

**SPECIAL COUNCIL WORK SESSION
MONDAY, OCTOBER 8, 2012**

7:00 P.M. PROMPT

MASTER PLAN REVIEW COMMITTEE

- **CONFIRM CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR**
- **DISCUSSION OF UPDATE OF CITY MASTER PLAN**

Arts & Cultural Board – Ken Matosky
Historical Preservation – Chris Sweet
Planning Commission – Helen Briggs
Civil Service Commission – John Whittaker
Board of Building Standards – Victoria Stemple
Resident input – Jean King/Richard Novak
Board of Zoning Appeals – (no chair selected)

- **EXECUTIVE SESSION – Personnel**

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(Council minutes and agenda posted at www.bedfordoh.gov)

Bedford City Council met in a Special Work Session at Bedford City Hall on Monday, October 8, 2012 at 7:02 p.m. The meeting was opened by pledging allegiance to the flag. The roll was called. Present: Council Members: Mayor Daniel Pocek, Warner Batten, Stan Koci, Marilyn Zolata, Paula Mizzsak, Donald Saunders [7:37 p.m.], Greg Pozar [7:04 p.m.]. Also Present: Clerk of Council Lorree Villers. Administration: City Manager Henry J. Angelo, Mike Mallis Economic Development Director. Absent: None.

Motion made by Batten seconded by Zolata to excuse Greg Pozar and Don Saunders. The roll was called. Vote – Yeas: Zolata, Batten, Koci, Mizzsak, Pocek. Nays: None. Motion carried. [Greg Pozar entered the meeting at 7:04 p.m. and Don Saunders entered the meeting at 7:37 p.m.]

Mayor Pocek welcomed and thanked everyone that was in attendance this evening. He thought the comments that were submitted were very helpful. At this time, the Master Plan Review Committee members were asked to introduce themselves. Present: Helen Briggs, John Whittaker, Dr. Haamid Javaid, Jeanne King, Ken Matosky and Vicki Stemple. Marty Stemple, Jeanne Sapir, Dick Bender, Holsey Handyside and Chris Sweet were also in attendance.

Mayor Pocek turned the floor over to Vice-Mayor Koci.

Vice-Mayor Koci requested everyone turn to Page 5, “Major Initiatives of the Plan”:

Mr. Koci referenced the 18 points in the Master Plan which was the focus this evening. The Master Plan has served as a document outlining the City’s intentions for the future. He stated a lot of these points had already been addressed and some were in the process of being addressed so it was going to vary from topic to topic. He noticed each group had focused on their area in which they served which was a good way of going about it because everyone had something to offer accordingly to their strengths.

He thought it was best to combine the following points because of their similarities as follows:

- #1, 2, 3 Automobile Gateways/Signage/Trails
- #4, 5, 6 Banners/Branding
- #7, 8, 9 Waste Water/Water lines/Sanitary
- #10, 18 Railroad
- #11, 13, 14, 16 Overlay/Zoning
- #12 Roundabout
- #15 Brownfield

He felt that was a good way of going about addressing the 18 points of interest instead of trying to address all of them individually. The City was in the right direction as far as using the Master Plan when making decisions. He was pleased to read the new ideas that were submitted that were not addressed in the current Master Plan. It was very important for the Administration to know if there were some items that needed additional attention. Tonight was more or less a quick overview of the combined 18 points with everyone’s thoughts and/or input. As each meeting progressed, each area would be addressed in more detail and prioritized accordingly to importance.

