

Economic, business and roads discussed at City Council meeting

Written by George Browning

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The Salem City Council held their final public meeting of the year on Monday, December 10, 2012. There was much talk that evening about economic, business and road development in Salem, where the city has been over the past few years and where it may be heading in the upcoming year.

Mayor David Bower was pleased to report that a few of the city's major construction projects have been making progress recently.

"The Shelby Street project is moving forward," Bower said.

Construction on that street is currently anticipated to start in the spring of next year. He also talked about the tangible progress being made on the Homer Street project. Some light construction recently took place on the street near Salem Middle School.

Bower also mentioned that a plan to place a giant sign at one of the construction sites was recently nixed in favor of creating funds to pay for more trees and two or three more park benches instead. The Mayor said that the unnecessary sign would have cost the city nearly \$12,000.

The big topic of the night was economic development, and there was some lively discussion among the council about the possibility of hiring Greg Fitzloff as an economic adviser of sorts for Salem and Washington County. Fitzloff has over twenty years of business development experience under his belt. He was a long-time President of the Southern Indiana Chamber of Commerce, and was leading the organization during the period it was merged with the Southern Indiana Economic Development Council and Southern Indiana 2020 to form One Southern Indiana in 2006.

Fitzloff has been nationally recognized for his strides in economic and workforce development in Indiana.

"We're looking at someone with a track record, with connections in the state and the region," Councilman Ron Haendiges said about the OSI co-founder. Councilman Wally Terkhorn added "We've interviewed him, he's got good qualities."

Should a partnership be struck, the council intends to have Fitzloff sign a one-year contract that gives them the option of releasing him if the city does not see any signs of results in six months time. Haendiges explained the measure plainly, "If in fact this is not working, we don't want to continue down this road."

Mayor Bower called the potential hiring "uncharted waters," but praised the council for making such a bold move, one that would hopefully kick the city's economic growth into high gear. Fitzloff, who currently lives in Georgetown, could begin working with city officials as soon as next month.

The other issue that generated a good deal of talk that evening was the passing of Ordinance 1448, which added traffic violations to the list of civil penalties that can be dealt with at the Violations Bureau's office. The Ordinance was considered due to the number of semi-trucks still traveling through the Square instead of using the recently opened bypass.

One of the chief reasons the bypass was built was so large truck traffic could conveniently drive around Salem without having to dangerously navigate the Square.

Semi-trucks are allowed to drive through Salem's Square if they have a delivery to make or other business in the city, but otherwise, they are suppose to make use of the bypass. Salem Police Chief Troy Merry said that SPD officers will hand out warnings to first time offenders, but after that they will be enforcing the traffic violations and ticketing truckers who continue to drive

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through the square.

“We built that bypass for them to use, we’re going to make sure they use it,” Merry stated.

The motion passed unanimously and traffic violations have joined a list that also includes parking violations, abandoned vehicle violations, and animal control violations.

By going through the Violation Bureau, drivers dealing with traffic fines will no longer have to automatically make an appeal to Salem’s court system, unless they refuse to pay the Violation Bureau clerk.

The Salem City Council holds their public meetings on the second Monday of every month at 7:30 pm in City Hall’s Council Chamber. Their next meeting will be held on January 14, 2013.