
Staff Present: K. Cox, B. Dunkley, S. Guderley, D. Marino, B. Newman, D. Spicuzza

Presiding Official: Alderman Moran

DECLARATION OF QUORUM

Chair Moran called the meeting to order at 6:50 p.m., a quorum being present.

APPROVAL OF MARCH 9, 2009 MEETING MINUTES

The Committee voted unanimously 9-0 to approve the March 9, 2009 meeting minutes with one minor correction.

ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

Chair Moran suggested addressing the items that had speakers present first.

(P7) Resolution 17-R-09, Designating the Portion of Davis Street between Orrington Avenue and Chicago Avenue with the Honorary Street Name Sign “Giordano Dance Street”

Chair Moran asked the citizens who wished to speak to the podium.

Ald. Wollin said that Amy Giordano and some of the students from the Gus Giordano Dance Center wished to speak. She said the Gus Giordano Dance Center has been at 614 Davis for 55 years and it is one of the oldest businesses and studios in town and she said she believes this is a fitting way to honor Gus Giordano’s memory as well as the activities of the studio.

Melissa Mulvaney, the school manager said that Ms. Giordano regretted not being able to be present because of a school function for her daughter. She said that this is near and dear to her heart and the memory of her father and the school that he founded. She said the school has been on Davis Street for 56 years and the school is truly an artistic landmark in Evanston, bringing culture, expression and creativity to this town. The school has brought hundreds of scholarship students to Evanston each year and the scholarship students are present tonight.

Chair Moran asked the students to stand and they came to the front of the Council Chambers. The audience and aldermen applauded. Ms. Mulvaney said having students from all over the nation come to them year after year and experience all that Gus Giordano founded is very special. She said she wanted to share a personal story about her job as the school manager. She has worked at a number of studios and at Giordano, she will see someone come into their building, come up the stairs, take in the historic pictures on the wall, take in the images of Gus, and tears are actually brought to their eyes and they get very emotional about the place. Sometimes they are there to take a class themselves or they are there with their child or their grandchild. They have students from age two to the oldest student, who is in her eighties. For a place to be so near and dear to people’s hearts is testament to how very special this school is and she is honored to be
a part of it and she knows that all the students present are as well. She thanked the Committee.

Ms. Courtney Kozlowski introduced herself and said she has been dancing since she was three years old. She lives in Bartlett, Illinois, over an hour away. She had heard about Giordano’s from one of her dance teachers who recommended she go there. She started going there last summer and she fell in love with the place, so when she got a little bit older she auditioned for their junior program which she has been in on the scholarship program. She said there are tons and tons of dance studios all around, especially right by her house and she chooses to drive to Evanston two times each day because she loves it there so much. She has met so many people and it is a great atmosphere and everyone loves it. She said she had not gotten to meet Gus Giordano but it was amazing to see the many, many dancers at his funeral from everywhere that he had touched. They all came together and had a dance that was very emotional. Everyone was crying and smiling and it was a beautiful experience and you could see how many lives he has touched and how great it is to be a part of it.

Mr. Curt Adametz, a scholarship student at Giordano said he would like to relate some anecdotes and perspectives of his own. He said he was born and raised in Massachusetts. Upon graduating from college he had every intention of moving to New York City, like every other dancer wants to, to pursue a career, when he stumbled onto Giordano studio. He had known about Gus Giordano since he was very little, and being a male dancer, he has had a huge influence on his life as well as many of his peers, so he could not pass up the opportunity for a scholarship. He said that something that sets Giordano apart from so many other studios not only in the immediate area but all over the country is that it is really not just a dance center. It is really a family and a community and that is something that he believes Gus always strived for and from his perspective so far in Evanston, that is something that is very important in this City and he thinks that is well reflected at the dance school in all its aspects, and this is a perfect way to honor such a legacy that is not only an international legacy, but something that is very important to this area in particular. The Committee thanked him.

Ald. Wollin said that April 25th is Gus Giordano Day in the State of Illinois, so she would like to get the street sign up and honored by then, if possible.

Ald. Hansen said she would like to share that she was a student at Giordano when she was engaged to be married and preparing for her wedding. She coerced her husband into taking dance lessons at Giordano so they could dance appropriately for their first dance at their wedding. She said once they got there and took a few lessons, it was so comfortable that he was not embarrassed to be there and it was great. She thanked Giordano’s for that opportunity.

