



City eyes future growth plans

By Kathi Bliss
Editor/POST-REGISTER

Growth and development took center stage on Monday evening as the Lockhart City Council examined options for the future of the community.

Two lengthy presentations to the council offered what some believe to be very different visions of the future of Lockhart and Caldwell County, leaving some in the council stymied as to the next steps to take.

Consultants hired to work with the Sustainable Places Project stakeholder committee presented information gathered by the committee over the last two years which have led to a vision that could drastically change the face of downtown Lockhart.

In their research and surveying, the committee learned that many hope to develop downtown Lockhart into a place where people live and work, and where attractions are available to create a more robust entertainment center and tax base.

Working on six principles, including housing choices, economic prosperity, mobility, community health, balanced growth and a focus on natural resources, the stakeholder committee worked with consultants from McCann Adams Studio to develop an idea for the future of Lockhart, merging the principles of long-term and short-term projects to shift the community's focus from a commuter hub to a stand-alone

community.

Central to that idea is the functionality of the Caldwell County Courthouse Square and downtown area.

The first project suggested includes a revamp of traffic patterns and sidewalks on the Square, which could potentially increase pedestrian mobility, while alleviating some of the parking spaces on the square.

A second project, which suggests a park at the north end of Main Street caused more concern, as the space suggested for the park currently consists of several single-family homes and privately-owned properties.

Lockhart resident Brock Langley, who owns a home in the area in question, encouraged the council to think carefully before moving forward, and said he was starting to question making improvements to his property for fear that the city would "take" his property for a park in the near future.

Mayor Lew White emphasized the need to move forward with the suggestions carefully, reminding the council and the gallery that the Sustainable Places plan is the community's plan, and that the ideas brought forth by the committee were merely suggestions.

The project will come back to council for additional workshopping in the near future, White said.

SEE CITY COUNCIL 6A

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1A

In another item related to growth, representatives from Green Group Holdings made an updated presentation to the council regarding their proposed 130 Environmental Park project in rural Caldwell County.

Though the project itself is not within Lockhart's city limits, the city will be impacted by the growth that Green Group hopes to bring to the area. In addition, according to Mack Reynolds, the Senior Project Manager on the project, a 25-cent per ton host fee will be offered to the incorporated cities in Caldwell County, which could lead to payments of nearly \$4 million

into the city coffers over the life of the project.

The 130 Environmental Park project is at the center of a swirl of controversy, because part of the project includes a 250-acre municipal solid waste landfill, a development that many believe will be bad for the county.

Public comments during the meeting were dominated by area residents who believe that a landfill at the "gateway to Lockhart," on Highway 183, five miles north of Lockhart, will squelch growth and development opportunities in the future.

Though the city council has no real authority in the matter, several members of the community encouraged the council to fight against the development.

Council member

Richard Banks took a strong position on the landfill proposal, calling the Host Agreement a "bribe," and encouraging Green Group Holdings to "keep your money and take your dump somewhere else."

In other business, as a result of the recent city council election, the council was forced to choose a new Mayor Pro Tem. Although Councilmember Kenny Roland asked that the vote be put off, to allow him time to get to know the other members of the council, the city's Charter demands that the vote be taken at the first regular meeting after the election.

Seated Mayor Pro Tem Angie Gonzales-Sanchez expressed her appreciation and fondness for the position and said it was an honor that all coun-

cilmembers should enjoy before nominating Councilmember John Castillo to the post.

Castillo was approved as Mayor Pro Tem on a 6-1 vote, with dissent coming from Roland, who said he would have suggested keeping Gonzales-Sanchez in the position.

The council also approved several contracts for work on the extensive library renovation project, which is nearing completion.

The Lockhart City Council meets on the first and third Tuesday of each month at 7:30 p.m. in the Glosserman Conference Center at Lockhart City Hall. The meetings are open to the public and are televised on Time Warner Digital Cable Channel 10.

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