

RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS

Village of Plymouth

Economic Development Committee Minutes

March 7, 2022

Economic Development Committee on March 7, 2022 at 5:30pm. The following were present:

Committee Members: Mayor Fryman; Mrs. Moore (Chair); Mr. Reno; Mrs. Carter.

Employees and other Councilmembers: DiAnn Jamerson, Fiscal Officer; Tom Hintz, Police Chief; James Burton, Administrator; Rebekah Fearing, Tax/Court Clerk.

Visitors: Morgan Gayheart, Willard Times-Junction.

Mrs. Moore called the meeting to order and stated that the focus of the Economic Development Committee is the revitalization of Plymouth's Square and business district. She met with Jessica Gribben (Richland Co. Chamber of Commerce) earlier in the day, who recommended several steps:

- That the committee create a list of owners of buildings that are currently empty or being used for storage and that those owners be contacted to determine whether they would sell or lease their buildings.
- That the committee promote the Historic District tax incentive for business owners who renovate/maintain their buildings
- That the village consider bringing in a Downtown Assessment Resource Team (DART.) to help develop a practical strategy that can be implemented to bring life to the downtown area. The D.A.R.T. program is administered by Heritage Ohio under its Main Street Program. **(see attached)** The cost for a D.A.R.T. is \$5000. Mrs. Moore suggested that the Plymouth Improvement Committee be approached to see if it would split the cost of a D.A.R.T. with the village.
- That the village study appropriate language for a Vacant Property Registration Ordinance (VPRO) and consider enacting an ordinance in the near future. **(see attached)**

Discussion centered around the above recommendations and also included a brief conversation about the benefits and risks of creating a Community Improvement Corporation (CIC).

- CIC's are non-profit organizations
- CIC's can hold and sell real property for a municipality

Members agreed that creating a CIC at this time is not a priority.

Mrs. Moore suggested first focusing on creating a VPRO, as it might create incentive for owners to sell or do something with their vacant buildings. She noted a VPRO could also apply to vacant residential properties in addition to commercial buildings. Moving forward, the next step would be working with Heritage Ohio to obtain a D.A.R.T.

Mr. Reno suggested there needs to be more greenspace on the Square – places that would invite people to come uptown. He noted that there are several buildings nearing obsolescence that need to be torn down and that a new building can be built for almost the same cost of tearing one down.

Mayor Fryman stated that in her discussions with several owners of properties on the Square, none is interested in repairing or leasing his building.

Mrs. Carter stated she would like to see a green space downtown similar to those in Crocker Park that offer giant checker boards, chess boards and interactive games.

Discussion took place on the old hotel and the former bar next to it. Mayor Fryman stated that the cost to tear the hotel down was approximately \$120,000 and that the village now owns the lot where the hotel once stood.

Other discussion centered on vacant properties around town which, the mayor noted, cannot be insured. The property on the Square that is in the best condition is probably the former Dentist's office on the southeast corner. One possibility for a new business is the former computer store that is currently being renovated. The former bank building could possibly be for sale, as well.

Mr. Reno suggested meeting with the individual owners of vacant buildings on the Square and informing them of the possibility of a VPRO. That might be enough to spur some of them into action.

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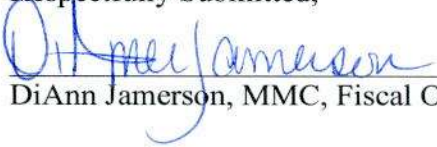
Mrs. Moore volunteered to contact Heritage Ohio for more information about a D.A.R.T.

Mayor Fryman announced there will be a ribbon cutting for the new Ohio Health medical office on Thursday, March 17th.

The next Economic Development Committee meeting will be held on April 11th at 5:30.

Meeting adjourned at 6.15 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,



DiAnn Jamerson, MMC, Fiscal Officer

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Attachment:

Downtown Area Resource Team (D.A.R.T.)

The **D.A.R.T.** is a subdivision of the **Ohio Main Street Program** that is administered by Heritage Ohio (formerly the Ohio Historical Society). The agency works with communities across the state to revitalize historic or traditional commercial areas. Originally based on historic preservation, the **Main Street** approach was developed by the National Trust for Historic Preservation to save historic commercial architecture and to make recommendations based on the history of commercial areas.

The **Main Street** program has grown beyond historic preservation to improve all aspects of a downtown or central business district, producing both tangible and intangible benefits for communities. The goals of the **Main Street** program are to:

- ✓ Improve economic management
- ✓ Strengthen public participation in a downtown business district
- ✓ Honor historic preservation and beautification
- ✓ Make downtowns fun places to visit
- ✓ Recruit new businesses and residents to historic downtown areas

Main Street is locally driven with all initiatives stemming from local issues and concerns. It requires a substantial commitment of funding from the local community.

Smaller communities with limited funds can take advantage of the **D.A.R.T.** The team will comprise experts from communities of similar size who will visit the village; talk with city officials; business owners and residents; study the village's unique history as well as its unique physical space, then it will recommend a strategy with achievable goals that are tangible and that can be accomplished in a series of small but noticeable steps. The cost to a community is \$5000. The key is recruiting local residents who will commit to the program and stick with it over the long haul to make sure the strategy is implemented.

Vacant Property Registration Ordinance (VPRO)

VPRO's have been enacted in a number of communities and townships throughout Ohio, including Ashtabula, Conneaut, Cleveland Heights, Strongsville, Hamilton and Colerain Twp. (Cincinnati). The City of Willard is currently studying language in an effort to enact a VPRO there, as well. A VPRO requires the owner of a vacant residential and/or commercial building to register it with the municipality annually. The benefit to the municipality is that it knows exactly what buildings are empty and can monitor them for vagrants, vandalism and health & safety concerns. A VPRO also puts the onus on the property owner to maintain the building. Failure to do so results in fines that increase exponentially annually. In some municipalities, registration fees are refunded if the owner rehabs the property and keeps it occupied. A VPRO may be sufficient to induce an absentee owner to sell to someone who will renovate and lease the empty space to a legitimate business.