The Committee voted unanimously 9-0 to pass Resolution 17-R-09, designating the portion of Davis Street between Orrington and Chicago Avenues, “Giordano Dance Street”

(P6) Resolution 18-R-09, Designating the Portion of Emerson Street between Dewey Avenue and Jackson Avenue with the Honorary Street Name Sign “Leon Robinson Street”

Ald. Holmes said there were representatives present from the church Mr. Leon Robinson attended, Ebenezer AME Church on Emerson Street, because this is where the request originated. She said the designation of Dewey to Jackson on Emerson is important because the Jacob Blake Robinson Manor is located there and that is just one of the contributions that the Robinson’s have made to the City of Evanston. Where Fire Station #3 is located used to be the old Robinson’s gas station, which you would have to be an old Evanstonian to know, but they have had such an impact on this community and this is a wonderful way to be able to honor the whole Robinson family, especially Leon. Ald. Holmes introduced Mr. and Mrs. Aikens.

Mrs. Alice Aikens introduced herself and said she has known Mr. Robinson all her life and that
his wife was her fifth grade school teacher. She said she thinks this is a perfect way to honor not only Mr. Robinson, but the family as a whole, who have done many, many things for this community. Not only the school bus, but the mother and father had a long history in the black community of helping time and time again in emergency issues within the community. She said they provided students with a place to go, which was Ebenezer Church. So they have a great history here in Evanston and this will be a great way of honoring them.

Ald. Holmes said Mr. Robinson is not present because he is in Florida and will be back in June, when a ceremony will be held and Ald. Holmes will make sure everyone is invited to it.

Ald. Bernstein suggested putting “Sonny” on the street name. He said he has known Mr. Robinson for about 30 years. He remembers so many altruistic and incredible things that he would never take credit for. He has come to the aid of more people in this town than anybody knows. He said, “God bless him, he is a truly good man” and he is really happy for him and happy for the City to have had him.

Chair Moran related a time when he was working on something that Mr. Robinson was interested in a long time ago, and he had called and left a message for Chair Moran while he happened to be in Paris. Chair Moran said he got confused with the time when returning the call and ended up calling him back at about 6:00 a.m. and Mr. Robinson picked up the phone and Chair Moran said he did not know whether he was asleep but he was immediately on target, which is typical of how sharp he is.

Ald. Tisdahl said she would tell a story also, which is about the bus company. She was driving a little third grade softball player home after practice and he was terrified because he forgot his lunchbox on the bus and he knew his mother would be mad at him. So she took him to the bus company to go to the lost and found and look for the lunchbox and Leon Robinson was there. He personally took them, found the bus, found the box, and then sent them on their way. She said he was so kind to the little boy who was terrified and he could tell that it was a major emergency for him and that is why he gave them great personal service.

Ald. Jean-Baptiste said he thinks that by honoring Mr. Robinson this way, we immortalize this image and this person who had pulled himself by his bootstraps and for so many of our young people that are coming up, unless we find a way to make that story come alive, they will not understand the example he sets. So he believes it is a great thing we are doing and he hopes that someone will help Sonny write a book because whenever he starts telling you his history, he could fill several chapters of several volumes. He said it is a great thing.

Ald. Bernstein asked whether it would be appropriate to add “Sonny” to the street name, to which Ald. Holmes said that the original request was to name the street after Josephine and Leon Robinson, Sr., but our rules for naming streets state that it can only be for a living person. Because Sonny has done so much, it was an easy decision to switch, but at the same time they certainly wanted to keep the memory of Mr. and Mrs. Robinson Sr., so since both of their names are Leon, that is the reason they are leaving it Leon, and not even saying Jr. or Sr. on the street sign. She wants people to know that street names are really designated for living people. They get a lot of requests for folk that they cannot honor, but they are working on finding a way to possibly honor some of those too.

The Committee voted unanimously 9-0 to approve Resolution 18-R-09 renaming the portion of Emerson Street between Dewey and Jackson, “Leon Robinson Street.”
(P1) Consideration of Federal HOME Fund Request from Over the Rainbow Association for Rehabilitation of Hill Arboretum, 2040 Brown

Ald. Wynne moved approval of the request. Ald. Wollin seconded the motion.

Ald. Holmes said that since the last meeting she has met with the neighbors and representatives from Over the Rainbow Association, and she made recommendations to help them work out solutions to the parking issues and alley issues and they are on their way to resolving them. They feel that they can release the funds so Hill Arboretum can proceed with the improvements to be made with assistance from the HOME funds.

The Committee voted unanimously 9-0 to approve the request.

(P2) Consideration of a Plat of Re-Subdivision for 101 Hamilton Street and 1212 Lakeshore Blvd.

Ald. Wollin moved approval of the re-subdivision. Ald. Wynne seconded the motion.

The Committee voted unanimously 9-0 in favor of the motion.

(P3) Consideration of a Request for a 27-Month Extension for the 318-320 Dempster Street Approved Planned Development

Ald. Wynne moved to approve the request. Ald. Rainey seconded the motion.

The Committee voted unanimously 9-0 to approve the request.

