

Council Grove City Lake Master Plan Community Forum Report

A public meeting was held February 18th at the Council Grove Community Christian Church with approximately 70 people in attendance. The purpose of the meeting was to present the DRAFT of the City Lake Association Master Plan, ask for opinions and receive inputs for the final plan.

Lake Association President Dave Baker opened the meeting. He thanked all for participating and recognized several people who have made significant contributions to the plan.. Dave also welcomed City Administrator Danny Matthews, and City Councilmen Rick Evans, JD Jones, Jr, and Steve Shepard, thanking them for keeping the lines of communications open, attending meetings and working with the Association.

Dave then introduced Dr. Curt Brungardt, Director of the Center for Civic Leadership, Fort Hays State University.

Dr.Brungardt thanked everyone who had worked on and made inputs to the Master Plan.

He emphasized the presentation was a DRAFT of the plan and the purpose of the meeting was to present the draft and solicit comments and suggestion for changes. Dr Brungardt stressed the importance of comments and suggestions from the membership. To be effective, the Master Plan must be representative of the opinions of all lake residents.

At this point Dr.Brungardt reviewed the Master Plan DRAFT, which was distributed at the meeting. The DRAFT is also available at the web site www.cgclakeassoc.org In this report we will not attempt to summarize the Master Plan DRAFT. We encourage everyone to read it on the web site, and print a copy to share with neighbors and friends.

President Dave Baker then outlined the process the Governance Task Force and the Executive Board utilized to arrive at the final recommendation; that the Lake residents purchase the lake lots and form an Improvement District to govern. The different options seriously considered were: Do Nothing; Long-term Individual Leases with No Annexation; Long-term Individual Leases with Annexation; Master Lease with No Annexation; Improvement District with purchase of lots. The outlines presented on the slides are too voluminous to be included in this report, and are available on the Lake Association web site.

After the review, Dave Baker opened the meeting for discussion and solicited comments and suggestions. Highlights of that discussion are summarized below:

Councilman JD Jones suggested that we may be “wasting time” by pursuing options that the City Council, or County Commission may not approve; i.e., we should get pre approval before planning. Dave explained that we are gathering information, facts and

numbers, to present and what is most important is that the plans have the full support of the lake residents before we discuss details with the city, county, or state.

Councilman Rick Evans expressed concern about how water quality could be controlled by the City if the homeowners owned the lots. Dave explained the agreement would probably need to be reached for assurances, but the water quality situation would probably be more assured under this plan, that calls for a future sewer system, as the city currently does not have plans for sewer. The plan also asks the city to use the Council Grove Reservoir for the primary water supply; a plan already being considered by the City because of problems with the new water plant processing the “clearer” water from the city lake.

Rick also pointed out there were more benefits to annexation than the one positive listed of permanent residents being able to vote in city elections. Dave acknowledged there may be more positives and ask Rick if he would like to list some of them. The first he listed was that for day-to-day operation such as street maintenance, law enforcement, etc, the lake would be treated like the rest of the city. He also mentioned improvements such as paved roads, water, and sewer. Dave pointed out that while these may be possible with annexation, the total cost would include the lease fee, new annexation taxes, and new special taxes for the improvements. The drastically increased cost would probably flood the real-estate market with a large number of cabins for sale, driving down prices, and stagnating an already fragile local economy.

Wayne Criser, one of the original founders of the Lake Association, was given the floor for several comments summarized below:

Wayne reviewed the history of the leases at the Lake and recounted the process of the first two extended period leases of 10 and then 15 years. The process was an arduous one with communications between the lake residents and the City Council being antagonistic. He emphasized the City Council controls the lake and every thing lake residents do.

Wayne pointed out that most of the issues in the Master Plan have been addressed before, but have never come to fruition; often for lack of communication, or lack of positive action. Above all Wayne encouraged the association to stay active, keep active, and keep the lines of communication open.

Dave followed by complimenting the City Council and City Administrator Danny Matthews for their cooperation and efforts at keeping the lines of communications open.

Dr Brungardt summarized the meeting asking for a show of hands of Lake homeowners who were interested in pursuing the option of purchasing their lots if it could be made a viable solution to financial stability at the lake. The show of hands in favor of pursuing this option was nearly unanimous. Dr Brungardt also emphasized the Economic importance of the lake, being the largest economic machine bringing outside money to Council Grove and Morris County. He pointed out the necessity for an economic impact study to show scientifically the impact and economic factors of a financially stable

environment at theLake. An economic impact study is also a necessity when applying for grants and low interest development loans.

The meeting was closed emphasizing that the improvement district and purchase of lots is the boldest and most innovative move considered. Achieving these goals will be a laborious, and at times a difficult process. However, the Governance Task Force and the Lake Association Executive Board firmly believe that this option is the one, which will most benefit the City of Council Grove and residents of the Lake.

Everyone is encouraged to study the DRAFT of the Master Plan, and the governance options outlined in the Master Plan section of the web site. The Bulletin Board section of the web site is a good place to share your comments with both the Executive Board and the community.