



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Wednesday, April 26, 2017 – 7:00pm

Lorraine Morton Civic Center, 2100 Ridge Avenue, James C. Lytle City Council Chambers

Members Present: Ald. Fiske, Ald. Wynne, Ald. Tendam, Ald. Holmes, H. Powell, M. Berns, Ald. Rainey, T. Dubin

Members Absent: Ald. Wilson, J. Sierant

Staff Present: M. Lyons, J. Leonard, P. Zalmezak, C. Plante

1. CALL TO ORDER / DECLARATION OF QUORUM

Ald. Tendam called meeting to order at 7:10 and moved approval of the minutes.

Ald. Wynne seconded.

Approved 8-0

2. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES OF February 22, 2017

Ald. Tendam announced that there are several people signed up for public comment, including Ald. Fiske, who will begin.

Ald. Fiske spoke about the proposal for development of the library parking lot. Adding an office building to downtown has long been a priority, and the process is different from regular planned developments because the land is city-owned. Bringing more office workers to downtown will help to support small businesses in the surrounding downtown area. It's important for the committee to understand the economic interests represented by the project and why it's so important. Ald. Fiske invited P. Zalmezak to speak about the economic impact of the project.

Ald. Tendam said that this is not the time for a presentation from staff because it's citizen comment.

Ald. Rainey said that the library parking lot isn't on tonight's agenda, but if residents want to speak about it here they're free to do so. Sale of the library parking lot is a matter for City Council rather than this committee.

Ald. Fiske said that it will be going back to City Council, but members of this committee who aren't on Council should get to hear about it.

M. Berns said that there wasn't a need for this committee to hear the presentation again so soon after council. T. Dubin agreed.

Ald. Wynne added that this item wasn't originally on the meeting agenda, and thus wasn't properly noticed, so doing it tonight isn't in order.

Ald. Fiske said that the limitation doesn't apply to citizen comment.

Ald. Wynne said that the lack of notice is unfair to others in the community on both sides who may want to speak on the item.

Ald. Holmes said that we shouldn't ever be cutting off people's ability to speak at public comment.

Greg Stec was asked to come here to speak about the project because it's been in the works for several months and the developers have engaged with neighbors over the course of 1,000 hours and over a dozen meetings with the Woman's Club. The property is currently tax exempt, but would produce \$1.5 million a year in tax revenue if it were allowed to be developed, producing an estimated 500 office jobs as well as hundreds of temporary construction jobs.

Bruce Larson one of the developers said that they were originally told not to come to Council on Monday and feels that they weren't given the opportunity to present their case to the council property. They've engaged in community dialogue, made numerous concessions, and made changes to staff and design in response to feedback from neighbors and the City in an effort to be sensitive to community needs and historic preservation. They're not asking for TIF money or any other funding in support of the project.

Paul Janicki of Janicki architects, worked to incorporate feedback from neighbors given the surrounding historic buildings. His firm specializes in historic preservation, and was brought on in order to incorporate changes that would make the building fit with the surrounding buildings.

Janet Steidl agreed that the developers should have been allowed to present on Monday. Wrote a speech earlier to read but forgot glasses and can't read it, but felt it was important to speak on this anyway.

Ald. Rainey said that this isn't the only contentious project, the 831 Emerson proposal was also voted down despite support from neighbors and the applicant's efforts to employ local residents and minority contractors. After thousands of hours of community engagement and tens of thousands of dollars in investment in the property in professional services, it was rejected, and it's damaging their business. It would have put \$2.4 million into the affordable housing fund. They weren't asking for any public money either.

H. Powell asked who told the developers not to attend the council meeting – and given the scope and importance of the project, why wouldn't you attend anyway?

Ald. Wynne asked that the agenda continue now that public comment is over so that people who are here for approval of other projects don't have to stay late.

Ald. Fiske left the meeting.

3. ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

A. Agreement with Main Dempster Mile Special Service Area #6

Katherine Gotsick, executive director of the Main-Dempster Mile gave a presentation on the recent activities, budget, and strategic planning efforts undertaken by the Main-Dempster Mile since last year. They're working on a second mural installation and are targeting the Dempster viaduct for beautification efforts. The group is also trying to raise awareness of the business district through marketing and events including the wine walk, warm bevvv walk, and a new trick or treat event, hiring a social media consultant and an event planner. The group is converting to a 501(c)(3) organization, and has developed a mission and vision statement as part of their strategic planning efforts.

