

**OWOSSO CITY COUNCIL**

**JUNE 24, 2013**

**7:30 P.M.**

**PRESIDING OFFICER:** MAYOR BENJAMIN R. FREDERICK

A moment of silence was held in memory of long-time City Attorney Lewis Benson on the occasion of his passing.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:** ALBERT MARTENIS, III

**PRESENT:** Mayor Benjamin R. Frederick, Mayor Pro-Tem Cindy S. Popovitch, Councilpersons Loreen F. Bailey, Michael J. Erfourth, Christopher T. Eveleth and Burton D. Fox.

**ABSENT:** Councilperson Thomas B. Cook.

A self-guided tour of the City's historic buildings was held just prior to the meeting for all interested parties.

**ITEM OF BUSINESS – CITY OF OWOSSO HISTORICAL PROPERTIES**

Representing the Historical Commission as its Chairperson, Councilperson Erfourth gave a presentation detailing the City's historic properties, their purpose, and condition. He also detailed some of the things he would like to see accomplished in the coming months including a clarified mission for the properties, expanded marketing and programming, and consideration of the establishment of a director position to oversee the maintenance and operation of the City's historic properties. He said he hoped that the outcome of the discussions would be a better, more clarified, path for the properties and those that are affiliated with them.

Mayor Frederick gave opportunity for citizen comment at that point.

**CITIZEN COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS**

Lorraine Austin, 906 Chipman Lane, organizer of CultureFest 2013, indicated she was passionate about cultural organizations and that the City had a number of cultural assets that could be leveraged to bring people to Owosso. She said that Owosso had the potential to market itself as a cultural destination with endless possibilities for educational festivities. She encouraged the City to seek the knowledge of the Michigan Museums Association in an effort to learn how other Michigan communities have maximized their historic properties. Lastly, she noted the importance of the proposed director position saying the position was essentially the backbone of the City's cultural body.

There were no further citizen comments.

**DISCUSSION**

The Gould House was highlighted as an issue of particular importance because of the unusual funding arrangement for the property. Currently, the Historical Commission is responsible for its maintenance and upkeep and must continually raise funds for this purpose, and despite their best efforts the funds raised along with the revenues from rental of the upstairs apartments continually failed to cover the expenses for the property. Commission members had expressed frustration with the arrangement and the responsibility placed on their volunteer membership.

There was discussion regarding appreciation for the current Commission members and their passion for Owosso history, the efforts of City Treasurer Ron Tobey, getting young people emotionally invested in the City's historic properties, advertising the City's historic properties, keeping the history of the City alive, starting an endowment fund, the direct economic impact cultural events have in the City, and ensuring tonight's discussion doesn't mark the end of the conversation.

Mayor Frederick remarked that he felt the Historical Commission seemed to be at a crossroads similar to that of the DDA a few years ago. A determination would need to be made whether there would be more benefit in paying a director to increase programming or to scale back programming to give volunteers a much needed break.

Mayor Pro-Tem Popovitch expressed her thanks for the presentation. She noted that she did not understand the need for a director when the idea was first presented but felt she had a much greater understanding of the circumstances now. She asked that any proposal for the position be well thought out detailing how the individual would interact with the Commission, Council and City Staff.

There was discussion regarding whether the Council was interested in considering the job description and Commission bylaws that had been drafted to flesh out the responsibilities of the

position. It was noted that Council had agreed to make a determination on funding for the position by July 29, so consideration at the July 15<sup>th</sup> meeting seemed appropriate.

The Council asked that a building inspection be completed on the Gould House to bring it into compliance with the rental policies. The also requested a detailed accounting of the revenues and expenses of the Gould House.

Lastly, the Council requested an informational campaign be conducted to educate the public on the reasons for the director position saying that if it involves tax dollars there needed to be an educational effort.

**NEXT MEETING**

Monday, July 1, 2013

**BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS OPENINGS**

Building Board of Appeals – 2 Alternates, terms expire 06-30-2015 (candidates must possess construction knowledge)

**ADJOURNMENT**

Motion by Councilperson Eveleth for adjournment at 8:51 p.m.

Motion supported by Councilperson Erfourth and concurred in by unanimous vote.

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Benjamin R. Frederick, Mayor

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Amy K. Kirkland, City Clerk