have proposed to blacktop all of the green space existing on their property, including the area east of the driveway recently discussed as a possible “pocket park”. Further, they find it interesting that all of a sudden there is such an interest in this small piece of property as well as the property known as 41 East New England when since at least 2000 and probably long before, according to both men who have served as the chief operating officer of our grand lodge during that time, not one person ever inquired of our grand lodge when it occupied the building at 634 High St. if the green space property behind
the lodge, which it owned, including the lot east of the driveway could be used for any kind of recreational activity, event or just play.

So I wonder if we weren’t in the position that we’re in and had to sell our beloved property would this even be an issue unless we take the Old Worthington’s Partnership point of intentionality for a park which is very reasonable; I would think our Director of Parks and Recreation would understand intentionality in the design of parks; if weren’t selling the property would we even be considering this question.

Jo Rodgers, 575 Evening Street, stated we don’t need a pocket park, but we don’t need the Village Green either and can you imagine Worthington without the Village Green. As far as the intentionality of the park, one thing that has not been brought up tonight and I think is worth considering is the property across the street adjacent to the alley. You all are very well aware of the issues with that property, with the deterioration of that property because people don’t want to live on that property because it’s right on top of that alley. This property, this lot is an exceptional buffer and I think in the long run so that we don’t face the issue that we’re having across the street with what to do with that property that nobody really wants to live in that’s falling apart now; having a pocket park in that area would be a blessing in many ways.

A pocket park or park is like art, you don’t need it, but life just isn’t the same without it. I encourage you to do what you can to seize this moment; it came by surprise we didn’t budget it, but find a way to be bold enough to seize this moment and bring in this pocket park.

Ellen Scherer commented I’ve heard that question before that people have gone by that grassy place for all these years and not said anything, well that’s because we’ve enjoyed it. We’ve enjoyed seeing the green grass. The reason why nobody has probably had a picnic there is because there’s chain link around it and it was private property, but we’ve enjoyed seeing all these years. So your situation brought to our attention the loss of it.

Ned Alexander, 654 Hartford Street, shared I have lived at this address September of 1961 and I was in the Worthington area seven years prior to that. I consider the route from campus to Worthington as the scenic route and when I go home (if I’m on the scenic route) I turn to go the corners of New England and Hartford and make one block and then I’m home; but sometimes that’s a little bit sluggish, so to avoid the traffic I will go over to Howard or Orchard to pick up Hartford and go on home. I think the charm of Worthington is there on High Street, the flowering trees in the spring, the white lights on the trees, there is there so much charm there and I think the pocket park would enhance the charm.

Susie Kneedler, 263 Weyden Rd., stated I am in favor of the pocket park and think it will make a very nice addition to Worthington.

Ms. Michael explained I’m going to bring the discussion back to Council members; asked if Council members had any questions or comments. Mr. Smith commented I have a written
statement that I think summarizes what we’ve been bouncing back and forth with the issues. I broke down in the summary three parts that I consider three main issues that we’ve been tossing back and forth the past few months, the three parts are:

**Financial capacity:**

In late 2014, City Council approved a budget for 2015 with $1.35 million in bonding for the Kilbourne Building. Currently $500,000 of that has been appropriated, with $300,000 being reimbursed by state of Ohio. As a result, there is $1.15 million of budgeted debt in the CIP budget that we are not likely to use. The purpose of the Kilbourne Building budgeted line item is a public improvement. This body was committed to spending $1.35 million on a public improvement. If council decides to purchase the parcel on E New England it will be a public improvement to which we can still commit.

In a recent council meeting, city staff informed council of approximately $2 million in the general fund that could be used to pay off debt, spend on additional CIP items, or keep as is.

All this is to say that we have the financial capacity as a city, without interfering at all with any current city services or CIP budgeted expenses.

**Green Space:**

Green space is always a good thing. When coupled against development or re-development, green space -in general- should be viewed in a case by case scenario. In this case, does the public benefit more from a condo or from green space?

The public has been very clear that green space is more valuable on this parcel. Understanding that there is a village green nearby, it is important to put this parcel into context of pending nearby development (namely the Showe Development approved condos), and preservation of the historical area that - to anyone's knowledge - has always been green space, save for a tool shed erected in early 1900's. In light of the pending development, it will serve as an oasis of green and historical preservation in perpetuity if the city purchases the land.

Good public policy should be informed by contextual facts in each scenario and should not be dictated exclusively by template or precedent.

If one is concerned about how this decision would impact future development in Worthington, one must consider community impact, history, public input and public buy-in, including the fact that a community group has already begun committing pledges for the development of a park on this parcel if it is purchased by the city.
Additionally, if one is determined to look to precedent to make a decision in this matter, consider the city's purchase of what is now the dog park for more than $500,000 in the 1990's. The land was purchased, from my understanding, with no specific plan until a public group was created to help develop the dog park.