(P4) Foreclosure Prevention Strategy for HOME-Assisted Development at 241 Callan

Chair Moran moved approval. Ald. Bernstein seconded the motion.

Ald. Rainey said that the first she knew about this was Sunday morning when she began reading her computerized packet. She said she has developed an inordinate amount of research on this property and she asked that it be held in Committee until the next meeting.

Chair Moran said if there are no objections it will be held until next meeting.

Ald. Rainey said she thinks it is extremely disrespectful to drop a bomb of this type on an Alderman who is so intensely involved in a particular neighborhood in her ward. She said no one had the courtesy to call or email her about this and she was shocked when she saw this so she asked that our staff be a little more sensitive to some of the aldermen’s feelings. Chair Moran replied that forewarned is forearmed. Ald. Rainey thanked him.

(P5) Request from Connections for the Homeless for Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) Funds for the Evanston Alliance on Homelessness

Ald. Rainey moved to approve the request. Ald. Wollin seconded the motion.

The Committee voted unanimously 9-0 to approve the request.
ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

(PD1) Discussion of a Proposed Revision to Approved Planned Development for 1890 Maple

Mr. David Reifman of DLA Piper, said he was there to present a concept that was contemplated by the original approval for 1890 Maple. As they continue to try to refine the plans to make this project feasible the sum and substance is that the proposal would be revised to increase the first floor commercial space to about 19,000 square feet so it is not tailored to the one specific grocer who it was originally tailored for. He reminded the Committee that the original proposal had about 40,000 square feet of retail, so it is still about half of the amount. Secondly, he said, they would like to increase the amount of dwelling units from 154 to 176. The original ordinance contemplated that if the second floor commercial space were not feasible then alternative use which included residential would be acceptable. Just to be very, very clear, he said, there is no increase in the F.A.R. or the height. Both of those things will stay exactly as approved and those were the subjects that were primarily of consideration during the hearing for this matter.

Mr. Reifman asked the Committee if they had any questions. He explained that they had deliberated with staff as to whether this needed Council action, and both staff and the developer agree that it would be good to have Council’s input and ratification of this matter if they are in favor of it.

He said they would be happy to show the floor plans if the Committee would like to see them. The purpose of the discussion is to show clearly the updated floor plans and to get another substitute ordinance approved, so everything is clear and written.

Mr. Marino said staff is looking for the Committee’s direction in terms of preparing a draft ordinance amending the planned development to be presented at the next meeting.

Ald. Rainey asked whether any of the changes affect any variations, special uses, etc. She asked what adjustment is offered that causes a change in the approval process.

Mr. Bill Dunkley, Zoning Administrator, said the primary challenge with this item is that the number of dwelling units is changing by 23 and although the original ordinance gave the option to substitute the second floor office space that was contemplated, it never specified a number of units or even a magnitude of dwelling units that would be acceptable in a swap out for that space should it prove to be not viable. The number of units is something that we control very closely through the planned development process. Because the number of units has risen, even though the F.A.R. and the height has remained the same, staff felt it was important to get direction as far as the procedure for this amendment, which is a little different from most others. He reminded the Committee that when they amended this Planned Development last year, it was identified that the second floor space was not viable for commercial and this proposed amendment is based upon that finding. He concluded that staff is asking for direction as to whether it should be brought to the Planning & Development Committee or whether there is an alternative which they feel would be more beneficial.

Mr. Reifman said the only relief that this project received during the planned development process was height. So the proposed revision requires no change to its proposed height and the F.A.R. is well below the permitted F.A.R. in the district. It is actually going down slightly.

Ald. Bernstein said the alternative would be to send them back to Plan Commission and he does not see that as a viable alternative. He said he has no problem with modifying the second floor use. He would like there to be an alternative use. If they can rent it for office space, since we
have heard that we need office space, he would just as soon do that. He said this developer has
done his best to conform to what the Council has requested of him and he would like to continue
to help him.

Ald. Rainey asked Mr. Reifman to explain about the viability of the second floor for commercial
use. Mr. Reifman explained that the original plan had 40,000 square feet of retail on 2 floors. At
that time, Mr. King was discussing a potential user who might take the whole space. Those plans
had fallen away and everything has been focused on the grocer which was only on the first floor.
So in the original ordinance they discussed a potential alternative. He said they do not have any
problem with changing the language of alternative uses. If there is another viable option, they
will go with it.

Ald. Wollin suggested that they direct staff to prepare an ordinance that meets these
qualifications. Chair Moran seconded it.

Ald. Rainey clarified that this would be an amendment to the planned development ordinance.

Staff agreed to present the amended ordinance at the next Planning & Development Committee
meeting on Tuesday, April 14, 2009.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 7:21 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Bobbie Newman