Ald. Wynne commended the work that has been done so far and expressed support for the new projects in the business district.

Ald. Rainey said that the report was really long but also really compelling – thanks and congratulations for all your work. One question – when the group is spending in excess of \$20k, the agreement calls for city manager approval, but when the City spends over \$20k, it goes to council.

J. Leonard said that this is a contract provision that was added to this agreement that wasn't in the previous one.

M. Lyons added that SSA #4, downtown Evanston isn't required to present these expenses to Council. Both groups present their annual budget and levy requests to council. This is an additional layer of City oversight that SSA #6 has consented to. This will hopefully allow the group to partner with the City on larger projects in the future.

Ald. Wynne added that City Manager approval would also be a more streamlined approval process rather than requiring it to go to city council for two readings.

Ald. Tendam Moved approval of the agreement.

Ald. Wynne seconded.

Approved 7-0.

B. Storefront Modernization Grant for 3006 Central Street (Central Rug & Floors)

C. Plante introduced the application for 3006, which is a comprehensive storefront renovation of 3006 Central. The building is owner-occupied by the owners of Central Rug & Floor, who are hoping to downsize their footprint and bring in additional tenants. Scope of work includes new windows, doors, awnings, signage, painting, lighting, and tuckpointing.

The owners do have the property listed for sale, but have maintained that they intend to remain as a tenant at the site.

Greg Goss, architect for the project reported that the owners have actually stopped marketing the building and removed the listing.

Ald. Rainey moved approval contingent on the requirement that a declaration of covenants be recorded for the project in case of a future sale.

C. Plante said that the guidelines already require this for projects receiving \$10k or more, so it remains in play here. The guidelines and program agreement also include language requiring that in the event of a sale or closure, the participant is required to either repay the City or have their successor execute an assignment of the obligation. In the last 4 years of the program, this has come up only once.

Ald. Rainey moved approval.

M. Berns seconded.

Approved 7-0.

C. Storefront Modernization Grant for 1610 Maple (Evanston Games & Cafe)

C. Plante introduced the business, a combination retail board game store and café serving beverages and sandwiches. It was originally known as Elysium Games but was recently sold to a new owner and renamed Evanston Games & Café. They host events for role play games like D&D, Magic: the Gathering, and board games popular with teens and young adults. There's been growth in this type of business around the country, particularly in college towns, including Madison, WI and Columbus, OH. The request is for assistance with improved signage to enhance the visibility of the business on Maple Ave.

Ald. Rainey asked about an high outlier bid on the signage and asked if it could be excluded from the average for purposes of establishing the maximum grant.

C. Plante responded that the rebate amount would be based on the invoices submitted upon completion and would likely not rise to the maximum amount.

J. Leonard added that staff could revise the program guidelines to update the formula for maximum rebate amounts in light of the concerns raised about outlier bids.

Ald. Rainey moved to approve the proposal up to a max of \$2,047.

Ald. Wynne seconded.

Approved as amended 7-0.

4. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

A. Downtown Evanston Annual Update

Annie Coakley presented an update on the activities of Downtown Evanston. The group has been working with the City and business community to prepare for the renovation of

Fountain Square. Downtown Evanston participated in the Evanston Explorers event to assist in promotion of businesses centered on children and family activities. Other upcoming events include the Women's Weekend of fun, a schedule of free in-store events at businesses downtown. Other events include the Oktoberfest and annual holiday events.

M. Berns asked if downtown Evanston was doing anything to address concerns about traffic obstruction due to deliveries, particularly trucks delivering supplies to restaurants.

A. Coakley responded that traffic and parking are always concerns. There are rules and parameters in place for loading zones and restaurant deliveries. The growth of Amazon has also contributed to traffic and parking problems as prime drivers are double parking too. Downtown Evanston is in a position to reach out to the restaurants.

J. Leonard added that some of the restaurant issues also may come from high turnover in the restaurant business and restaurant management.

5. COMMUNICATIONS

A. Monthly Economic Development Communication

H. Powell said he remains concerned about the claim that the library lot developers were told not to attend the council meeting, and that nobody will reveal who directed them not to attend.

Ald. Raniey asked that staff revise the spreadsheet about projects before the economic development committee be updated to remove old information.

C. Plante reported that staff is in the process of migrating the data to a more sophisticated CRM system that will improve accuracy and usefulness of the data for the committee and staff.

6. ADJOURNMENT

Ald. Tendam moved to adjourn.

Ald. Holmes seconded.

Meeting adjourned at 8:28 pm.