
MEMBERS ABSENT: Ald. Grover

PRESIDING OFFICIAL: Ald. Rainey, Chair

OTHER OFFICIALS: None

STAFF PRESENT: Wally Bobkiewicz-City Manager, Lehman Walker-Community Development Director, Dennis Marino-Assistant Director of Planning, Morris Robinson-Economic Development Planner, Craig Sklenar-General Planner

OTHERS PRESENT: Charles C. Happ, Chairman-Technology Innovation Center; Jonathan Perman, Executive Director-Ev. Chamber of Commerce; Carolyn Dellutri-Executive Director-Downtown Evanston (EVMARK); Gina Speckman, Executive Director-Chicago’s North Shore Convention & Visitors Bureau; Local press

SUMMARY OF THE MEETING:

Chair Rainey introduced Mr. Lehman Walker to the EDC and asked him to say a few words. Mr. Walker is the new Community Development Director for the City.

I. Chair Rainey called the EDC Meeting to order at approximately 7:40 P.M.

II. Consideration of the EDC Meeting Minutes of November 18, 2009

ACTION TAKEN: Chair Rainey asked for a motion to approve the Meeting Minutes of November 18, 2009. Ms. Carolyn Dellutri asked to clarify the status of an amendment to Downtown Evanston (aka EVMARK) current maintenance agreement mentioned on page 2 of the minutes. The contract amendment is pending not executed as written at which time it was moved to approve the minutes with the clarification. The motion received a second and was unanimously approved.
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
COMMITTEE MEETING OF DECEMBER 16, 2009

III. CONSIDERATION OF THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY & MAJOR PRIORITIES

Chair Rainey next asked staff to proceed with the main agenda item for the meeting; establishing the economic development strategy and major priorities. City Manager Bobkiewicz began by introducing Mr. Lehman Walker the new Community Development Director and asked him to say a few words. Director Walker, who has been on board for about a week stated that he is in the process of getting a grasp of the many challenges facing the city as well as the initiatives occurring on the economic development front. Director Walker received a warm welcome from the EDC. CM Bobkiewicz continued by explaining how he and staff have distilled the previous strategy and priorities to the document the members of the EDC have in their packet. The current iteration of the Economic Development Strategy/Priorities consists of four major priorities: 1. Business Retention; 2. Business Attraction; 3. Area and Commercial Revitalization and Redevelopment and 4. Marketing. Each major priority has four primary, measurable strategies designed to accomplish the plan objectives. A copy of the document is available in the Planning Division for review.

CM Bobkiewicz pointed out the objective of having a plan in place and operating before consideration can be given to becoming a part of an external economic development corporation or other such entity. Once the City is properly organized with clearly set economic development goals; the plan to meet those goals and appropriate staff is in place, perhaps in two years the City can then explore the possibility of participating with the Chamber of Commerce and other external partners in organizing a corporation or similar economic development alliance. During this period, the external partners are encouraged to continue planning while the City manager will continue meeting with Northwestern University; Evanston Inventure; Downtown Evanston; the hospitals and others to work towards mutually beneficial economic development goals. However, at this time the City is just not ready to make the broad leap to an external economic development corporation.

CM Bobkiewicz stated that the EDC and the City Council input clearly express the expectation for economic development activities to be enhanced and that staff member Morris Robinson who has been staffing Economic Development has announced his intention to retire at the end of the first quarter of 2010. Now it is even more important to create sufficient staff resources to implement the plan in order to meet expectations. To that end, the Community Development Department will undergo a name change to Community and Economic Development Department and Director Lehman will be challenged with the responsibility of meeting the economic development goals.
In addition, consideration will be given to adding additional staff members, one to succeed Morris Robinson and a second new position. These two positions will work “on the street” to address economic development needs and priorities.

Planning Division head Dennis Marino will be involved with economic development in addition to other duties, particularly strategic planning. CM Bobkiewicz once again stressed the need for the EDC to recommend approval for the document before them which will allow staff to move forward with the plan. Once the plan is approved, staff will report back to the EDC on progress made on the strategies at the monthly EDC Meetings.

Chair Rainey commented that the way the document is prepared the action plan is inherent for each priority. Ald. Jean-Baptiste asked if staff had the opportunity to research other economic development concepts. City staff has read about cities with external economic development corporations or similar organizations but have not visited with representatives. CM Bobkiewicz again commented on the Evanston’s lack of readiness for such participation in such an organization.

Member Zenkich asked to be recognized by the chair and distributed documents from the National League of Cities; Economic Vision Strategy for Burnley England and a Potential Economic Planning Framework drafted for discussion by member Zenkich. Remarking on the components of the proposed plan for Evanston, member Zenkich stated that his research of other cities verify the need for an overall “vision statement” with specificity of objectives and the plan should be mapped around specific, measurable objectives citing the city of Burnley in England as an example. Chair Rainey stated that she was unaware of the intent to distribute articles from member Zenkich at the EDC Meeting and the EDC members should have an opportunity to read and digest the material before a proper discussion can take place. The documents and the research were appreciated.

