

Parks Not the Real Issue Behind City-Owned Land

Written by Kathleen McCarthy
Tuesday, 11 September 2001 18:00

- [Discount - Corel VideoStudio Ultimate X6](#)
- [Download iSkysoft iMedia Converter 2 Mac](#)
- [Buy OEM iSkysoft iMedia Converter 2 Mac](#)
- [Download Autodesk Alias Automotive 2014 MAC](#)
- [269.95\\$ Autodesk AutoCAD Plant 3D 2011 cheap oem](#)
- [Buy Cheap Adobe CC Master Collection MAC \(Full LifeTime License\)](#)
- [Buy Adobe Premiere Elements 10 \(64-bit\) \(en,fr,de,ja\)](#)
- [Buy Cheap Intuit Quicken 2008 Home & Business](#)
- [Buy Cheap Microsoft Expression Studio 4 Ultimate](#)
- [Download iPhone: The Missing Manual](#)
- [Discount - Autodesk Revit MEP 2012](#)
- [Buy Ashampoo Burning Studio 8 \(en\)](#)
- [Discount - Incredible Bee Archiver 2 MAC](#)

After nearly 10 years of observing Davenport's city councils in action, one would think nothing would come as a shock. It's as if a line keeps being drawn in the sand that councilmen keep stepping over. Such is the case with 6th Ward Alderman Bob McGivern. Most of us expect incumbent elected officials to do some spinning of events to augment their campaign resumes. But this does not include overt deception.

In a last ditch effort to make himself look good for constituents, Alderman McGivern proposed a resolution last week that would allocate "up to" 160 acres of city-owned land at the corner of 53rd Street and Eastern Avenue for recreational amenities. He claimed his reason for doing so was because this was the direction given by the council back in January, when it drafted its annual citywide goals. According to McGivern, this direction resulted in a resolution passed by the council on April 4th, charging city staff to present a plan for "the recreational development, street design and sale of the city-owned real estate located at 53rd Street and Eastern Avenue at the greatest net value to the city." The resolution, again according to Alderman McGivern, culminated in a report from city staff, in conjunction with the Park & Recreation Advisory Board, designating 160 acres of the 220 owned by the city at 53rd and Eastern for recreational amenities and public purposes. Alderman McGivern would have the public believe that this report was what prompted his resolution last week. Unfortunately that dog won't hunt.

In the fall of 2000, 10 of us, including Alderman McGivern, sat on the mayor-appointed ad hoc committee to determine what to do with the 220 acres the city owned. After months of debate, and two citizens' connectors to get the public's input, the council was presented with six different land-use options, one of which was the 160 acres for recreational amenities (Option D). Because the committee could not achieve consensus on one particular option, we presented them all to the council with the understanding that all six options would be explored at a later date, after a new comprehensive land-use plan was completed. This understanding was agreed to by all the ad hoc committee members, including Alderman McGivern, who was present and gave his blessing for John Gardner and Michelle Magyar to draft the language of such an understanding, which was presented to the mayor and council in October 2000.

The mere fact that Alderman McGivern claims he was compelled to develop Option D was a

Parks Not the Real Issue Behind City-Owned Land

Written by Kathleen McCarthy

Tuesday, 11 September 2001 18:00

complete betrayal of the process committee members worked on so hard for nearly a year. He was among those of us who agreed that the best direction was to wait for the comprehensive land-use plan before any further action would be taken on the property. We agreed that because the land was so valuable, it was worth holding on to and paying the debt service on for the two years it would take to complete the comprehensive land-use plan. If Alderman McGivern is to be believed, he went behind everyone's back to develop this particular option for the land, unbeknownst to the majority of the committee members, and against the express wishes of the public, who voted this particular option down two to one in favor of a different option that included guidelines for future development.

In truth, Alderman McGivern did none of this. If you check the record, the report from the Park & Recreation Advisory Board was finalized in January 2001, and the city's Parks & Recreation Director Jef Farland submitted it to Kent Kolway on March 23, 2001. Meanwhile, the resolution that Alderman McGivern claims was his direction for developing this supposedly new park plan was initiated two weeks after these events, on April 4, 2001. Yet McGivern's resolution that would have supposedly secured this option as the final development plan for the property wasn't brought forth until last week's council cycle, five months later, but conveniently just weeks before the election.

