

Cuyahoga Falls City Council
Minutes of the Finance Committee Meeting
April 3, 2006

Members: Tim Gorbach, Chair
Jerry James
Carol Klinger

Mr. Gorbach called the meeting to order at 6:20 p.m.

The minutes of March 20, 2006 were approved as submitted.

Legislation Considered:

Temp. Ord. A-45

Temp. Ord. A-46

Discussion:

Temp. Ord. A-45

An ordinance authorizing the Director of Public Service to enter into a contract or contracts to purchase certain real property located at 2083 Cook Street and declaring an emergency.

Temp. Ord. A-46

An ordinance authorizing the Director of Public Service to enter into a contract or contracts for the lease of certain property located at 2083 Cook Street to the Cuyahoga Falls Historical Society and declaring an emergency.

Mr. Gorbach read A-45 and A-46 (second reading). Mrs. Truby said the City has been trying to assist the Cuy. Falls Historical Society in their efforts to find a permanent home for several years. Last fall, the Society found the Cook Street property which they believe suits their needs. In December 2005, the City appraised the property at \$110,000 an offer was made to the property owners, Mr. & Mrs. Vern Schley. Closing would occur on May 15. The lease agreement states that the City will lease the property to the Society for \$1 per year. Lease term is 5 years, with four additional terms to extend. The Society would pay for improvements required to meet code in an amount not to exceed \$50,000. Costs of improvements is estimated at \$60,400 the City would pay anything over the \$50,000. The Society will pay utilities and maintain the interior of the building; the City will maintain the exterior. They will be open for two hours on Sundays and four hours on Mondays.

Dick Horn (2649 Woodward Rd., Cuy. Falls), president of the Historical Society, said the Society currently leases the Arment building on Hudson Drive. Under the original terms of the 5-year lease, rent was \$100 per month plus utilities. When the lease expired on May 1, 2005 the property owner raised the rent to \$600 and requested a security deposit of \$600. The lease was extended for another six months at the rate of \$700 with another \$100 security deposit. The Society cannot afford the rent and requires a larger space at least 2,000 square feet. They have looked at many properties in the City. They tried to purchase the old Bruno property on the mall, but the deal fell through. The Society needs a permanent location and feels that the Cook Street property is suitable with 2,400 square feet on one floor.

David Brown (677 Blaine Ave., Akron), vice president of the Historical Society, said the proposed location meets the Society's needs. The cost is a small price to pay for preserving the City's history.

Paul Huff (656 Prior Park Dr., Cuy. Falls) said he is a history addict who has written articles for the Falls News. He regards the Historical Society as a "chapel" where memories of our City's people are kept alive. Some of the museum's artifacts are priceless and well worth preserving. He believes Council should approve the purchase.

Mr. Gorbach said while he agrees with the need for a permanent museum, the Cook property may not be the ideal location. The building is not on a highly traveled street so will not have much visibility.

Mrs. Hummel asked about the zoning. Mrs. Truby said it is R-4 medium density residential. Since 1979, the building has been a legal non-conforming use. Mrs. Hummel asked about parking. Mrs. Carr said the lot behind the building will hold 12 spaces comfortably but could hold 20 smaller spaces. Mrs. Hummel asked what the funding source is. Mr. Brodzinski said the property would be purchased from the capital projects budget.

Mr. Walters asked if it might be feasible to erect a new building on City property at a reasonable cost. Mr. Demasi said it would be a challenge to construct a new 2,400 square foot building for \$90,000 for public use. A residential home this size would cost \$200,000 or more.

Mr. Barnhart referred to the comic book store on the mall as a possible location, since it would provide higher visibility. Mrs. Truby said the property is currently under an 18-month lease. It is smaller and has a second floor which would require handicap access.

Mayor Robart said the City had looked at many options, and while the downtown mall may be an ideal location, the members of the Society agree that the Cook Street property is the most viable at this time. He encouraged Council to approve the purchase.

Mr. James asked if the Society had agreed on this location because they feel it is a good choice, or because they are frustrated in their search.

Mr. Horn said that they can no longer stay at the Hudson Drive location and must move now. Cook Street is both suitable and available.

Tom Sullivan (447 Tallmadge Rd., Cuy. Falls) said that if Mr. Schley would sell the property to another business with more employees, there would be more commercial activity in the area. He believes the Historical Society is a better use of the property and will minimize any negative impact on the surrounding neighborhood.

Mr. Gorbach asked if the current non-conforming use status would transfer with the sale of the property. Mr. Arrington said he would research the property and report his findings to Council.

Gerald Mellinger (3355 Lakeview Blvd., Stow), a Society member, said he appreciates the Mayor's efforts in helping them over the last few years. He approves of the Cook Street purchase.

Karen Nelsch (2545 North Haven Blvd., Cuy. Falls) asked if the Society has made any commitment to expanding their hours to better serve the public. Mr. Horn said it is difficult to keep the museum open to the public due to a limited staff of volunteers. He hopes that as membership grows, more volunteers will be available.

Liz Cross (635 Franklin Ave., Cuy. Falls), a Society member, said the museum is open by appointment. The current location isn't large enough to hold many people. A larger space is necessary.

Gary Smith (2075 Cook St., Cuy. Falls) asked what would happen to the property should the Society eventually leave. Is there any possibility that the City would eminent domain the surrounding properties? Mrs. Truby said the Society would likely stay for many years. Mr. Smith said the museum should be a showplace for the City and is well worth the investment.

Mr. Flinn said he favors the purchase. While it may not be the ideal location, it is probably the right one for now.

Mrs. Hummel said she's a life member of the Society who understands its importance. She believes the best location would be on the mall or a busy street with drive-by traffic to improve visibility. She's concerned about expanding a non-conforming use in a residential neighborhood and wants to know what the zoning actually is and what is legally allowed. The City should follow its own codes on its own properties.

Mrs. Klinger suggested the Society seek student volunteers at the high school. She supports this ordinance and would like the committee to bring it out for a vote.

Mr. Mader said he's impressed with the time and effort invested by the Society's members in finding a location. He agrees with Mrs. Hummel about the zoning, but if it can be worked out, he will support the purchase.

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Mr. Walters asked if grant money might be available for a new structure. Mr. Brown said that if

the City could get a property registered as an historic place on the National Register, grants would be available. Mrs. Carr said the City has 6-8 properties on the National Register. The application process is time-consuming, and there is very specific criteria that must be met. It doesn't guarantee the availability of grant money.

Mr. Barnhart believes that visibility is essential for the Society's growth, but if the members agree on the Cook Street site, he will support it.

Mr. Gorbach said he would like information regarding the zoning issue and non-conforming use status of the property before Council votes.

Mr. Schley (4710 Young Rd., Stow) addressed the zoning issue. The building was originally Stutzman's Market. When he took possession, there was a beauty shop in one corner and upholstery business on the other side - mostly commercial. Parking shouldn't be an issue.

The committee recommended bringing out Temp. Ord. A-45 and A-46 for approval.

The meeting adjourned at 7:50 p.m.

