

Main Street Historical Commission Meeting

Tuesday, March 11, 2008

Members present: Marjorie Clark, Sandra Leavey, Sandra Wood-Wicke, Sandra Barbree, Jan Goines, Pixie Floyd, Mary Lee Stotler

Visitors: Nat Hickey, Jim Saccamanno, Kenny Kouches, (Sandra Leavey's friend Kathy), Gary Beverly.

4:10.

Marjorie opened the meeting and Mary introduced Robert Johnson, Economic Development Specialist for the Texas Historical Commission Main Street Program. He showed a PowerPoint presentation giving the benefits of home-grown businesses versus chains. 80 cents of every dollar of locally owned business profits stay in the community, while 6 cents of a big box retailers' profits (like Wal-Mart) stay in the community. That is why it is more important to grow business from within than to try to attract big retailers. Robert was very blunt about the need for the Chamber of Commerce to take the lead in promoting the City of Freeport. He said the city should consider setting up its own chamber because we are not getting the attention we should from the Brazosport Chamber. He showed pictures of areas where sprawl had taken over in other cities, and suggested that Lake Jackson was heading that direction. He also said that building owners who sit on their buildings and don't do anything with them are a huge problem, because that helps an area stagnate. Robert suggested that the city needed a branding program to help identify it to the rest of the state. The board indicated that we have been working with a local architect to come up with an identifying look for the downtown which would spread to other areas of town as well, but money is a problem. Robert said that Freeport might consider giving up CDBG funding so that it could apply for a Texas Capital Fund Grant (we are ineligible because we are an entitlement city). Robert also suggested that design guidelines should be city-wide, not just in the Main Street area.

Robert offered to continue to work with Main Street to turn the city around. He offered to come back and do a presentation to council at a future date. Mary will coordinate with Robert on his schedule.

The presentation was very good and really eye-opening. The consensus was that Robert should be invited back sometime in the summer, when his schedule allowed.

Meeting ended at roughly 7:00 pm with no formal adjournment.