

CITY OF WILLARD  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT TASK FORCE / PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION  
WORK STUDY  
May 16, 2022  
7:00 P.M.

Members present: Randy Brown, Burnis Coleman, Darrell Proctor, Alderman Hall and Alderman Baird. Absent: Mayor Snider, Whitney Burrell and Forrest Owens.

City Staff present: City Administrator, Brad Gray; City Clerk, Jennifer Rowe; and Parks Director, Jason Knight.

Citizens Present: Bill Owen (State Representative), Terry Kathcart (Planning and Zoning Commission), Derrick Estell, Pam Conti, Carolyn McFarland, Daniel McFarland, Frank (Pam's Dad).

**Call to Order.**

Chairman, Darrell Proctor called the Work Study to order at 7:00 p.m.

City Administrator Brad Gray welcomed everyone. He then introduced Bill Owen, State Representative.

Mr. Owen introduced himself and discussed the new area map for State Representatives. He then discussed the projects currently being considered at OTO and the issues along the northern side of Greene County.

Mr. Gray then had everyone in the room introduce themselves.

**Presentation on Economic Development**

Mr. Gray gave a presentation on Economic Development.

Discussion made on map with where the new homes are currently being built.

Discussion made on the Force Main upgrade to 16" from 10" to leverage resources.

Discussion was made on the Organizational chart and the need for new employees.

- Goal to stay under 50 full time employees. Currently at 46 and needing an Economic Development position, Assistant Public Works director, and another officer to allow for 2 officers on per shift.

Discussion on the next steps:

- Join Springfield Regional Economic Partnership (SREP). Businesses come to them to find locations to develop. Funding sources also available there.
- Put together a "Why Willard?" Help sell Willard to organizations looking to relocate or open new business.

Mr. Brown stated that Industrial and Manufacturing businesses can cause more difficulty as Springfield has to sign off on all sewer capacity extensions.

Terry Kathcart, Planning and Zoning Commission Chairman, discussed what he has been doing to sell Willard. He stated he talks to every business he goes into and encourages them to think about opening in Willard. He is currently focused on Smith's Restaurant and Auto Zone. He gave the

Alderman Baird stated there is a large part of eastern side of Willard that never comes into town, they go to Springfield for all their needs. We need to attract them to want to come into Willard to shop.

Derrick Estell stated that he has infrastructure expertise. He feels it would be very important for Willard to have a seat at Regional Economic Conversations. Willard is factored into the Springfield Metropolitan area, but without a seat on the Committee, Willard does not have access to the funding available. He stated that \$125,000,000 was just awarded to the area, and Willard could have benefitted from that. He also stated that the sewer issue is a crux. As long as Willard relies on Springfield, we won't be what we want to be. They will always have final say on what comes here. We need to have a voice at the table to add value to Willard.

Representative Owen left at 8:44 p.m.

Mr. Gray asked the Task Force how often they would like to meet. There does not seem to be enough information to continue monthly, if we were to move to quarterly meetings, it could be a lot more beneficial. The Task Force agreed every 90 days would be fine.

Ms. McFarland stated that the sewer issue was her biggest takeaway from this meeting, as they were unaware of the severity of the issue. We need to get more people at the meeting's so they understand the need to fix the sewer issue.

Mr. McFarland asked what the best option was, and if a treatment plant was it.

Mr. Gray stated that there were no good options as they all came with their own challenges.

Discussion was made on everything the city has done to work toward solutions with the sewer.

Alderman Hall stated that everyone seems to want to point fingers at staff for the issues in the city. They complain on Facebook, but don't seem to want to help with solutions.

Mr. Brown stated that marketing and branding is important. The trailhead is a big strength with the mural, bike shop, trail, and local businesses. The publicity of these has helped to fill the vacancies for businesses downtown. There is room for growth though. He stated it was a 10-year battle to get the 4 lane through Willard at OTO, it takes more than staff to fix the issues. The city is growing.

Discussion was made on the next steps. Mr. Gray stated that staff will take the recommendations to the Board, adding items to the amended budget: SREP Membership and laying the groundwork for the Organizational Chart changes to start. We will come back in 90 days with an update at a work study, so we can move forward.

Work Study ended at 9:05 p.m.



Darrell Proctor, ECDTF Chairman

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Jennifer Rowe, City Clerk