- #1, 2, 3 Automile Gateways/Signage/Trails – He said from what he read every group agreed these areas needed addressed. Ms. Sweet asked if the signage for the Automile area had been decided on and was there an opportunity to discuss it. Mr. Mallis explained the grant was submitted in 2009/2010 for this project. Some of the changes were made by Automile dealerships themselves as everyone worked together as a group. It was determined the “Welcome to Bedford” signs needed to be more attractive. Jean Sapir and Councilwoman Zolata both felt there were several areas of interest that needed to be mark by signage to direct visitors to these sights. There was some discussion regarding other grants that had been applied for that did not come to fruition. The focus/idea was to connect the downtown area to the Metro Parks via bike path per Mayor Pocek. Jean King was very much in support of connecting the bike path to the downtown area. Ken Matosky thought maybe the bike path could encompass a nice neighborhood like Washington Street instead of the industrial area. Mayor Pocek understood there might be some legality concerning a bike path through a neighborhood. He was not sure if there could be a designated path. There was discussion that some of the entrance signs to the City needed to be enlarged and upgraded.
- #4, 5, 6 Banners/Branding – Mr. Koci noticed this area was given a low priority by what was submitted to Council to review. Jean King suggested it was best to distinguish each Ward as a district and to include its item of interest to brand each Ward. Example: Ward 3 would be mentioned as a district regarding the Bedford Falls area as an area of interest. There was discussion about branding certain areas of Bedford to identify certain areas of the City. Mrs. Zolata suggested maybe some of this information could be put in the City newsletter. Mayor Pocek thought the areas should be obvious for its branding and not tied to a generation. Example: the Presidential district was obvious because of the street names. Mr. Koci added the areas needed to be “natural branding”. Councilman Batten had concerns about the size of letters on the street signs. The signs needed be printed in larger letters for easier reading. Mr. Angelo explained the street signs were being changed per the ODOT State Code requirement that was to be in effect in 2014. Everyone was pleased with the overhead road signs that had been installed.
- #7, 8, 9 Waste Water/Waterlines/Sanitary – Mr. Koci stressed this area was of great concern due to the age of the system. This topic required a lot of funding and it was very expensive to maintain. It was approximately \$1,000,000 per mile of water line and Bedford had 50 miles of water lines. Mr. Angelo stated the City was working on a lot of different things which the residents weren't aware of. He thought the Administration needed to do a better job informing the residents of the projects and costs so they are aware of what was happening throughout the City. Dealing with the EPA was a constant battle. It was determined the City was still hauling sludge out of the water treatment plant at a reduced amount and cost. It was a non-stop effort on everyone's part to research where and how to get the funding for these types of projects. John Whittaker expressed concerns regarding how the EPA conducts business because they make these mandates with no direction or suggestions how to pay for each project. He felt the residents were maxed out when it came to taxes because the residents paid the highest property taxes in the area. He felt City employees should live in Bedford in order to work at the city offices because the tax dollars should stay in Bedford. Mr. Angelo assured him the employees were paying tax dollars to the City whether they lived here or not. The State has been in the process of making several different types of tax changes which will affect Bedford's budget for the next several years. He added the State changes were far worse than the Federal level tax changes along with Cuyahoga County. A lot of the tax changes made no sense and it was totally bizarre. Mayor Pocek pointed out that requirement was removed from the book several years ago and it was not permitted by the state.

Mrs. Zolata and Mr. Angelo were happy to inform everyone the City Administration had applied for \$25,000,000 of grant over the past 8-9 years. It was determined it was this type of good news that should be announced at all the Ward meetings. Mrs. Briggs wasn't sure but maybe the reason some of the surrounding communities had lower taxes was because of the amount, level or lack of services they had which would affect the tax rates. She felt the residents were beginning to read the utility bill insert, which was a better form of communication rather than a meeting that most don't attend.

John Whittaker had concerns why Bedford was not mentioned much in the Liberty News & Views newspaper. Mr. Angelo said he had spoken to Joe Mestnik, owner of the newspaper. There was a cost for everything these days and Mr. Angelo did not know if there was a contract with the newspaper. Clerk Villers understood from Mr. Mestnik that the information had to be submitted one month in advance for publication. Mayor Pocek explained the Liberty News was a blog not a reporter type newspaper. Mr. Batten mentioned this newspaper was distributed to 17,000 homes in several surrounding areas. Dick Bender was disturbed because Mayor Pocek's picture was not in this newspaper with a monthly comment or information regarding Bedford.

