

Council Rejects Plan To Hire Consulting Firm

By GEORGE WILKENS The Tampa Tribune

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A split vote of the Temple Terrace City Council on Tuesday night quashed a proposal to spend \$344,000 for work that would include creating a code for downtown redevelopment.

The council's new members, Mark Knapp and Alison Fernandez, joined Frank Chillura in rejecting a resolution to hire Clarion Associates, a national land-use and real estate consulting firm, to perform the work.

The 3-2 vote came despite the efforts of Community Services Director Ralph Bosek. "We see code development as one of the cornerstones of the future of the city," Bosek told the council.

Among other things, the "form code" portion of the 18-month project would detail structure locations, heights and "the feel" in the planned mixed-use development to start on a 35-acre site at 56th Street and Bullard Parkway.

Clarion would address mixed uses in the area planned for residential, retail, office, restaurant and cultural/civic components. "This is a big step," Bosek said. "It's not cheap. It is overdue."

Recruiting the consultant dates to March, when the city issued a request for qualifications. Four of the seven applicants were interviewed and in July the council approved negotiation with top-ranked Clarion.

Bosek said he and his staff "spent five months and hundreds of hours" negotiating a Clarion contract.

Conceding city codes dating to the 1960s "are certainly in need of rehabbing and modifying," Chillura was the first to voice concerns.

"I'm not opposed to going there, but at the right time," Chillura said, calling it premature until the council negotiates a contract with the firm selected in October to redevelop downtown. "I just want to do something that is realistic, focused and is going to be effective."

Knapp questioned the value of the work the city would receive and whether it should be delayed to better meet the redevelopment timetable.

Fernandez, too, expressed financial concerns. "This is only the budgeted number," she said of the \$344,000. "We could end up spending considerably more."

Ron Govin's motion to adopt the resolution received a second from Ken Holloway.

Before adjourning the 2½-hour meeting, Mayor Joe Affronti suggested Bosek meet individually with Chillura, Knapp and Fernandez to discuss what would allay their concerns.

Govin questioned continuing the issue. Procedural rules, however, require that a motion for reconsideration come from a member of the prevailing side, and none offered one.

That motion, however, would still be legal at the next council meeting, Feb. 6, City Attorney Ted Taub advised.

In a related matter, Govin reported progress in negotiations with the Pinnacle/Ram partnership selected to lead redevelopment.

"The money gap was more than we thought we could go forward with," Govin told the council, apologizing for vague terms used to preserve confidentiality of contract negotiations.

Govin said the development team was asked to try to reduce its numbers, examining the possibility of the Sweetbay Supermarket remaining where it is.

The grocery chain wants \$3.175 million to give up its long-term lease in the redevelopment area, the city has been told.