ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE  
MEETING NOTES  
February 23, 2011

Attendees:

Committee Members:  C. Burrus, R. Creamer, J. Fiske, S. Freeman, J. Grover, L. Jean-Baptiste, A. Rainey, M. Tendam, M. Wynne, R. Zenkich,

Committee Members Absent:  D. Mennemeyer


Presiding Member:  L. Jean-Baptiste, Chair

I. Call to Order  
A quorum being present, Chair Jean-Baptiste called the meeting to order at 7:32 p.m.

II. Consideration of Meeting Minutes of January 26, 2011  
Ald. Burrus moved approval of the January 26, 2011 minutes, seconded by Ald. Tendam.

The minutes of the January 26, 2011 meeting were approved unanimously, 10-0.

III. Staff Reports  
A. Downtown Evanston Zoning:  
Dennis Marino, Planning & Zoning Manager, reported that the Plan Commission is reviewing the downtown zoning considering the recommendations based on the adopted 2009 Downtown Plan. Their recommendations will be sent to the Planning & Development Committee as soon as the Law Department puts them into code language. The recommendations emphasize the 1993 Zoning Ordinance as amended and the Plan Commission will review new applications to be processed under that code.

Mr. Marino explained that the Downtown Plan emphasizes predictability and transparency for planned developments and the plan will manage and shape the density of the downtown with a district framework: the Core, Transitional and Traditional Districts define the density allowed within each. The new Downtown Plan links zoning bonuses to public benefits which would allow the developer to extend beyond as of right zoning, and which will encourage public benefits such as sustainability, affordable housing, underground parking, streetscape and alley improvements. This bonus system will also make the process more predictable for developers. Currently, the planned development process allows zoning variations with a two thirds vote by Council. With the bonus system, if the developer complies, the project can move forward more easily within the parameters of the bonus system.
Craig Sklenar, General Planner, presented a map and a table representing the 3 zoning districts and the zoning code changes, explaining that in the DC3 Zone heights can range from a minimum of 38’ to a maximum of 385’ when bonuses are awarded for public benefits.

Mr. Marino explained that the Plan Commission spent a great deal of time deliberating about the bonus system before recommending it. They believe it will allow the City to have the appropriate density in the Downtown.

Mr. Freeman added that Council will have final approval on applications for bonuses.

Chair Jean-Baptiste requested that the Plan Commission copy the Economic Development Committee on the documents pertaining to the zoning when they are submitted to the Planning & Development Committee and to Council.

IV. New Business
A. Discuss and consider application for Façade Improvement Program Grants form Economic Development Funds or Tax Increment Financing (TIF) Districts

Ms. Nyden presented the applicants for consideration for Façade Improvement Program grants for 2011, explaining that the façade is defined by the first 35’ of a building and the grant will provide up to $10,000 on a 50/50 cost sharing basis, so if, for example, a façade improvement costs $30,000, the applicant is eligible to receive a maximum of $10,000 and $100 for each additional foot.

At Ald. Rainey’s inquiry, Ms. Nyden reported that the kinks are being worked out of the new application form but it is working well, and that Aaron Brown, Economic Development Intern, is assisting applicants who do not have computers. She added that through checking “You Owe” for applicants, the City has collected approximately $2,000 in unpaid water bills, parking tickets, etc. Ald. Rainey noted that one of the façade improvement applicants seeks to improve a building whose landlord’s taxes are overdue, adding that she will not approve a façade improvement grant until the taxes are paid.

In response to staff’s recommendation that staff review the $500 rebate applications, Ald. Rainey requested that the aldermen be notified of the rebate candidates before they are approved by staff. At Mr. Freeman’s inquiry, Ms. Nyden reported that there are approximately 4-5 $500 rebate applicants a year.

At staff’s suggestion, the Economic Development Committee authorized $10,000 to be administered by staff to cover the costs of small grant applications for signage up to $500, similarly to the façade program’s applications for smaller amounts.

