I. Call to Order
   A quorum being present, Chair Jean-Baptiste called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

II. Consideration of Meeting Minutes of December 1, 2010
   Ald. Rainey moved approval of the December 1, 2010 minutes, seconded by Mr. Creamer.

   The minutes were approved unanimously, 9-0.

III. Staff Reports
    A. Façade Improvement Program:
       Ms. Nyden reported that the Economic Development Division presented 2 information
       sessions at the beginning of the month with 45 building and business owners and
       managers attending, and filling Room 2200. The due date for the 1st round of
       submissions was earlier in the day (January 26, 2011). The submissions will be
       presented to the Economic Development Committee at next month’s meeting. She
       assured the Committee that the applications that can be funded by CDBG funds will
       be sent to the Housing and Community Development Committee and TIF-eligible
       projects will be funded appropriately through the TIF funds and presented for
       recommendation of approval to the Economic Development Committee.

       Ms. Radzevich, the new Economic Development Division Manager of 6 weeks,
       introduced herself. She said Newton, Massachusetts, where she worked for the last 3
       years is similar to Evanston. The Committee welcomed her.

    B. Business Advisory Center:
       Ms. Radzevich reported that the Economic Development Division is working on
       updating the Business Advisory Center physically as well as on the website to make it
       more business-friendly for retention, expansion and generation of business. She and
her team are working to create a space for meeting and interacting with applicants. She reported that Ward’s Manufacturing has started working on their site.

Ald. Tendam asked what role the City’s 311 Center will have in relation to the Business Advisory Center, to which Ms. Nyden responded that a component of the 311 Center will provide a directory of Evanston’s service providers, for example, food service deliveries, plumbers, etc. Businesses will be able to upload their information into the system. Service requests by citizens can also be entered, such as broken sidewalks, trash complaints, etc. Messages will be relayed to the appropriate department. Ald. Tendam wondered how fast the requests will be related to the division. Ms. Nyden explained that it was her understanding it would be immediate and that there will be a component providing information regarding what you need to start a business, move a business or expand a business in the FAQs.

Ms. Nyden explained that there will be a component providing information with all the permutations on what you need to start, move or expand a business in Evanston and FAQs.

Mr. Griffin promised to bring up the Business Advisory Center component to the City Manager at the Special Council Meeting on Monday, January 31st.

IV. New Business

A. Discuss and consider submission requirements for financial assistance requests in excess of $25,000

Ms. Radzevich had distributed a list of items to be on a comprehensive application form based on the mission statement, projects and funding requests, which could serve overlapping funding sources and streamline the applicant’s process.

Ald. Rainey suggested removing some of the items, requiring that the form not be handwritten, and that it provide for property owner as well as business owner information. She commented that it was very thorough.

Mr. Mennemeyer suggested that the property pin number should be on the form so the City can determine who has title and whether there is a lien on the property, and that the form should be pdf-fillable, which will help to alleviate the problem of handwriting. He also suggested using a short form and a long form for applications for $5,000 as opposed to $100,000.

Mr. Freeman suggested the requirement for the form to be filled out electronically.

Ms. Radzevich replied that she had been looking forward to the Committee’s input and she will put the form into a more succinct, standardized application so the process can begin. Ms. Nyden added that some of the $1,500 façade improvement program applicants who do not have computer access are assisted by the Economic Development Division intern.

B. Discuss and consider program requirements for Neighborhood Business District Improvement Program
Ms. Nyden reported that with the Committee’s input the application would be grouped by marketing, landscaping, holiday decorations, etc.

Ald. Jean-Baptiste noted that every district has different needs. He suggested sharing information between the business districts about what they are doing to aggregate and leverage funds.

Ms. Nyden responded that the City hosts an early morning, monthly meeting with representatives of all of the business districts, which started as a small group by Ms. Dellutri. Ms. Nyden is working to encourage attendance by the emerging business districts. Ms. Dellutri said they began the meetings 2 years ago, talking about planters, holiday decorations and ways to enhance their districts such as having sidewalk sales. Chair Jean-Baptiste asked for a monthly update after each meeting, going forward.

Ald. Tendam said he sat in on the Central Street Business Association meeting where many business owners were frustrated about issues related to landscaping on the public way and electricity in the west end of Independence Park, but he said there were good ideas coming in also.