This political manipulation is getting tiresome. It is time for the public to see Alderman McGivern for the opportunist that he is. Nothing could better demonstrate the disingenuousness of this alderman's agenda than this deliberate attempt to fool the public into believing this resolution was in the best interest of Davenport. Not only did Alderman McGivern insert himself as the champion heralding parks for his ward, but he did so with a selfish purpose to further nothing but his own campaign. This same alderman originally promised, along with the rest of the ad hoc committee, that before any decisions were made relative to the 220 acres, the public would be consulted. All the alternatives would be explored in depth, including the costs and benefits of each land use option. Alderman McGivern completely circumvented the process and reneged on those promises that he was instrumental in making. His attempted resolution last week was nothing more than political posturing so that his campaign could claim he initiated a plan for the city-owned property at 53rd and Eastern.

The plan to allocate 160 acres was already developed and presented as Option D back when the ad hoc committee was in service, complete with rough financial projections. The new plan Alderman McGivern is claiming to have initiated is nothing more than a churning of the old version, with the exact same acreage but this time no financials. There is still room for a branch library and possibly a school. However, none of these "public purposes" for the land has been explored enough to justify such allocation, let alone pass a resolution to designate it as such.

Meanwhile, if Alderman McGivern was acting upon council direction, then where are the impact studies, the valuation and financial projection reports, and comparable data on the other options, as the resolution of April 4 dictates? Why is it that only one option out of six made its way forward in the form of a resolution with nothing to back it up other than a sizable wish list from those parties who would have a direct interest in such a plan? Alderman McGivern's service would be better described as a special interest advocate instead of a council alderman. This is further evidenced by the fact that he voted against the living wage resolution, another

Parks Not the Real Issue Behind City-Owned Land

Written by Kathleen McCarthy

Tuesday, 11 September 2001 18:00

indefensible action that pushes the financial well being of a few over the collective economic health of the whole community.

A Living Wage Welcomes Quality Industry

The Living Wage policy passed by Davenport's city council makes a statement that if businesses want financial assistance from Davenport taxpayers, they are going to have to be financially secure enough to pay a living wage of \$10 per hour, including benefits. In reality, this is not really a living wage either, but it is a start. Considering that the national average hourly rate of benefits is \$2.50, the actual wage required is only \$7.50. This is not a living wage when compared to the cost of living. Yet two aldermen, McGivern and Ahrens, voted against this policy that raises the standard for public assistance to businesses.

One spokesperson for the living wage policy said it best: "When people in a community make more money, they spend more money, and when they spend more money, this attracts investment." My question is why would we want a business that couldn't or wouldn't pay \$10 per hour with benefits? The requirement should be \$10 per hour on top of the \$2.50 in benefits. Otherwise, such companies will bring jobs here whose employees taxpayers will have to subsidize in other ways, such as housing assistance, food stamps, etc. because they cannot otherwise make ends meet.

When asked why he would vote against such a policy, especially being a member of a collegiate staff who is close to the challenges of pay scales once graduates leave the academic nest, Alderman Ahrens stated, "It concerns me that the resolution was attached to TIF. If a company brings 50 or 100 jobs and is willing to pay \$9.95, then we would have to turn them away. I believe we should continue to deal with it on a case-by-case basis. In most cases, where assistance was given by the city, the wages met the criteria anyway."

All employees who put in a fair day's work deserve a living wage for it. As another spokesperson for the living wage put it, "It is about our children." Without a living wage, their caretakers will not have the resources to put behind their children to extract the best possible future for them. When these two aldermen voted "no" for a living wage policy, they voted against the families of Davenport, and future generations' economic potential.

Censorship Finally Defeated in Davenport

Public with Business was finally reinstated for television broadcast, ending the nearly year-long policy of censorship in Davenport thanks to the courage of 5th Ward Alderman Wayne Hean, and the other "yes" votes of Aldermen Caldwell, Nicholas, Ambrose, Ahrens, and Englemann. To the audience's horror, however, Aldermen Sherwood, Moritz, McGivern, and Brown (yes, the same voting clique of four) voted against reinstating Public with Business. Alderman Sherwood, who postured before the camera himself just weeks ago claiming that he wanted to see Public with Business reinstated, asked for it to go to the Quality Assurance Committee for review. This was clearly a stall tactic, while allowing him to claim favoring its reinstatement on his campaign resume. When nothing came out of committee, Alderman Hean (chair of the Quality Assurance Committee) moved to reinstate it during last week's regular council meeting and got the

