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Appraisal of Boswell's site approved for city offices consideration

By Pippa Fisher



The old Boswell's store, currently occupied by the temporary Halloween store until Nov. 5, is an ideal location for new city offices. Photo Pippa Fisher

The Lafayette City Council is moving forward cautiously with an appraisal of the former Boswell's property to look into the feasibility of purchasing the site for city offices.

Administrative Services Director Tracy Robinson reminded the council that in 2017 council members Mark Mitchell and Cam Burks had formed a subcommittee to study a number of potential sites on which permanent city offices could be located and had identified the Boswell's site as being the most appropriate, especially given its size and location between the library and the police station. At the time, however, the owner was not interested in selling.

With the closure of Boswell's earlier this year a new subcommittee consisting of Burks and Vice Mayor Susan Candell was formed. Candell has been talking to the owners who have expressed an interest in selling now "for the right price."

Robinson warned that it would be a lengthy process to completion, even after the purchase of the property, should it go ahead.

Public comment on the item favored the purchase, especially if the city were encouraged to "think outside the box" and look for ways to also incorporate some sort of community center as well.

With the item back to the council for discussion, Burks said he is now questioning the wisdom of committing \$5 million or more at this time. "It doesn't seem pertinent to me to even consider it down the road . if we're in a situation which is tantamount to a crisis because of litigation costs that we're up against," he said, referring to the multiple legal cases in which the city is currently embroiled.

Furthermore, Burks said that he respectfully asks to be removed from the subcommittee.

Although all echoed Burks' concern about spending, and applauded his fiscally conservative thoughts, the other four council members all agreed they could support moving forward at least with the appraisal for now, costing up to \$15,000. The vote passed four to one.

Mayor Mike Anderson pointed out this is a very long-term process and said that the city needs to get the appraisal. "We need that baseline information to have the conversation," he said.

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