



City of Des Plaines
Planning and Zoning

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Minutes of Meeting
Economic Development Commission
March 11, 2015

Call to Order: Economic Development Coordinator Lauren Pruss called the meeting to order at 7:35 A.M. on Wednesday, March 11, 2015, in Des Plaines City Hall 1420 Miner Street, Room 101.

Mayor Matthew Bogusz welcomed the Commissioners. The general sentiment of the current and former Economic Development Commission is not being used enough. We strive for the EDC to be used to its full ability. The main value is your connection to the community and understanding of the current business economy. Staff cannot get out in the community and listen to everyone they need to listen to. It is harder to get a business to come to the City of Des Plaines and stay rather than prevent a business from leaving.

City Manager Michael Bartholomew stated we need to the EDC as ambassadors. If each Commissioner can reach out to five businesses a year it will make communication that much better. The City is currently undergoing a new branding effort.

Commissioner McGeean asked for a current full list of businesses. Director Sakas responded that we are currently working on that. The Community and Economic Development Department just implemented new software and the data needs to be placed in the system.

Commissioner Devereaux stated he heard about the marketing goal for over a year when is that happening? City Manager Bartholomew responded hopefully soon, we have a meeting at the end of March.

Director Sakas opened the floor for a volunteer to chair the meeting. Commissioner Richard Grosse volunteered to chair this meeting and we will vote next meeting for the official Chairman after the by-laws have been reviewed.

Approval of Minutes: Motion to approve the December 11, 2013 meeting minutes was made by Mr. Devereaux and Seconded by Mr. Bottalla. Motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

Members Present: Louis Psihogios, Richard Grosse, Barbara Ryan, Malcom Chester, Anthony Bottalla, Patrick McGeean, Mohammad Khokhar, Randall Rapp, and Patrick Devereaux.

Members Absent: Christen Osowski, Cortney Anderson-Wascher, Pat Mauro, and Jin Lee.

Also Present: Mayor Matt Bogusz, City Manager Mike Bartholomew, Community & Economic Development Director George Sakas, Economic Development Coordinator Lauren Pruss and Administrative Assistant Lauren Griffin.

New Business:

- a. Introduction and Mayor's Guidance to the Commission. Previously discussed.
- b. Appoint Chairperson and Secretary. After reading the by-laws the Commission decided to appoint a Chairperson and Secretary at the next meeting.
- c. Commissioner and Staff Introductions. All staff members present gave a short introduction.
- d. Review Contact Information. Please give any changes to Lauren Griffin to update the contact list.
- e. Business Assistance Programs.
Economic Coordinator Lauren Pruss began with a power point presentation. The existing programs consist of; Awning Program 75% of eligible costs up to \$5,000, Façade Rehabilitation Program 50% of eligible costs up to \$20,000, Interior Build-Out Program 50% of eligible costs up to \$15,000, and Outdoor Dining Program 50% of eligible costs up to \$10,000. New proposed program is the Shopping Center Rehabilitation Program, 50% reimbursement for rehabilitation of commercial shopping centers, minimum 5,000 sf of floor area and three tenant spaces to be eligible, a minimum \$15,000 in eligible improvements, 5,000-10,000 sf floor area for \$15,000 maximum grant, 10,000-30,000 sf in floor area for \$30,000 maximum grant and 30,001 sf or more for \$50,000 grant. If they do not qualify for this grant they can still apply for other existing grants. Coordinator Pruss stressed to the Commission we are looking for feedback, do these figures seem appropriate?

Commissioner Bottalla noted that the older commercial spaces typically have a smaller square footage. Should look at a smaller square footage maybe 3,000 to qualify for grants, because those are the spaces are that sitting empty.

Commissioner Chester explained that we should still have an exception to the rule if someone were to come in and propose an application but still remains under the square footage threshold. We could treat it like an appeals board.

Commissioner Ryan questioned if the grant money was for both interior and exterior. Coordinator Pruss indicated that it is more for exterior.

City Manager Bartholomew mentioned that it doesn't stop them for applying for interior grant money too.

Commissioner Ryan asked how much money had been budgeted for these grants. Coordinator Pruss said \$150,000 for downtown grants and \$150,000 citywide grants. We need to get the word out, we have been giving all the landlords and leasing agents this information, but we need EDC help.

Commissioner Devereaux suggested that the EDC put together a quarterly newsletter to the businesses in Des Plaines. We can explain what the City is doing for them as a business and for owners. We could feature each ward of the City, and can archive them on the website. We need to take advantage of all communication possibilities. It will prove to them that we are thinking about them and want to help.

Director Sakas indicated that the new software that is being implemented should be putting the tools into place to get this information out.

- f. The Des Plaines Chamber of Commerce and Industry.
Commissioner Ryan explained that Chamber has been around since 1934. Provide many networking capabilities. We promote business and provide legislation every month by having a speaker. The Chamber hosts the Mayors annual address to the City. We hold many community events and partner with the City and Park District. We partner with many various groups in the City. The Chamber has a ton of free resources for business owners. Looking at starting an “Entrepreneur Café” and encourage all to participate.
- g. License Status.
Coordinator Pruss showed via power point presentation the numbers of business licenses and categories that were issued this year. We will begin working on re-vamping the application to get more detailed information from each business owner. We are also trying to make the renewal process easy and electronic.
- h. Discussion of Business Surveys - New and Existing.
Director Sakas explained that we want to get more specific numbers and exact types of businesses. Should we conduct a survey? New Businesses and Old Businesses? Or do we compile a couple questions and have members of the EDC go out and ask the questions to the businesses? Coordinator Pruss indicated that we need to work using a pyramid system, need to set the framework and work down. Commissioner Chester stated we should all send our survey questions to Lauren Pruss and we can discuss at the next meeting.

Staff Comments:

EDC Members you have your homework. Please send your survey questions and feedback to Lauren Pruss.

Chairman & Commissioners Comments:

Commissioner Bottalla indicated that the zoning hearing process is too long and that should be looked into. It needs to be an easier, quicker process for approval. City Manager Bartholomew stated that we do need to adopt a new zoning ordinance to ease up on the requirements.

Comments from the Public:

Chairman Chester asked if there were any other comments. There were none.

Adjourn:

Meeting was adjourned by Chairman Chester at 9:05 A.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Lauren Griffin, Administrative Assistant