**Financial Capacity:**

In late 2014, City Council approved a budget for 2015 with $1.35 million in bonding for the Kilbourne Building. Currently $500,000 of that has been appropriated, with $300,000 being reimbursed by state of Ohio. As a result, there is $1.15 million of budgeted debt in the CIP budget that we are not likely to use. The purpose of the Kilbourne Building budgeted line item is a public improvement. This body was committed to spending $1.35 million on a public improvement. If council decides to purchase the parcel on E New England it will be a public improvement to which we can still commit.

In a recent council meeting, city staff informed council of approximately $2 million in the general fund that could be used to pay off debt, spend on additional CIP items, or keep as is.

All this is to say that we have the financial capacity as a city, without interfering at all with any current city services or CIP budgeted expenses.

**Green Space:**

Green space is always a good thing. When coupled against development or re-development, green space – in general – should be viewed in a case by case scenario. In this case, does the public benefit more from a condo or from green space?

The public has been very clear that green space is more valuable on this parcel. Understanding that there is a village green nearby, it is important to put this parcel into context of pending nearby development (namely the Showe Development approved condos), and preservation of the historical area that – to anyone’s knowledge – has always been green space, save for a tool shed erected in early 1900’s. In light of the pending development, it will serve as an oasis of green and historical preservation in perpetuity if the city purchases the land.

Good public policy should be informed by contextual facts in each scenario and should not be dictated exclusively by template or precedent.

If one is concerned about how this decision would impact future development in Worthington, one must consider community impact, history, public input and public buy-in, including the fact that a community group has already begun committing pledges for the development of a park on this parcel if it is purchased by the city.

**Pocket Park:**

The pocket park may seem like a superfluous concept, but it really boils down to a philosophy of green space in our community. In this case, there is already going to be development in the area so we are not choosing green space over development. As a resident recently told me, a pocket park would be nice in that location especially during the farmer’s market. It would be nice for the family to visit the farmer’s market, and kids can stay in the pocket park while one parent shops for produce at the farmer’s market.

Since the 1820 Masonic Building is already in the development process, it is important for us to preserve what we can, especially in light of our city’s Masonic history. As I have stated before, I come from a strong family tradition of Masonic heritage, so to have a park that potentially captures the Masonic essence of our city would be a valuable historical asset.

Action:

I urge council to continue being supportive of balanced development. And because, in this case, building a pocket park would be consistent with the developer’s goals – since the city would make the developer whole, I would also urge council to be supportive of integrating green space into development by purchasing the parcel on New England.

Vote yes on tonight’s resolution to submit a letter of intent to the developer for the city to purchase the parcel.

Doug Smith