

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Wednesday, April 24, 2019 – 7:30 p.m.

Lorraine Morton Civic Center, 2100 Ridge Avenue, City Council Chambers

Members Present: Ald. Braithwaite, H. Powell, Ald. Rue Simmons, Ald. Rainey, M.B. Berns, Ald. Wynne (arrived at 7:54 p.m.)

Members Absent: Ald. Wilson, A. Pigozzi, J. Sierant

Staff Present: P. Zalmezak, P. Martínez, K. Boden, S. Johnson

AGENDA

1. CALL TO ORDER / DECLARATION OF QUORUM

Meeting called to order at 7:39 p.m.

2. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES OF February 27, 2019

Rainey/Braithwaite

Approved 5-0

3. ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

NONE

4. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

A. Economic Development Annual Report

Mr. Paul Zalmezak provided a brief overview of the economic development report. He mentioned over 30 businesses opened last year, including a new theater. He mentioned affordable housing and entrepreneurship support continues to be a priority for the City of Evanston.

Mr. Zalmezak summarized the improvements made through the Storefront Modernization Program and the Great Merchants Grant. He mentioned the unemployment rate is low, average 3.5%, as well as low vacancies.

Mr. Zalmezak said commercial rent rates are high and continue to climb, which is a challenge to small businesses; another challenge is that office space is very scarce and in high demand.

Mr. Powell asked where the funding for youth employment and other entrepreneurship initiatives come from. Mr. Zalmezak indicated the Entrepreneurship Support Program comes from ED funding, Elevate Evanston is more of an umbrella. Ald. Braithwaite clarified that \$90,000 for Elevate Evanston comes from the Good Neighbor Fund from NU.

Mayor's Summer Youth Employment Program comes from City of Evanston and private funding.

Mr. Powell questions why the Mayor's name was part of the summer youth employment program, since it is tax-payer funded. He suggested the name be changed to "City of Evanston Summer Youth Employment Program."

Ald. Simmons directed staff to bring it up to City Council for discussion.

B. Financial Wellness Initiative

Ald. Rue Simmons said many of Evanston's residents need financial empowerment, and she would like to see staff and financial institutions come up with a strategy to reach the community.

Mr. Zalmezak said staff is working to convene organizations and the private sector to strategize to help residents stay out of debt, build wealth, buy a house, and build credit. He requested 90 days to come back with an update.

Ald. Simmons said she wants to see a badging system, or progress acknowledgement program. She also wants to see a focus on early financial education for youth and young adults, especially for young parents (baby bonds, home purchasing, etc.).

Ald. Wynne said this initiative was needed, and recommended reaching out to the high school's financial education program to make sure efforts are unified and updated.

Ald. Simmons asked staff to include insurance agents.

Ald. Rainey said the City already has many other committees where a lot of these issues should be addressed, instead of EDC (i.e. Housing committee, MWEBE). EDC should help businesses.

Ald. Simmons said EDC won't be doing the work, just convening the organizations and businesses that address these issues and refer residents.

C. ComEd / Alley Lighting

Ald. Simmons introduced Mr. Carlo Cavallaro from ComEd.

He explained it would be \$80/year per light pole with 3000 kelvin bulbs.

Ald. Braithwaite explained that he made the referral to EDC, because the current power stations impede development on the West side of Evanston, and he wants ComEd to explore the cost to bury the lines that go over the parcels that could be redeveloped and find out who owns them.

Ald. Wynne asks if you can bury a high tension panel. Cavallaro said yes but it comes down to cost.

ComEd to work with ED staff and coming back with an update.

D. MWEBE Report

Mr. Zalmezak explained that the Purchasing Manager, Tammi Nuñez, was unable to be present, but that he would give an overview, as well as Sharon Johnson.

Mr. Zalmezak gave a brief overview of the make-up of the committee and its mission, helping Evanston-based, women, and minority businesses.

Programs: Procurement Fair, Value Innovation Technologies (local spend metrics)

Sharon Johnson introduced herself and explained she manages the Local Employment Program. She provided a summary of last year's activities regarding hiring for City contracts, and the resources shared with the library to help contractors.

City's goal for MWEBE is 25% local employment -- 27.1% achieved in 2018.

5. COMMUNICATIONS

A. Monthly Economic Development Communication

Mr. Paul Zalmezak introduced Katie Boden, Economic Development Specialist, as a new member of the Economic Development Division.

B. Announcements/Updates from EDC Members

Changes in zoning board. Mary Beth Berns leaving.

Ald. Rainey asked who Hubris was and if we can reach out to them for the financial wellness initiative, because we should support the businesses we help fund.

Mr. Powell clarified his suggestion to change the name of the summer youth program was not an attack on the mayor.

Ald. Simmons said Gyros Planet Evanston has a grand opening at 2:30 p.m. on Friday 4/26.

6. ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 8:44 p.m.