

Survey Results and PSJRA Updates

Steve Richardson has been a stalwart member of the board since the inception of the redevelopment agency in 1989. Last Thursday, Steve tendered his resignation. We wish him well...however to our delight...his “retirement” was short-lived; he and his wife, Melba, have agreed to serve on a new and essential committee—business recruitment. We also welcome our newest director, Tracy Melvin, who will chair the new committee and invites any interested parties to participate.

We wish to share a very positive development relative to the lawsuit against the City and the PSJRA by Rachel Crews, et al. An order from Chief United States District Judge Robert L. Hinkle was received by the PSJRA on May 9th titled “ORDER DENYING PRELIMINARY INJUNCTION.” The plaintiffs had requested an immediate, preliminary injunction to prevent the PSJRA from “moving forward with, spending money on, voting on, or implementing a proposed redevelopment plan.” Specifically, this order states, “The injuries plaintiffs allegedly will suffer...are remote and speculative, not actual, imminent, and irreparable as required to support the issuance of a preliminary injunction...Nowhere in plaintiffs’ complaint, motion, supporting affidavits, or exhibits do plaintiffs show irreparable injuries imminently occurring.”

The PSJRA is dedicated to continue the public planning process for redevelopment in the North Port St. Joe Community. WIM Associates will be hosting another workshop on Thursday, May 24th, 7 PM, at the Fire Station. Personal invitations will be mailed to the heads of local agencies (CDC, Chamber, TDC, EDC to name a few) as well as each pastor of each church located in NPSJ to attend this workshop. Coordination is key to success, and a comprehensive view is an essential element. We have asked the invitees to bring their friends and constituents as well. As always, the public is invited.

Over the last two weeks, I have conducted a survey of businesses along Reid and Williams Avenues. It is a wonderful experience to talk with each of you and benefit from your thoughtful consideration of issues and power of discernment. I would like to share several of the findings and comments:

The level of interest was high for the PSJRA-sponsored façade improvement grant, to be instituted upon adoption of the design guidelines. “Façade improvements are a great opportunity to enhance the exterior appearance.” “I think a certain architectural style applied to store fronts would be great for any city.” “Improve the physical appearance of the business districts.”

Support for the addition of shade trees along Reid and Williams also garnered support by a 2:1 ratio. We have a plan to keep the palms as well, relocating and grouping them to the landscaping at the intersections. An inviting canopy of shade will be welcomed on our warm summer days!

Parking continues to be an issue in the downtown area, particularly “merchants parking in front of their or other’s storefronts.” How about merchants and employees parking offsite for the next two or three weeks...consistently...to test the theory that our parking/business will improve as a result?

Most importantly, we (City/County) are being asked to focus on **RETAINING EXISTING BUSINESSES**. We can all help by shopping locally. Give locals an opportunity to match or come close to online prices or advertised specials by “big-box” retailers. In

addition, note was made of the “impossible trio”—taxes, insurance and property cost. “With all three obstacles, it’s almost impossible to find a retail formula that rings a profit.” We will soon have newly elected city officials, and I suggest we work diligently to implement incentives and financial assistance for existing business.

As always, feel free to call/email me at 850-229-6899 or gail@CelebratePortSaintJoe.com