**Pocket Park:**

The pocket park may seem like a superfluous concept, but it really boils down to a philosophy of green space in our community. In this case, there is already going to be development in the area so we are not choosing green space over development. As a resident recently told me, a pocket park would be nice in that location especially during the farmer's market. It would be nice for the family to visit the farmer's market, and kids can stay in the pocket park while one parent shops for produce at the farmer's market.

Since the 1820 Masonic Building is already in the development process, it is important for us to preserve what we can, especially in light of our city's Masonic history. As I have stated before, I come from a strong family tradition of Masonic heritage, so to have a park that potentially captures the Masonic essence of our city would be a valuable historical asset.

**Action:**

I urge council to continue being supportive of balanced development. And because, in this case, building a pocket park would be consistent with the developer's goals – since the city would make the developer whole, I would also urge council to be supportive of integrating green space into development by purchasing the parcel on New England.

**Additional Comments From Council:**

**Scott Myers:** I did not take this job for money, I didn't take this job to make friends, and I didn’t take this job to get elected again. I took this job to try and make the best decision for everyone in Worthington that includes people on the east side, the west side, the south side and the north side. I have to look at budget of $31 million dollars and balance it against a $200,000 or 5% of our CIP expenditures. This is not an easy decision for any of us sitting up here regardless of how this comes out. As I looked at this and as I talked to people and as I read the volume of correspondence we received, I don’t think this is about a park; a park just happened to be what was latched on to it. I think this is about development, some people are pro-development, some people are anti-development and what I kept hearing over and over again is we want to keep Worthington the way it is, and I understand that. I’ve been here for almost 33 years, but when I look back and Mr. Robinson can’t share this experience with me, what was Worthington like 33 years ago. This building wasn’t here, we were meeting in a concrete block building where the Griswold Center is now located, of course the Griswold Center was not there; the Recreation
Center was not there; there was a gas station where Dewey’s is, a station that we spent considerable time and money to fight all the way to the Ohio Supreme Court before they finally built it; we tried to keep that gas station out.

It only took us 40 more years to get rid of it. We could have instead of a park and looking at trees, you could be smelling paint fumes because that’s once where the parking lot behind Rivage, that’s what was there for how many years when Rivage and when House Wine was a car dealership, so there has been extensive development in Old Worthington just during the few 33 years that I have lived here; and I believe that each one of those steps was for the benefit of the City; we don’t have an auto body shop, we don’t have a gas station; we have a beautiful City Hall, that’s all development, so I can’t say that I am opposed to development; and it’s coming, we can’t stop development. The property in question could have been built 40 years ago when the City made the decision that this should be a single family lot and zoned at R-10; it went through three separate updates to the development and that was never changed, this was always intended to be a house. Now it’s going to be a house if Council so votes.

I think people are worried about what may happen. Worthington is going to change and it has changed, and I think by and large it has changed for the better and I support this project because I think it is a change for the better. Most of my peers live in single family homes and have raised houses. Most of the people that I work with are considerably younger than I am, but they don’t want a single family house, they want the Short North. That’s where people are moving to, we have an opportunity to give some of those people this.

When I look at how this project has changed from the original proposal, I can only imagine how much the cost has gone up. I know the materials have changed, I know the setback has changed, I know the density has dropped at almost in half and that’s all because of Municipal Planning Commission and the input of the citizens of this town, so to say this project has not changed for the better since it was proposed, I think is disingenuous, it has, in large part because of your input. It’s not a question of whether there’s development, it’s a question of how we manage development and what precedent we set for how we manage development going forward. It’s going to happen,

Finally, I hear a lot of talk about the historical preservation, the history, the what-not. The history in this is not in the 50x135 ft. parcel. The history is in the lodge that sits on High Street, that’s the history in my mind; and this is the only Developer that came forward that was willing to preserve that history; and I wish the Masons were still here, but their state association made a decision to change their headquarters to the Masonic home in Springfield; there’s nothing we can do about that, we tried, we passed a Resolution to keep them here, we lost that fight. We’re trying to make the best of a bad situation.

**Dr. Chosy** – Right from the get go, I think I was the first one to bring it up to Council, I’ve been concerned about the preservation of the old Masonic Lodge and to keep it as an active lodge because of the history and the time it’s been there and that’s my primary concern
about this whole project. I agree that it’s been scaled back very very nicely from the original plan.

When the pocket park came up, I was concerned that any potential deal the Showe’s may make with the present New England Masons and I think there is still some possibility of that, the Masons buying back that property to continue as a meeting house. I was concerned that the loss of their ability to build one more building on New England might alter their thoughts about working some arrangement with the Masons, but I asked our attorney to check that out and I was assured that there was no relationship; that the potential sale of the pocket park area was not going to hurt what the Showe’s did with the lodge, if they do anything with it. So when I realized there wasn’t a concern about them having to hold on to that land, then it totally made sense to me to say green wherever you can; and so I feel quite strongly that we should vote to buy that land and it’s based a lot upon people actually coming through and helping with the finances to develop it and I heard that a lot tonight and I sure hope I see it if we go forward with this.

