

*(The following is a synopsis of the minutes of the West Branch City Council meeting. The full text of the minutes is available for inspection at the City Clerk's office. The minutes are not approved until the next regularly scheduled City Council meeting.)*

### **City Council Work Session**

**West Branch, Iowa**

**Heritage Square, Intersection of Main Street and S. Downey St.**

**August 3, 2015**

**6:00 p.m.**

Mayor Pro Tem Colton Miller called the work session to order at 6:00 p.m. Councilpersons Jordan Ellyson, Brian Pierce and Mary Beth Stevenson were present. Councilperson Tim Shields arrived at 6:03 p.m. Other attendees included West Branch Preservation Commission Members Lou Picek, Alan Bohanan, Peggy Jeffries and John Fuller. Honorary West Branch Preservation Commission Members present included Lynn Smith and Cary Wiesner. Planning & Zoning Commission Chair Roger Laughlin, Herbert Hoover National Historic Site Superintendent Pete Swisher, West Branch Main Street Executive Director Mackenzie Krob, West Branch City Administrator Matt Muckler and West Branch Times Editor Gregory Norfleet also attended.

#### Peggy Jeffries, West Branch Preservation Commission Member – Heritage Square Design

Jeffries reported that there was extensive discussion by the West Branch Preservation Commission on whether to keep the grass or install permeable pavers in the Heritage Square area. There was some agreement that the portion of the Square near Main Street would be a hard surface. Permeable pavers throughout would ensure a uniform surface and would allow for use of the area for special events. Jeffries discussed the positive aspects of wayfinding signage that will be installed by the National Park Service at the entrance to the Square from the Historic Site and advocated for additional signage. Jeffries felt that the design provided by a professional landscape firm tried to place too many amenities in the small space. When fixtures were selected, Jeffries suggested coordinating with the Herbert Hoover National Historic Site. Permanent swing structures and plantings would have to be limited, but at least a couple of trees would be nice, as the area is a hot spot during the heat of the day.

#### Lou Picek, West Branch Preservation Commission Chair – Heritage Square Design

Picek spoke in favor of grass. He felt that pavers would make the space even hotter. He didn't feel that drainage was a major issue on the Square. He would rather have grass available for children to play on than pavers. He advocated for the softer look of grass vs. pavers. Picek mentioned that West Branch Public Works Director Matt Goodale asked for no obstructions to be placed on the east side of the Square so that staff would have adequate space to push snow during the winter months. Picek stated that he thought the paver walkway should be removed. He thought that the flagpoles should be replaced and that something should be planted that would bloom all summer long, drawing visitors into Downtown West Branch. He mentioned that all three adjacent business owners favored grass.

Additional discussion took place on the Farmer's Market, the various plans that had been considered by the West Branch Preservation Commission, and plantings that would be a good fit for the Square. Krob recommended that the design should be determined after first determining a vision and the future uses of the Square. Krob mentioned that Main Street Iowa brought in a designer years ago and they had suggested consideration of a low-maintenance paver surface and a pergola to draw visitors into the downtown area. Swisher described the wayfinding signage that will soon be installed. Stevenson stated that she liked the plantings that were removed last year and was sad to see them go. Picek advocated for new trash cans on Main Street.

Laughlin stated that he has observed most visitors utilizing the sidewalks along the buildings and therefore thought the interior paver walkway was unnecessary. Picek mentioned that he had opposed the location of a veterans' memorial in the Square that was proposed years ago. Picek advocated for adding

plantings and trees. Shields shared that he thought the expenses involved with various design options, maintenance and runoff issues pointed towards grass as being superior to pavers. Miller thought that pavers would be better for the Farmer's Market and some other events, but thought that a grass surface served better than pavers as a gateway to the City. Ellyson thought the addition of some picnic benches would be nice and encourage people to use the Square as a picnic area. Pierce asked whether there was a compromise position reached by the Commission. Jeffries reported that a compromise position has been reached at one point by the Commission. Fuller stated that space is limited and that too many amenities would be detrimental. Shields asked to see costs for various options that might be considered and thought that the Council should follow the direction of the Preservation Commission.

Miller asked the West Branch Preservation Members what general design options they preferred. Picek, Bohanan, and Fuller all advocated maintaining grass and removing the paver walkway. Jeffries could live with either grass or pavers and advocated for additional signage in the Square. Council members asked the West Branch Preservation Commission to come up with design options for the Heritage Square area which maintained grass as the primary surface and to present those options to the City Council at a future date. Miller suggested that the Parks & Recreation Department budget would be an appropriate budget to fund improvements in the Square.

Motion to adjourn the City Council Work Session by Pierce, second by Ellyson. Motion carried on a voice vote. City Council Work Session adjourned at 6:50 p.m.

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Colton Miller, Mayor Pro Tem

ATTEST: \_\_\_\_\_  
Matt Muckler, City Administrator/Clerk