Mr. Pozar read over all information submitted for this meeting. He referred to the Master Plan as a "Master wish list". The long term residents had experienced the changes and differences. He found it frustrating because of the noise and disrepair in some of the neighborhoods and the lack of police response at times. The tax base was very limited and most residents don't have an appreciation for the property tax amount. He stated the City received approximately \$800 from a \$3,600 annual property tax payment. One half of the property taxes were given to the school district. The common threat of all the ideas was funding and whose responsibility was it. He stated government's first priority was to deliver services. There were millions of dollars spent alone at the waste water sewage treatment plant. The common base for everything was tax dollars. Bedford residents hear of a 2% tax and everyone screams but the Fed's want 35% to 40% and everyone was to agree to pay it. Everything comes from the top down. He wanted to talk about the 90% that went to the Arts & Cultural and Historical Society and related charities and churches that the City needed to go to for some solutions. When it came to the City's infrastructure that was millions of dollars the City did not have. It was budget time and it was going to be a "stark reality" this year during budget discussions. He did not mean to be gloom and doom but everyone needed to emphasize the priorities that the City could actually consider. It was very difficult to get big businesses to move to the City. He commended everyone for submitting their ideas because they were all on the same page. He concluded with, if there was a certain percentage amount available, it should be given to the people on the Boards that were working trying to get businesses and visitors into the City and continue to wish for the rest.

Mr. Mallis explained the grants had been difficult to get for some time now. The reality was there wasn't a lot of funds available and the criteria and rules have been changing. Every government agency was experiencing cuts which were working from the top down which made applying very challenging.

Ken Matosky thought the City's website was attractive but very difficult to navigate. The information was complicated to find. He suggested the website be addressed first then it should be put on the utility bill to encourage people to use it. Inform the public about the grants, financial concerns or any type of information that Council or the Administration wants the residents to know how things have changed. Mr. Mallis explained the website was in the process of being updated and there were things being added to inform the readers.

Mr. Koci stressed "communication" was the key to every aspect in life whether it was work related, family or friends. He explained there were a lot of things combined to maintain the "quality of life" in Bedford such as the recreation center, events on the square, art festivals along with fixing the sewers and maintaining services.

John Whittaker thought there should be some type of nuisance letter for the business owners to fix their properties. The small strip plaza on Broadway Avenue near the railroad tracks was an eyesore. Mr. Koci noted some of the landlords were difficult to deal with so businesses look elsewhere. There was no way to force a landlord to fill their empty offices or buildings. Mrs. Zolata thought the Administration needed to contact possible new business owners to inform them about Bedford and what it had to offer and that it was a unique city. She felt when a business was looking for a new location they were only basing their decision on the average income level. It was very important to inform these business owners to let them know Bedford was a destination; they needed to know what Bedford had to offer plus the several events and festivals all year long. She also felt some of the current landlords needed to be contacted to ask them to rent their empty buildings. It was not right that they were holding land that could be filled with a much needed business. These business owners should not have the attitude they do. She reflected back to the times Council tried very hard to impose a vacancy tax and Council was told by the Law Director that it was not legal, so it couldn't be considered. Mr. Koci explained some of the business owners currently received a check from the previous business every month and that was why there were empty buildings. There was nothing legal the City could do to these business owners. John Whittaker suggested if a business wanted to relocate to another area of the City, they should not be allowed to leave the old location empty. Mr. Koci said as long as a new business met all the laws and codes, they had the right to relocate and build. John Whittaker couldn't understand why a business owner wouldn't want out of the lease. Mayor Pocek replied the landlord used the empty building as a tax write off and this was part of their business plan. Ken Matosky pointed out because of these landlord's actions, it deprived the City of tax dollars because they could have a business in these buildings with working employees.

Mr. Mallis told a story about all the changes and work he had to do to try and get a Save-A-Lot store in the downtown location. The parking lot and store square footage were issues even with the City helping with some of the costs. It ended up the landlord decided to not go forward with the project because he was going to get his money regardless from the previous business for many years and the costs for the project outweighed the easy to collect rent. Mr. Angelo explained the work and calls the City Administration made to the State, County and the banks involved when Taylor Chair decided to close. The Administration was currently working on a new business that wants to move into the old Taylor Chair location which would employ 75 people and another 25 in about two/three years. There were a lot of things that happen behind the scenes that people do not know about. Impact, the City's marketing company, was updating the new business guide flyer/brochure, staff and service training for the employees so they know how to treat the customers. It was important that the City needed to get more information out to everyone.

