Planning & Development Committee Meeting  
Minutes of May 27, 2008  
Council Chambers – 7:00 p.m.  
Evanston Civic Center


Presiding Official: Alderman Holmes

DECLARATION OF QUORUM

Chair Holmes called the meeting to order at 7:32 p.m.

APPROVAL OF THE MAY 12, 2008 MEETING MINUTES

Ald. Jean-Baptiste moved approval of the May 12th, 2008 minutes, seconded by Bernstein. The minutes were approved with a vote of 9-0.

ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

(P1) Request from Housing Opportunity Development Corporation (HODC) for Affordable Housing Funds for Homeownership Education

Ald. Bernstein moved approval, seconded by Ald. Jean-Baptiste.

Ms. Erica Page, Housing Counselor for HODC was present for questions and explanation if needed for the workshop and individual counseling she offers through her program. Ald. Bernstein asked for clarification of the 50 clients mentioned on agenda item sheet, however the list on page 3 of the Evanston Housing Counseling Proposal with the Projected Goals and number of clients presumed to participate has a much higher number. Ms. Spicuzza explained that this information was provided by staff and the 50 estimated clients/participants would be a result from the five housing workshops.

Ald. Rainey asked exactly who does HODC partnership with to provide this housing workshop. Ms. Page responded that their first and foremost partnership is with the City of Evanston working closely with Ms. Spicuzza as the City’s Housing Planner, the First Time Homebuyers Program, Down payment Assistant Program, and future assistance with closing cost as well; which are City and HUD sponsored programs. Secondly, HODC partnerships with the Not-for-Profit CHDO’s in Evanston. Ald. Rainey asked why this Housing Workshop program and individual counseling needs to be funded in one lump sum versus services rendered as needed. She says this because they are not seeing a large amount of affordable housing being sold in Evanston. Existing affordable housing projects have been vacant for long periods of time; for example, the 602 Mulford building has listed 8 units under contract and as of today, only one unit has closed. She also mentioned the building on Dobson which has been finished with the rehabilitation for some time and not one unit has been under contract. Ms. Page clarified that she is only involved in the beginning educational piece for purchasing affordable housing and counseling clients throughout the process. Ald. Rainey asked if part of the counseling provides assistance in helping the client
qualify and receive financing. Ms. Page responded that she does help with that process and also help the client with applying for other assistance programs such as down payment and for closing costs. She also offers her Housing Counseling Program in other municipalities and receives funding from HUD/Cook County, Employee Assisting Housing (EAH), funds from different municipalities and also some private banks. She noted that the majority of her clients are at 80% median income and most are first time homebuyers. However she does offer housing counseling to clients that are in the 120% median income. Ms. Spicuzza informed the Committee that 80% median income would be approximately $60,000 for a family of four which could afford property around $185-200,000 and 120% median income would be approximately $75,000 for a family of four affording property around $230-250,000.

Ald. Moran stated that he has always supported this program and it is still a very valuable workshop for low to moderate income households and first time homebuyer’s. He feels times will change with the housing market and there will always be people looking for affordable housing. He believes Evanston will benefit from these workshops and counseling program.

Ald. Jean-Baptiste feels there is a need for more education on what to look out for as far as debt to income ratios, predator lenders, and the dangers of buying property, especially for the first time homebuyer’s and those whose credit draws them to more higher interest loans. Ms. Page responded that this education is part of the post purchase counseling and she is expanding past this to counsel on long-term budgeting and how not to extend one self after purchase of a property.

The current affordable housing project for a single-family home on Washington Street by the Citizen’s Lighthouse Group was mentioned as a possible property to purchase for some of the clients in the workshop. Ald. Rainey thanked Ms. Page for all her good work she has done and is proposing to do with these upcoming workshops. She asked Ms. Page to take into consideration what she mentioned earlier regarding the vacant and unsold units that were projects of the same CHDO’s she is working for because there needs to be as much assistance as possible to sell the existing affordable housing. Ms. Page responded that she would like to see these units closed on and sold as well, however most of these multi-family units are too small for the client families in her workshops.

The motion passed with a unanimous vote of 9-0.

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

(PD1) Presentation and Discussion of Impact Fee Reports
Mr. Wolinski introduced Ms. Julie Herlands, Principal Consultant for TischlerBise, who has worked closely with City Staff to do an in-depth study on impact fees for Parks, Libraries, Streets and Water. He reminded the Committee that at the last meeting they were provided a brief memo from the Finance Department along with four reports: 1) Feasibility Study prepared in 2006 by TischlerBise, 2) Impact Fee Study: Parks and Libraries, 3) Streets Excise Tax Study, and Water Capacity Fee Study. He noted that staff is looking for direction from the Committee on whether they want to proceed with impact fees.

