

Community Center Task Force
City Council Chambers
55 West Tompkins Street, Galesburg, Illinois
August 17, 2023
6:00 p.m.

Meeting called to order by Elizabeth Varner at 6:00 p.m.

Members present: Cassie Cirimotich, Connie Dennis, Tony Franklin, David Hix, Ted Hoffman, Darla Krejci, Anthony Law III, Graef Mulata, John Polillo, Maria Salsman, Adam Sampson, Jaclyn Smith-Esters.

Absent: Del Toliver and Carl Dortch. Also Present: Interim City Manager Wayne Carl, Director of Parks and Recreation Elizabeth Varner, Community Development Director Steve Gugliotta, and Deputy City Clerk Ericka Gugliotta.

Elizabeth Varner welcomed and thanked the members of the task force.

Council Member Steve Cheesman thanked the task force on behalf of the Mayor and City Council.

Elizabeth Varner gave a Community Center Task Force Kickoff Presentation

Task Force Organization

The Task Force members shared brief introductions of themselves. Varner asked if there were any members that would like to serve as secretary for the task force. Darla Krejci volunteered.

Nominations were made for Tony Franklin and John Polillo to serve as Chairman of the task force. Both accepted the nomination. Votes were taken by the committee and results were as follows:

John Polillo: 6
Tony Franklin: 5
Anthony Law III: 1

John Polillo accepted the nomination as Chairman and Tony Franklin accepted the position as Vice-Chairman.

Elizabeth Varner went over the timeline for the Task Force. Preferably the Task Force will meet every two weeks with a target date of completion on November 30, 2023, and a presentation to the City Council by December 4, 2023.

Summary of Tasks/ Topics of Discussions

Discussion was held regarding whether there will be funds available for a Community Center since the budget will already be approved before they make their recommendation to the City

Council. Interim Carl confirmed that there would be funds available for 2024. Carl added if the City is awarded the one million federal grant those funds could be distributed in the spring.

Darla Krecji asked if she could record the meetings to assist her with the minutes. Deputy City Clerk Ericka Gugliotta stated that any meeting of the public body can be recorded.

John Polillo stated that the first order of business should be what is wanted for a community center and what the key component should be. Should it be a teen center. Should it be one location or two.

Tony Franklin stated that they were here to work on a community center not whether a teen center and youth center should be separate buildings.

Darla Krecji suggested that the members go on YouTube or Google and search for community centers and find what they like and share with the group what their vision is.

Maria Salsman suggested talking to the youth and seniors and finding out exactly what they want.

Anthony Law III stated that no one has reached out to young parents, and asked what they want to see in a community center. They want a place where they offer STEM, a place to study, teach skill sets and make children better prepared for their future.

Jackie Smith-Esters stated that she visited with high school students last year and they wanted a safe place to hang out. She stated that we should use all our resources and our seniors do not talk to our youth, and we will lose our history.

Public Comment

Deb Gordon stated that she would like to see a center with teens and the elder together under one roof.

Heather Accera expressed her appreciation to the task force and what they are doing. Accera urged them to visit other centers such as the Boys & Girls Club in Normal, and the Peoria Friendship House who both do an excellent job.

Andrea Berarano-Robinson thanked the task force for serving. Andrea stated that she has four children who want to go to a place where they feel safe, be themselves and not judged.

Jeanette Chernin questioned the task force and why they were planning a tour of the new library since the library is not a community center. Chernin also stated that she visits the high school often and if you haven't spent time with kids since after the pandemic then you really don't have any idea what is going on with them. She urged the members to reach out to the kids to see what they want.

David Amor congratulated the volunteers on the task force and that it is a big responsibility. He understands that they might start out with some ground rules, but they may end up going in a different direction. He urged them to talk to people that have the needs not those who have other alternatives.

Diane Crock encouraged the task force to visit her business The Galesburg Downtown Depot, 120 E. Main St. It's a place to go if you're going through a rough time they can get food, clothing, and medication. They are helping some juvenile offenders complete their community service. Residents don't have to be 18 to use their services.

Dwight White stated he agreed with Anthony Law's statements earlier that we need to focus on education. The city has plenty of athletic facilities. The community center should focus on teaching skills for the youth. It should be a place for the youth to speak to the older people, for the older people to feel good and for the youth to learn.

White encouraged the members of the task force to reach out to someone that is the opposite of them and to find out what they need. White also thanked the members of the task force for volunteering.

Champ Coleman stated that the task force needs to reach out to all the kids. Coleman stated that he is involved with the community, and he is still out of touch. He added that kids need to learn life skills and they don't teach that anymore. Coleman also encouraged people to visit the Friendship House in Peoria.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 7:20 p.m.

John Polillo, President

Darla Krejci, Secretary