The following applications were presented:

$145 Rex’s Place, 1316 Maple, presented by Mrs. Kathy Lichtenstein
Proposal for signage and low cost façade improvements
Ald. Fiske recused herself from the vote for this application.
$2,250  Evanston Festival Theater, 600 Main St., presented by John Szostek
Propose to install 6 decorative antique style lights along platform; scale compatible to building, in a currently dark area

$8,000  Stratosphere Networks, 2930 Central St., presented by Erica Abdnour for Steve Melchiorre
Propose to revamp worn out front signage, replace stone at base and modernize and lighten up. Ald. Grover mentioned that the company had considered moving to Skokie and she is glad they stayed in Evanston. The applicant will appear before the Sign Review Board. Chair Jean-Baptiste advised the applicant to call Lou Dickson, who disassembles and recycles building materials when they do the renovation.

$9,500  Varsity, LLC, 1706-10 Sherman, presented by Steven Rogin
Propose to restore to original appearance by tuck pointing terra cotta on building, retiling on front, repairing green tile on roof, rebuilding a section of the wall

$16,500  Renaissance Realty and Construction, 1715 Church and 1703-1711 Darrow, presented by John Leineweber
Mr. Leineweber proposes to improve façades with canopies and awnings in steel, bronze, glass and stretched canvas, at a cost of $30,000 for the project. He requested that he be conditionally approved for assistance before he began paying for drawings and design work, and the submission of three bids for the work. The Committee commended the design work of the Mr. Leineweber’s properties.

The Committee voted unanimously to approve the Façade Improvement Program grant applications for Rex's Place, Evanston Festival Theater, Stratosphere Networks, Varsity, LLC, and for the first phase ($2,000) of Renaissance Realty and Construction.

$5,200  EGEA Spa at 1521 Sherman, presented by Kathy Pappas
Propose to replace existing awning at corner of building and add additional awnings in the material of the existing awning.

The Committee voted unanimously to approve the grant for EGEA Spa conditional upon building owner’s payment of the overdue taxes.

B. Discuss and consider Economic Development Grant Application for the Evanston Community Development Corporation (ECDC)
Ms. Radzevich explained that ECDC requested that their application be held until the next meeting in order to have more time to prepare for the Committee’s questions.

The Committee agreed to submit their questions for ECDC to Ms. Radzevich.

C. Report from Downtown Evanston on Quarterly Activities
Ms. Carolyn Dellutri, on behalf of the Downtown Evanston Board of Directors, reported that the Gift Card Program was a huge success with 635 cards sold at a value of over $33,000 and $14,000 redeemed to date, adding that the gift card can be used for
parking in garages. She said the Director of Student Affairs at Northwestern University is helping to make students aware of the program and to sell the gift cards online. She reported that over 75 businesses were featured in the Passport Book which will provide discounts throughout the year.

Ms. Dellutri reported that Downtown Evanston is planning a new event called Girl Whirl Weekend Getaway which is to be featured in AAA Living Magazine and Make It Better. The event will coincide with Women Out Walking (on Saturday morning) and the Talking Pictures Film Festival.

Ms. Dellutri listed upcoming programs/events Downtown Evanston is working on:
- Big Bite Night (for Northwestern University students)
- Art Under Glass
- Downtown Family Block Party (to coordinate with the Farmer’s Market, Backstage Evanston and other organizations)
- American Planning Association meeting at the Orrington Hotel
- Renewal of 3 year Summer Maintenance Program with the City of Evanston
- Outreach to office renters
- Making gift cards available on the internet
- 150 year celebration (More information at breakfast meeting on March 22, 2011)

Ms. Dellutri reported that consultant Kennedy Smith will report on her findings in the end of March or beginning of April, 2011.

V. COMMUNICATIONS
   A. Real Estate Transfer Tax Report
   B. Staff Report

VI. PUBLIC COMMENT:
There was no public comment.

Chair Jean-Baptiste welcomed Annette Logan, Economic Development Planner, back to the City after her absence.

Chair Jean-Baptiste announced that this would be his last meeting and thanked the Committee and staff for their excellent service and responsiveness. He expressed his hope that the neighborhood business districts would share in the spotlight, as well as downtown Evanston, as Evanston’s marketing promotions progress.

Ald. Rainey commended Chair Jean-Baptiste and congratulated him on his appointment as a judge in Chicago.

VII. Adjournment
The meeting was adjourned at 8:38 p.m.

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, March 23, 2011.

Respectfully submitted,
Bobbie Newman