ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
Wednesday, July 24, 2019 to 7:30 p.m.
Lorraine Morton Civic Center, 2100 Ridge Avenue, Room G300


Members Absent: A. Pigozzi, D. Wilson

Staff Present: P. Martínez, P. Zalmezak

1. CALL TO ORDER / DECLARATION OF QUORUM
Meeting called to order at 7:41 p.m.

2. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES OF April 24, 2019
Mr. Hecky moved to approved
Ald. Wynne seconded
Approved 7-0

3. Public Comment

Mr. David Tognarelli introduced himself as an employee of First Northern Credit Union (FNCU). He explained FNCU offers financial education, and works with various community organizations. Mr. Tognarelli mentioned FNCU is interested in partnering with the City of Evanston to offer complementary financial education sessions for the community.

4. ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

A. Great Merchant Grants
   a. Howard Street Business Association

Ms. Martínez explained the Howard Street Business Association (HSBA) was planning its first open house, and requested $250 through the Great Merchant Grant for social advertising.

Ald. Simmons moved to recommend
Ald. Rainey seconded
Passed 7-0

B. Entrepreneurship Support Program Grants
   a. Charrisse Roberson – Gettwisted Designs

Ms. Charrisse Roberson introduced herself and explained her business model. Ms. Roberson explained she is a designer, and mainly focuses on custom wedding dresses, alterations, and bow ties. She is requesting $2,160 through the entrepreneurship support program to upgrade her equipment and be able to double her production.

Ald. Braithwaite moved to recommend
Ald. Rainey seconded
Passed 6-0-1 Ald. Simmons recused

b. Rachel Holmes – Confidence Now Consulting
Ms. Rachel Holmes introduced herself and explained her business modeled. Ms. Holmes explained she is a confidence consultant, but that she has a full-time job in the healthcare industry, which she hopes to transition out of as she grows her consulting work. Ms. Holmes indicated she currently works with a handful of clients one-on-one, but that she also does corporate trainings.

Ms. Holmes explained through the Entrepreneurship program she is asking for $1,000 to register her LLC and buy a laptop and a microphone, to help her continue making videos for promotional purposes. She currently has a laptop on a loan.

Mr. Powell moved to recommend
Ald. Wynne seconded
Passed 6-0-1 Ald. Simmons recused

C. Equity in the Arts Hiring Program
   a. Mudlark Theater

Mr. Paul Zalmezak introduced himself, Maureen Powers, and Daisy Copeland from Mudlark Theater. Daisy Copeland was hired by Mudlark Theater with partial funding from the Equity in the Arts Hiring Program from the City of Evanston, which is a program aimed to help arts organizations diversify their staff.

Maureen Powers, Executive Director of Mudlark started in January 2019. Ms. Copeland is the Development Director. Ms. Powers explained Ms. Copeland’s job is to cultivate donors for Mudlark; one of her projects was to launch its first major gift program. Ms. Copeland has also helped achieve equity goals, as the organization is in the process of analyzing its programs and processes to find biases and fix them. The Mudlark staff is also concentrated in building relationships with organizations and audiences they have not interacted with before, especially organizations and audiences of color. While Ms. Copeland’s job is not operationalizing equity, her relationship building skills have helped the Mudlark go in that direction.

Ms. Copeland explained she learned about the job through her neighbors and other professional relationships she has in her equity network. She mentioned she has had good training while on the job, and it has opened doors to organizations she had not interacted with before, i.e. Women in Development, Evanston Community Foundation, etc. Ms. Copeland also explained Mudlark Theater will create an equity committee to work on a racial equity tool.

Ms. Powers said the organization is working on making sure the role is sustainable beyond the 2-year grant.
Ald. Rue Simmons said the Economic Development Committee is not the right committee to have this request going forward. Ald. Rainey rebutted that the theory is that the arts will create further economic development.

Ms. Dziekan asked Mudlark staff if they are capturing metrics about their equity impact. Ms. Powers said they do not require participants to report their race, but from the data they do receive Mudlark can demonstrate the impact. Ms. Dziekan also asked if their partnerships help reach a broader pool of young actors. Ms. Powers said “yes.”

Ald. Braithwaite asked how close Mudlark is to its fundraising goals. Ms. Copeland replied said they are expecting the majority of their funding to come in the second half of 2019.

Ms. Sierant commended Mudlark on their work.

Mr. Zalmezak asked for clarification on the future of the program. Ald. Simmons said she would like to see support to the arts, but not from the economic development fund.

Mr. Powell moved to recommend
Ald. Wynne seconded
Passed 7-0

D. Financial Wellness Initiative

No need to vote.

Mr. Zalmezak provided a recap of the initial referral of this initiative; he mentioned Ald. Rue Simmons made the referral. Mr. Zalmezak explained that while researching options to create an initiative, he came across established financial wellness programs. He said staff believes that issuing an RFP to partner with established programs to provide the services would be the best course of action.

Ms. Sierant asked why not reach out to the YWCA, since they have an established financial wellness program. Mr. Zalmezak said the RFP would be open to anyone, but that he doesn’t know if the YWCA has the capacity to provide completely free services. Ms. Sierant also asked what the parameters will be to judge the proposals. Mr. Zalmezak said purchasing guidelines will be followed to score each proposal.

Ald. Rue Simmons said she liked the idea, but asked FNCU if insurance would be part of the curriculum in their proposal. Mr. Tognarelli said FNCU already partners with Balance, but they also bring in local partners if they do not have all the content required.

Ald. Rue Simmons asked staff to make sure you cover the financial needs of everyone in the household when drafting the RFP/Q, especially for youth.

Mr. Zalmezak asked for clarification on what “youth” meant in this context. Ald. Rue Simmons said “children.”
Staff was directed to move forward with issuing the RFP.

E. Business License Process Change

Mr. Zalmezak said the City of Evanston is shifting from a business license to a business registration process. This is to ensure we provide better economic development services to them, help with code enforcement, and fire and safety services. Mr. Zalmezak added that in 2008 the City Council approved a business license for home-based businesses, but that it was never codified.

Ms. Dziekan asked what the value for home based businesses is. Mr. Zalmezak said that is he wants to see a nexus between the fee and the services, but that staff needs to first hear from home-based businesses about the services/technical assistance they need.

Ms. Dziekan also asked what the impetus for this change was. Mr. Zalmezak replied “to better capture our businesses and provide better services to the small and home-based businesses.”

Ald. Braithwaite added that City Council also wants to make sure that City contracts under $20,000 go to go small and home-based businesses in Evanston, because right now 90% is spent outside of Evanston.

Ald. Rainey said it is important to know who is here to make sure we inform people of our programs, i.e. entrepreneurship training program.

Mr. Zalmezak added that we want to collect Minority, Women, and Evanston-based Enterprise (MWEBE) data to make sure these businesses connected to the right procurement opportunities.

5. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

None

6. COMMUNICATIONS

A. Monthly Economic Development Communication

B. Announcements/Updates from EDC Members

Ald. Rue Simmons announced that the City Council approved a new restaurant user for the Gibbs-Morrison Cultural Center. The group owns six restaurants in Chicago. They employ the neighbors and feed the hungry. They are hoping to be open in time for the 2019-2020 school year.

Ald. Wynne said the Parking/Transportation Committee approved an additional 2-hour parking across the street from the Gibbs-Morrison Cultural Center.

7. ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 8:50 p.m.