Ms. Herlands informed that her firm TischlerBise completed in May 2006 an Impact Fee Feasibility Study for the City of Evanston and then was retained to produce in-depth studies regarding these fees for Parks, Libraries, Streets and Water. These in-depth study reports were
completed early this year, which is what the Committee received at their meeting two weeks ago. She also informed the Committee that TischlerBise has done over 700 Impact Fee Studies and Reports throughout the Country and many studies done in the Chicagoland area.

Ms. Herlands began her power point presentation entitled Briefing on Impact Fees. She started off with an introduction and background information on TischlerBise. The presentation slides are as follows: Overview of Impact Fees, General Process for Study, Land Use Assumptions, Overview of Methodologies, Methodology Overview – Generic Incremental Formula, Parks, Parks Input Variables, Parks Impact Fees, Parks Cash Flow, Libraries, Library Input Variables, Library Impact Fees, Library Cash flow, Water, Water Input Variables, Water Capacity Fees, Water Cash Flow, and then the Wrap-Up slide to finish the presentation. (If you would like electronic copies of the reports and the presentation, contact: aolson@cityofevanston.org.

In order to validate impact fees, a community must be able to demonstrate the impact, benefit and proportionality of the fees. These fees are typically imposed at the time of residential development building permit issuance and are paid by developers. Impact fees have the following general limitations:

- They can only be used to finance capital infrastructure and cannot be used to finance ongoing operations;
- They must be accounted for in separate accounts and specifically earmarked for the capital expenses for which they were collected and cannot be deposited in the General Fund; and
- They cannot be used to correct existing infrastructure deficiencies unless there is already a plan to fund corrections for the deficiency for the existing business and residential population.

The following representatives from City Departments that the impact studies were done for are:

Parks, Forestry, and Recreations: Doug Gaynor, Director and Paul D’Agostino, Superintendent of Parks & Forestry.

Library: Ms. Mary Johns, Director

Water & Sewer Division: Dave Stoneback, Superintendent

Questions, comments and discussion followed between the Committee members, Ms. Herlands, and city staff. Ald. Tisdahl asked if not-for-profit organizations would be excluded. Ms. Herlands responded that equal protection laws would come into place in this matter and the fact that everyone should have to pay their fair share. Ald. Wollin questioned if age factor should be considered; for example, senior citizens use parks more passively than kids’ activities. Ms. Herlands agreed and this case should be factors in and should come out fair overtime. Ald. Rainey raised several questions on the “Water Capacity Fees” and how they relate to water meter sizes. Mr. Stoneback explained. Ald. Moran asked how they should look at this as a City that is built up almost to capacity. Ms. Herlands responded that Evanston can still benefit greatly from impact fees because it helps maintain the current level of public services, facilities and infrastructure.

Staff asked for direction from the Committee. The consensus of the Committee was to go forward with approaches described in the final reports prepared by TischlerBise. Ald. Wollin
feels these impact fees have a great deal of potential with regards to the Budget and would be a good tool. Ald. Moran agreed that the impact fees are a real potential but also some real concerns for potential optimism. He feels Evanston is a very economically diverse community and may need more analysis specifically regarding different neighborhoods, income levels, etc. Ald. Hansen would like to see discussion continued on moving forward with the impact fees; they do not need to wait until Budget season to start implementing. Ald. Tisdahl seconded Ald. Hansen’s view, especially in view of the current condition of Evanston’s streets. Ms. Herlands noted that those reports are Evanston specific and can actually be adopted at this time. Ald. Rainey was particularly favored the revenue generated from the water capacity fees as shown in Ms. Herlands presentation and requested that staff move forward to adopt these fees. Ald. Moran said that notification should be sent out to the public regarding the Impact Fee Studies done and before any impact fees are adopted.

Ald. Rainey made a reference to direct staff to come back with further information on revenue generated if the Impact Fees are adopted and bring back before the A&PW Committee.

COMMUNICATION

(PD2) Memorandum from the Community Development Director

This meeting was James Wolinski’s last meeting with the Planning & Development Committee as he will be retiring from the City of Evanston on May 30, 2008. His memorandum reads:

The Planning & Development Committee Meeting of May 27, 2008, will be my last as staff to the Committee. I will be retiring from City service on May 30th, 2008. I wanted to express my appreciation and thanks to all members of the Committee, both past and present, for allowing me to serve you over the past 14 years. I began staffing the Committee in 1994 when I was appointed Community Development Director.

During my tenure, I have witnessed the Planning & Development Committee preside over and recommend to the City council an incredible amount of land use legislation ranging from over 50 planned development proposals, affordable housing, zoning text & map amendments, special uses, preservation, neighborhood planning and property standards.

The work of the Committee during this period has been amazing. Again, thank you for allowing me to come along on the ride. It has been an honor.

James M. Wolinski

Mr. Wolinski also thanked his staff and personal secretary, Jackie Brownlee who has assisted him and been the minute taker for the past 14 years along with him. A standing ovation followed.

We will miss you Jim.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jacqueline E. Brownlee