Memo

August 27, 2013

To: Mayor Dennis Clark

Cameron City Council Members; Darlene Breckenridge, Ronnie Jack, Jerri Ann Eddins

City Manager, Mark Gaugh

City Clerk Barbara O'Connor

From: City Council Member Bill Rose-Heim

Regarding: Notes from Public Input Conversation #3

Summary

Council Member Darlene Breckenridge hosted the third in our inaugural series of conversations with residents of Cameron. This meeting took place at D Dubs on Third Street in Cameron at 6:30 am. In attendance were: Derek Williams, Cheryl Keim, City Manager Mark Gaugh and Council Member Bill Rose-Heim. Conversations centered mainly on downtown development and options for dealing with neglected properties. The Council and the City of Cameron were affirmed for hosting these open meetings and encouraged to keep making them available. There may be interest among downtown business owners to meet with the Cameron Economic Development Committee for a mutual exchange of visions for development and collaboration.

Issues and Questions

- When potential new business owners come to Cameron with a criminal record and/or a history of complaints about their business practices, what options do existing business owners have to protect the quality of the existing business environment?
    - When an alcohol license is required the state has in place applicable laws that may prohibit issuance of a license to serve alcohol
    - Over-reaching legislation and regulation runs the risk of violating civil rights of new business owners
    - It is possible, given public information available on the Internet, for existing business owners to learn about the backgrounds of potential new business owners and to take that information into conversations with those contemplating opening a business to learn if there are any potential problems that can be averted – beginning with face-to-face conversations to establish a neighborly connection
    - As business owners in commercial areas (e.g. a downtown merchants association) organize and collaborate on development more frequently a culture of quality can

emerge that has political as well as peer power that can be used proactively to prevent problems before they start. Most new business owners prefer to have the good will of their neighbors as it portends the possibility of referrals and increased sales.
    - In some municipalities certain business districts may appeal for more restrictive regulation but only insofar as that does not violate existing state statutes and/or municipal ordinances
- How can owners of neglected properties in business districts be encouraged or required to make needed repairs and/or perform needed maintenance which, left untended, may discourage shoppers from frequenting neighboring businesses in that area?
    - The City of Cameron maintains lists of properties in violation of the Property Maintenance Code and properties considered to be Dangerous Structures.
        - First attempts to encourage owners to exercise responsibility can include a conversation and/or a letter specifying the problem and requesting a response
        - Many properties are owned and/or managed by absentee owners and it can take time to locate them and in some cases even longer to get them to respond
        - If owners are unresponsive and/or unwilling to exercise their responsibilities under the law, further action may require litigation which can be a lengthy and costly process
- A property (private residence in which no one has resided for some time) on the west side of town has open windows, no living room floor and is now home to raccoons and possums which frequent the back yards of neighboring properties. What can be done?
    - City Manager can check to see if the property is already listed by the City as in violation of the Property Maintenance Code or considered to be Dangerous Structures and learn at what stage progress is being made to solve the problem
- A question came up about a request of City Council to investigate a recent personnel matter. Did Council respond to that request?
    - Personnel matters are considered by Council during called Executive Sessions. Notice is published in advance and proceedings of Executive Sessions are, by law, confidential to protect the reputations of any personnel being discussed for any reason.
    - While recognizing that the lack of specific information can be frustrating for citizens, confidentiality protects individual City of Cameron employees and it protects taxpayers from having to underwrite costly litigation if Council members and/or City staff inadvertently (or intentionally) say or do anything that might violate the civil rights of the employee
    - What can be said of a recent personnel issue was that an employee resignation was neither required nor requested but was the decision of that employee
    - What can also be said is that most persons seeking to serve in elected office usually intend to perform all due diligence required in every instance where the public good requests and/or requires . . .they just can't talk specifically about how and what they do to fulfill that duty
- Why is it that some Cameron residents consider prices in local specialty shops high but will pay more for the same item in a larger city and think nothing of doing that?
    - Some residents may be unaware that some local prices charged have to be higher than at a discount chain operation because especially for smaller business overhead and

costs for locally produced or purchased goods may be higher than for larger businesses in urban areas.

- How can we alert more people who travel US 69 (Walnut Street) to check out the 30 businesses in downtown Cameron?
    - Can there be signage created somewhere at or near the intersection of Third and Walnut?
        - Previous attempts have been unsuccessful
        - Several downtown business owners would like to create more visibility to increase customer base to more sustainable – even more robust levels
    - It may be possible for downtown business owners and restaurants to collaborate in putting together shopping/dining tours for businesses in cities along I-35 that conduct similar day tours – bringing in tour busses filled with people who enjoy shopping for antiques (for which seems to be a growing number of local businesses) and enjoying locally prepared meals
    - It may be time for a conversation between downtown business owners, the Cameron Economic Development Committee, and contract Economic Developer Terry Rumery to explore the visions of each group and to identify areas of collaboration
        - A follow up call was made to schedule such a meeting. Time/date and place may be announced soon