Ald. Burrus complimented member Zenkich on the contributions to the deliberative process and mentioned that she had recently visited Ann Arbor Michigan which has a highly regarded economic development organization and business support culture. Ald. Burrus continued by suggesting that the city of Evanston needs to focus narrowly on retention and expansion and agreed that the city is not yet ready to participate as an equal partnership with the external organizations. Perhaps the city may be able to join a not for profit entity in two or three years. Ald. Burrus also offered the opinion that one reason Northwestern University may not have been more involved with contributing to an economic development partnership is the lack of Return On Investment (ROI) for the university.
Member Mennemeyer was recognized by the chair and proceeded to comment on the need for a partnership organization. Although appreciating the need for the City to reach a preparedness level, member Mennemeyer stated that waiting for two years to develop the right organization would be unfortunate.

Chair Rainey interjected that there were no constraints preventing the partners on the private side from proceeding with strategy planning even though the City is not ready to proceed within the context of a large external group.

Member Mennemeyer continued providing the EDC with opinions on how the planning process should proceed and who the major participants should be; agreeing with Ald. Burrus that there was no ROI for Northwestern University and other general comments. Member Mennemeyer also stated that he was now prepared to support the City Manager’s request to approve the economic development plan submitted by staff with the expectation that an opportunity will be made in the future to consider a multi-partnership organization, after the City has reached a readiness point.

Ald. Jean-Baptiste commented on the good components of the plan, adding that the strategies were arguably tactics. Ald. Jean-Baptiste underscored member Zenkich suggestion that a vision was needed. A well thought out plan presupposes the framework as well as the vision. Collaboration with external partners has taken place and will continue regardless. Clearly the next step is continued discussions and implementation of a broad vision that will allow that vision to be a guide for achieving the economic development objectives. Ald. Jean-Baptiste punctuated the point by borrowing and stating the quote; “if you don’t know where you are going, any road will take you there”.

CM Bobkiewicz again advised the EDC that approval of the plan will allow staff to start implementation of the strategies as at the beginning of the new year. The EDC will be provided with periodic performance updates at the EDC Meetings. CM Bobkiewicz stated that collaborative meetings with the external partners will also continue, citing recent meetings with Northwestern University President Shapiro and Business manager Sunshine as well as Carolyn Dellutri’s Downtown Evanston monthly meeting as examples.

Member Mennemeyer stated that specific focus needs to be directed at appropriate resource allocations and additional staffing if the economic development initiatives are to be successful. Member Mennemeyer continued with his comments indicating that various organizations such as Downtown Evanston and the Technology Innovation Center were not economic development organizations.
Ald. Burrus took exception to that statement stressing that not only is the Technology Innovation Center an economic development organization but it is also the future of economic development for the City, particularly in threshold industries such as nanotechnologies, biotechnology and incubator start-ups. Mr. Charles Happ concurred. Ms. Dellutri expressed similar sentiments about Downtown Evanston (aka Evmark) adding that an economic development component is part of the organization’s charter.

After more general discussion, member Mennemeyer asked to clarify his remarks. It was not his intention to deny that the organizations were economic development centered. His intent was to suggest they were not involved with economic development for the entire city and he apologized for the misstatement. Following other comments, Chair Rainey stated that the plan request required City Council approval and asked for a motion.

**ACTION TAKEN:** Ald. Wynne moved to recommend approval of the Economic Development Strategy and Major Priorities Plan with periodic implementation reports to the Economic Development Committee and for staff to incorporate a vision relative to the goals of the City. Ald. Jean-Baptiste provided a second and the motion was unanimously approved.

(*Urged by CM Bobkiewicz, Ald. Rainey instructed staff to make the necessary arrangements for the recommendation to be presented at the City Council Meeting of January 11, 2010. *Ald. Rainey also suggested that a summit meeting with all the partners was in order. Ms. Dellutri volunteered to coordinate the meeting).*

**IV. REVIEW OF COMMUNICATIONS: MEMORANDUM AND ATTACHMENTS FROM NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY CONCERNING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

Chair Rainey stated that the next agenda item to consider were documents submitted by Mr. Jeff Coney, Director–Economic Development for Northwestern University. The documents were submitted in response to an appeal made by City staff to the external partners for input in developing the economic development priorities. Significant aspects of the documents are Northwestern’s endorsement of Evanston Inventure as a key participant and the university’s broad support for collaborative initiatives that benefit the city and the university. Of particular note is Mr. Coney’s request to let the university know how the City would like for it to participate in the economic development initiatives and priorities.

**ACTION TAKEN:** The EDC encouraged CM Bobkiewicz to invite the NU representative to the summit meeting once it is arranged and to continue engaging in partnership/relationship building.
V. COMMUNICATIONS: Prior to the convening of the EDC Meeting, staff member Robinson also distributed two articles germane to the main agenda topic. The communication documents contained in the packet were acknowledged.

* Ald. Rainey instructed staff to include the material distributed by Mr. Zenkich as an EDC Agenda item for the January 2010 EDC Meeting.

VI. ADJOURNMENT: There being no further business, Ald. Rainey asked for a motion to adjourn.

ACTION TAKEN: Ald. Wynne moved to adjourn and Ald. Burrus provided a second and the EDC voted unanimously to adjourn. Chair Rainey adjourned the meeting at approximately 8:50 P.M

The next Economic Development Committee Meeting is scheduled for January 27, 2010 7:30 P.M. in Room 2404 of the Lorraine H. Morton Civic Center.

Respectfully submitted,

Morris E. Robinson
Morris E. Robinson
Economic Development Planner