Parks Not the Real Issue Behind City-Owned Land

Written by Kathleen McCarthy

Tuesday, 11 September 2001 18:00

required six votes needed to see it pass. This means that the public will be back on the airwaves beginning with this week's committee meetings. Alderman Sherwood's remark before he voted it down was, "It's 10 o'clock at night and I'm voting no." This is an absurd rationale for continuing to betray the public's trust in an unprecedented manner. Remember that Alderman Sherwood campaigned on open government in the last election, only to settle in behind closed doors, "where," he informed the public, "most of city business is conducted." The only positive thing about Alderman Sherwood running for mayor is that come January 2002, he will no longer have a vote in any of the city's business.

Will the City be Able to Protect Against Predatory Lending?

For two years, the city of Davenport poured its resources into a study that brought to light disturbing problems relative to contract land sales. It appears that certain companies that offer contract sales prey on individuals whose credit is damaged, or who have limited resources to purchase homes through conventional mortgages. Obviously the problem begins with conventional financing, which does not have a place for these families in their mainstream loaning portfolios. The characterization, however, that contract sellers make it possible for low-income buyers to own properties is deceptive. Many of the contracts examined show that the default rates are significant, that buyers take inordinately long times to build any equity, and pay exorbitant amounts of money to own properties that will never realize appropriate returns on their investments. The study also demonstrates a significant percentage of properties in disrepair.

The city should be commended for its work. But if no meaningful change results from its efforts, what was the point? The city is considering a deal that would implement voluntary inspections of contract sales homes for one year. The two major contract sellers also agreed to make changes suggested by the city relative to the language of the contracts. First Financial and Oak Helm Partners should have these terms in writing by the next committee meetings on Thursday. The question remains whether this deal will actually constitute additional consumer protection. At least for a year, however, the city will be able to inspect at the point of sale and collect solid data on the housing stock in the city that is traditionally involved in these sales. Such inspections should further the city's goal in high housing stock preservation. In a meeting last Friday with Iowa Attorney General Tom Miller, city leaders were encouraged to enact local legislation should they see fit. Miller explained that his office was limited in what it could do and would welcome local intervention. With this blessing, what can be done legally is under consideration by staff. There is some concern that Mr. Miller is just passing the buck until the election is over. He claims that his office is currently investigating contract sales, so the results of this should prove how committed Mr. Miller is to the issue.

Interested parties in this matter should keep a careful eye on the city's legal department because, according to First Financial, the city's own legal staff previously sanctioned the contracts' language. Why should the public have confidence that more of the same endorsement of language that allows for predatory lending won't occur this time around? Contract sellers should be held to the same standards of fairness and accountability as conventional third party mortgagors. The traditional checks and balances that are naturally in place with third party mortgagors do not exist in contract sales transactions because the seller is

Parks Not the Real Issue Behind City-Owned Land

Written by Kathleen McCarthy

Tuesday, 11 September 2001 18:00

also the mortgagor. There is no disinterested third party. So the transaction operates outside normal channels of oversight. As a city, we have a unique opportunity to change such practices, at least in Davenport, so we should insist that any “deals” to be made add protection rather than defeat it.

Terrorism Ends American Security

I wrote this editorial on Monday, before the horror of Tuesday morning. This terrorism is the worst in our nation, perhaps even the world, and feels utterly personal. The country jumped to judgment with the Oklahoma bombing, believing that Arab factions were responsible. At present, responsibility for this abomination is undeclared. What is clear is that the world as we know it will never be the same. The insular sense of security that Americans have enjoyed throughout our history is over. We have been conscripted into a global arena of terror that now permeates our beings. All eyes are on us, watching to see how we cope. As Americans, we need to search our souls to determine how we will react. What will we allow this brutal terrorism to cost us beyond the precious lives of our fellow citizens? Our patriotism is our strength, but we need to revisit the principles upon which this country was founded in a much larger context. We must explore within ourselves the question of peace and its importance, especially as it relates to our freedom. But for the moment, our thoughts and prayers should reflect the victims and their families. The loss is so profound, so deeply sad and terrible, that prayers are the only force capable of remotely dealing with such pain.