Mr. Saunders spoke from experience of the process some of the businesses go through to consider a location for their business. Most businesses want to be centered in a city and Bedford couldn't offer that. He felt one of the reasons stemmed from the problems/depressed area on the north side of the City. A lot of the businesses were locating or relocating in Macedonia because Bedford was included in that area. Businesses viewed "earned" income not the disposable income. They viewed empty buildings as keeping their competition away. It was very hard to work with these types of business practices and no matter how hard the City tried, the business was going to resist. Ken Matosky suggested "unique" businesses be brought into Bedford. There were other areas that were doing well because of the type of unique business they had to offer. Some of the problem was the square footage of some of the downtown buildings. Mayor Pocek reflected back to the trip some of Council made to Ferndale, MI to see what types of businesses they had to make their area successful. Two were a national known business and the rest were entrepreneurs. He stated that was why Al's Model Makers was doing well. The Arts & Cultural Board members were working very hard on this topic.

- #10, 18 Railroad – Mr. Koci and Mr. Mallis noted this was an ongoing issue.
- #12 Roundabout – Mr. Koci noted this issue was ranked as a low priority.
- #15 Brownfield – Mr. Koci said this had been addressed and the property was ready for marketing.

Vice-Mayor Koci thought the meeting went very well with the dialog that occurred tonight. Mayor Pocek suggested for the October 22, 2012 Master Plan Review Committee meeting, the members formulate together a list of priorities. Mr. Angelo would have the department heads available for questions and answers. Since the committee had not picked a chair and vice-chair, Mayor Pocek chose John Whittaker to organize their committee.

Mayor Pocek welcomed comments from Council members and the Administration.

Councilman Pozar explained the Master Plan served as a "key element or key tool" in the process to maintain the City's excellent bond rating, to obtain grants and to refer to develop the City. He stressed the more involvement and suggestions the better, whether one's idea was used or not. No efforts would or should be considered a waste.

Councilman Saunders stated the Master Plan was the blueprint for the future. This document was reviewed by businesses looking to relocate or consider a location. All ideas would be taken into consideration so the input was very important.

Councilwoman Mizesak stated Bedford was a special unique town and residents, Council and the Administration do care. Please contact Mike Mallis if you have an idea to fill any empty buildings in the city. She said a little food for thought – the government can over tax the City but Bedford had "natural beauty" and this land was here for us.

Mr. Angelo stated the department heads would be available for questions and answers at the October 22, 2012 meeting. The main point at the next meeting was to prioritize a list to start working from.

Clerk Villers reminded the committee members to use the list of names and phone numbers she had prepared for them because even though some of the people on the list were not present this evening didn't mean they did not want to participate. One positive thing she was told today was some of the BZA

members wanted to participate even though she had not heard from any of them since the June 2012 meeting.

Councilwoman Zolata thought this was a great meeting this evening. She was in favor of bringing people to the City using the Arts & Cultural Boards ideas. She liked the ideas of keeping communications open between the City and Chambers, the Bed and Breakfast idea but another location should be considered, art or pictures being displayed in the store front windows downtown, encourage neighborhood block parties and to keep the great ideas coming.

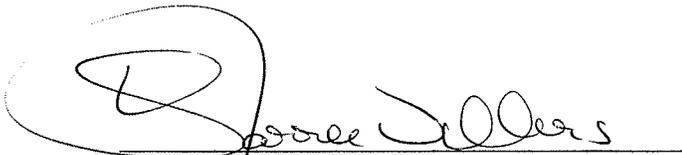
Vice-Mayor Koci thanked everyone for their efforts. It was important for the City to have a direction and he looked forward to the next meeting. He suggested a lot of the topics or communication be conveyed at the Ward meetings.

Councilman Batten thought Bedford not having local newspapers was a problem. He thought the Liberty News & Views should have some type of Bedford information in it. He submitted the Pumpkin Festival schedule to Joe Mestnik and he published it. The Neighborhood News also published and wrote articles on the Council meetings and items given to them.

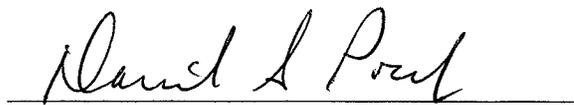
Mayor Pocek appreciated everything everyone had done up to this point. He told the members and residents in the audience to understand one thing "they were Bedford". 10% of the people that live in Bedford actually do care and were concerned about this City. He hoped for more input from everyone.

Discussion of the Special Work Session agenda was concluded regarding the Master Plan at 8:37 p.m. At 8:45 p.m., Bedford City Council went into an executive session to discuss personnel. The Executive Session recessed at 9:50 p.m.

The Special Work Session adjourned at 9:51 p.m.



Clerk of Council



Mayor – President of Council