It’s difficult for me not to keep green.

**Rachael Dorothy** – the talk of this development has been going on for quite a long time and I’ve spent a considerable amount of time reviewing everyone’s application. So one of the main considerations I have been looking at for this development and development throughout Worthington is the walkability and human scale architecture throughout Worthington and being able to get to destinations throughout Worthington. This piece of historic property was built human scale 2 stories tall, walkable and fairly dense to begin with; and historic Worthington goes from South Street to North Street and North Street several blocks north of this and we don’t have a lot of activation Worthington north of 161, so some of the things we’ve been trying to do is put money into rehabilitating the 725 Historic Library and trying to get people north of 161 because currently when you walk along High Street, you walk to the destinations, you walk to the restaurants, you walk to your churches, you walk to the Village Green where we have programmed activities and Farmer’s Market and people walk and bike to those activities and the more people that you see out, the more likely you’re to go out and walk; and knowing that it’s dense and you and bike and you don’t drive and I am encouraging people to live in neighborhood developments that encourage the walkability and bike-ability.

I appreciate green space, but I also think this is a very thoughtful development. I think it was too dense when it was first proposed, but I think MPC did a great job of getting it to a development that is reasonable and the condo that is proposed, it blocks the parking lot that I think is an eyesore off New England at the moment. I think that the setback is very responsible in keeping with the Worthington nature right now of walkability and providing green space for everyone to enjoy. I appreciate that the public is saying that they would produce money to help develop a proposed pocket park, but we also don’t have that as something that we can rely on at the moment.
Michael Troper – I appreciate everyone’s comments and input into this discussion, but no matter how you slice it, money is limited. I just feel we have a greater need for our existing parks throughout Worthington than for this park.

Dave Norstrom – for 10 years I served MPC/ARB, seven of those years I was the chairman. When someone like David Robinson would come in and say to me what he said to this group tonight, it would make me extremely mad. Every member of Council, every member of the MPC/ARB listens. We may not agree with what’s being said, but they do listen. This little piece of property was sitting there for many years, just a nice little piece of property. To the east of it somebody came with an idea to build a very big house, for those of you that have been around long enough that was even a very contentious discussion. I voted for that, I did make a mistake the potato stone on the front of it is terrible. I agree with that.

The fact that people in this room would think that Council and MPC/ARB do not believe that green space is important just flabbergasts me; you haven’t been to those meetings talking about taking down trees, this is often a discussion. What makes Worthington special, we have 50 foot lots, we have shared driveways, we’ve got people living extremely close to one another that’s part of Worthington; this little piece of property we’re talking about is a difference between one house and a park, it’s not that big of a deal.

I hear you in the background, we sat up here and listened, I’m asking you to listen because that’s what you’re accusing us of is not listening. The fact is that we look at the community as a whole. Look at this piece of property, if you go one block to the north you’re on the Village Green; if you go about four blocks to the south you’re in Park Boulevard Park, a very nice park that I walk in all the time. I spent 27 years walking sheep dogs around this community; I know where every park is in Old Worthington. If you go to east just a little bit, you’re going to find Moses Wright park and East Grandview park; these are parks you can take your kids to or you can have picnics in, that you can enjoy quite moments. The question is “where is our best investment?” We can afford it, we can change priorities and we can buy this piece of property, but it isn’t a wise decision. Many of you in this audience think that it is; I do not think that it is.

MOTION

Councilmember Myers made a motion to authorize the City Manager to execute a non-binding Letter of Intent (LOI) for acquisition of the subject property substantially consistent with the Term Sheet. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Dorothy.

The motion carried by roll call vote:

No: 5 Dorothy, Michael, Myers, Norstrom and Troper
Yes: 2 Chosy and Smith

Ms. Michael announced the vote and commented I have a degree in Parks and Recreation and am a strong believer in green space, but I also feel that this park is not going to serve the
needs and also we have such a limited budget. We do support parks and the City has had a consistent history of supporting parks and we will continue to support our parks that we have.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

MOTION        Councilmember Norstrom made a motion to meet in Executive Session to discuss board and commission appointments. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Smith.

The motion carried by roll call vote:

Yes  7    Troper, Chosy, Dorothy, Myers, Norstrom, Smith, and Michael

No    0

Council recessed at 9:25 P.M from the regular meeting session.

MOTION        Councilmember Troper made a motion to return to open session at 9:34 P.M. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Myers.

The motion carried unanimously by a voice vote.

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION        Councilmember Smith made a motion to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Norstrom.

The motion carried unanimously by a voice vote.

President Michael declared the meeting adjourned at 9:35 P.M.

/s/ Tanya Maria Word                          
Temporary Clerk of Council

APPROVED by the City Council, this 18th day of May 2015

/s/ Bonnie D. Michael                           
Council President