

**City of Tonganoxie**  
**Special City Council Work Session Meeting Minutes**  
**1/30/12**

The Governing Body of the City of Tonganoxie, in conjunction with the Chamber of Commerce, the Retail Development Committee, Business Owners, and Citizens of Tonganoxie, met in a special meeting on January 30, 2012 for the purpose of discussing everyone's long term and short term goals for the development of Tonganoxie and to determine what we are doing well, what we can do better, and solutions to those goals.

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 PM. Roll call was taken with the following members and staff present: Mayor: Jason Ward, Council Members: Dennis Bixby, Andy Gilner, Bill Peak and Jim Truesdell, City Administrator Mike Yanez, and City Clerk Mary Conway. Council Member Chris Donnelly was absent. A quorum was confirmed as present.

The Mayor opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance followed by a brief explanation of the purpose of the meeting. It is his hope that all of the committees interested in the development of Tonganoxie can meet quarterly to share ideas and help each other reach common goals.

Cecilia Harry, with the Chamber of Commerce, was the first speaker of the evening. Ms. Harry stated that the goal of the chamber was to promote business in Tonganoxie. They had a very good membership year in 2011 and hope to grow even further in 2012. They are ready to put ideas into action and will remain approachable to all businesses to help serve this community. Their long-term goal is to use the history of Tonganoxie to attract new customers and businesses downtown while supporting the business growth north of town. Their short-term goals are to advertise the opportunities Tonganoxie offers. They want to continue their annual events such as St. Patrick's Day Parade, Tonganoxie Days, and Spooktacular as well as other events to attract people to our town.

Bill Peak, Chairman of the Retail Development Committee, discussed how this committee was developed from a survey by Bucher-Willis in 2008. The committee was formed in 2009 and is funded by the City Council. They have developed a web page to advertise current events and happenings in Tonganoxie. They have developed two brochures about Tonganoxie businesses and to visitors on "how to spend the day". Welcome flags were purchased and displayed in downtown Tonganoxie as well as signage on the highway directing visitors to downtown. Their long-term goal is to grow the committee by adding new members, continue to present and implement new ideas, and to recruit volunteers.

Charlie Conrad spoke from a business owner perspective. He and his wife Debi own the West End Café located on 4<sup>th</sup> Street. Their issue is communication. As a business owner they just want to be heard. They would like to see businesses promoted not only to people outside Tonganoxie but to our local residents. As Tonganoxie has grown there are many local residents who do not even know what exists downtown or what the City of Tonganoxie has to offer. Let's educate our local residents and then spread the word to potential visitors. What specifically can business owners do to promote their business? They are all willing to entertain ideas, even if it means knocking on doors. The key is communication and it is imperative that everyone do a better job at that.

Dave Plomaritis, owner of Bikes to Trikes, was the next business owner to speak. He transitioned here from Leavenworth with the goal of making money for himself and Tonganoxie. He is associated with the Chamber of Commerce and also the Tonganoxie Motorcycle Association (TMA). This is a family oriented operation and they are planning a meet and greet on March 25<sup>th</sup>. He is also involved with EAST, Entrepreneurs Achieving Success Together, which meets every Friday morning at the West End Café. He would like to be sure that citizens are getting correct information, not misinformation. Again, communication is lacking.

Donald Provence, owner of the previous Lenahan's Hardware Store, spoke about the lack of retail in Tonganoxie. He is not yet opened for business but plans a Restoration Show Room. He would like fresh ideas from the Retail Development Committee and would assist in these endeavors.

Jovita Johnson, owner of Natures Open Door, is a retail spa business. She and her husband operate the business and offer Spa Parties. She is on facebook, twitter, and has distributed flyers. She is also looking for ideas as to how to promote not only her business but all of Tonganoxie. Most of her business is from individuals outside Tonganoxie and she would like local residents to hear about her business and visit.

With no further business owners wanting to speak, Mayor Ward summarized the input thus far. The common theme seemed to be one of needing better communication and to work within groups we have to make them all more efficient. With that being said, the meeting was opened to additional discussion from the audience.

Sheila O'Neil asked if Tonganoxie has a map of downtown businesses and the answer was we do not. She suggested this would be a good way for businesses to promote other businesses.

Kelly Fann, Tonganoxie's Library Director, stated the Library has information on entrepreneurship and is a good resource for small businesses. She stated that maybe Sunday hours would be something she and her staff should consider.

Greg Orschelen, who is associated with Steve LaForge and Jim Bennett of Everlasting Specialties, advised that Will Katz from University of Kansas and a business director is also an excellent resource. His job is to help small businesses find ways to succeed. He also shared that Everlasting Specialties had been named Small Business of the Year for 2011.

Jim Jobst, pastor of Trinity Church, stated that building relationships where you are and shopping locally is a win-win for everyone. He thinks signage is a successful tool that could be used.

Cecilia Harry, on behalf of the Chamber of Commerce echoed some of the comments and feedback from the speakers. The chamber is implementing changes and intends to take all the feedback to the Chamber and showcase Tonganoxie. Streets will not be closed for events and they will move forward with information received and promote businesses as a whole and maintain professional and personal tiers of service. They are in the planning stages of the St. Patrick's Day Parade. Bill Peak questioned if there is going to be an entry fee to participate in the parade. The entry fee was to provide a raffle ticket for prize money. The entry fee was not well received by the public. J.W. Evans stated that in the past the business owners provided the prize money, but how long that could continue was unknown.

With no further discussion, Mayor Ward suggested that thoughts and ideas be presented on a "Discussion Board" for all to see. Please refer to the attached document.

With no further business to discuss, there was a **motion** by Bixby to adjourn. Second by Gilner. Motion carried. All Ayes. Aye 4. Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,  
Mary Conway  
City Clerk

## DISCUSSION BOARD

| <b>NOT DOING SO WELL</b>  | <b>DOING WELL</b>               | <b>SOLUTIONS</b>  |
|---|---------------------------------|---|
| Communication   | Speed Control                   | Use available groups                                    |
| Segmentation  | Have a historic downtown        | Local resources - Library                               |
| Misinformation  | Good roads                      | Consistent themes                                       |
| Not enough local participation  | Spirit for Tonganoxie           | Farm tours  |
| Don't promote savings of buying local; misconception of things cheaper outside Tonganoxie | Water Park                      | Cross promote businesses (training for business owners) |
| Using volunteers properly   | Chieftain Trail                 | City map of businesses                                  |
| Downtown businesses need a voice  | Parks VFW, Chieftain Park       | Quarterly meetings                                      |
| Share concerns in a proper forum  | Historical Society              | Group memberships                                       |
| Promote Sr. Center - leases hall  | Good leadership in Police Dept. |   |