Ms. Nyden informed the Committee that the meeting is held on the 3rd Wednesday of each month at the Civic Center and it provides an informal setting for the representatives to talk. She has been doing extensive outreach to emerging business district representatives and has been managing the meeting.

C. Economic Development Division Work Plan
Ald. Burrus commented that this plan has solidified the progress of the Economic Development Division. The action items and the tasks have been more fully developed, taking it from a vision and bringing it along. She thanked Ms. Radzevich.

Ms. Radzevich said she used the basic work plan begun by her predecessors and she pulled in Lloyd Shepard to ensure that MWEBE and LEP are included because they are so important to economic development, in Evanston particularly, and to encourage the businesses to hire locally.

V. COMMUNICATIONS
A. Real Estate Transfer Tax Report
B. Staff Report
Ms. Radzevich respectfully requested that the information provided by the staff report would be included in a monthly update that is sent to the aldermen and will include the activities of all of the Community & Economic Development Dept. staff.

PUBLIC COMMENT:
Ms. Carolyn Dellutri commented that it has been a delight working with the new Economic Development Division staff. Per a request submitted by Ald. Fiske, she updated the Committee about the Varsity Theater feasibility study: Consultant, Kennedy Smith met with a task force meeting that morning. She has been conducting phone interviews with various arts organizations the mayor and the university and she has found that there are dozens of performing arts organizations in Evanston but no performing arts facilities in the downtown area. Several important groups are expressing that they need space, so there is no
shortage of demand. Kennedy has said Evanston is unusually fortunate to have as many arts organizations as it has. Arts have been an important economic catalyst bringing jobs and revenue but the potential for growth is enormous and can make Evanston even more appealing. Kennedy is focusing on strategies that strengthen the arts, generate revenue for the City and minimize the need for public investment, support downtown businesses and enrich the community’s cultural environment. She will recommend actions to strengthen the environment for art development in Evanston. Ms. Dellutri and Ms. Smith met with the Mayor and the University, who enthusiastically agree that the University should be an active collaborator in the overall vision and is willing to come to the table. Ms. Dellutri summarized that Ms. Kennedy believes in the revitalization of the Varsity Theater and other performing arts facilities.

Ald. Rainey asked what the other facilities could be, to which Ms. Dellutri replied that if the need is greater, we may be able to find other facilities to fill the need. Ms. Radzevich said she attended that morning’s meeting and the project is moving along well but while there is a focus on the Varsity Theater, this will positively affect the other areas of the City. She said she believes Ms. Smith wants to get a better sense of the wards and other aldermen’s interests and how this will work City-wide.

Ald. Grover compared the idea to the arts district that was created in Cleveland, which has been wildly successful. Mostly private financing, the city contributed an open lot parking. It was a $20 million capital campaign. A number of local arts organizations came together and raised the money to make it happen.

Ms. Dellutri said she expects the recommendations to be presented in March. Mr. Zenkich wondered in which fiscal year the recommendations would be applied, to which Ms. Radzevich replied that she believes Ms. Smith realizes there may not be money available out of the City's budget.

Mr. Michael Vasilko of 2728 Reese Ave., Evanston, said Crate & Barrel in Plaza del Lago is closing due to the fact that their lease is not being renewed. The Committee enthusiastically received this information and staff will act on it. Mr. Vasilko distributed a flyer about Crate & Barrel.

Mr. Lonnie Wilson asked about the second round of the Façade Program, to which Ms. Nyden replied that the next meeting would be April 5th, at which information will be distributed, adding that there will be funds available for the second round of applications.

Ald. Burrus distributed a flyer for the Northwestern University business networking breakfast. She explained that the offices of Corporate Relations, Community Relations and Economic Development are sponsoring the North Shore business breakfast to reach out to chambers along the North Shore from Highland Park to Morton Grove on Feb 17th at the Orrington. There will be about 1.5 hours of presentations by Northwestern staff about how businesses can engage, from hiring students, to hiring alum, to how to become a vendor, to how to work with students on special projects. The last half hour will be an open discussion on what can Northwestern University can do to better engage with businesses. It is free.

Ald. Grover asked to make sure Converge Communications receives an invitation.

Chair Jean-Baptiste advised that the MWEBE coordinator, Mr. Shepard be there as well.
VII. Adjournment
   The meeting was adjourned at 8:16 p.m.

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

   Respectfully submitted,

   Bobbie Newman