



**CITY OF ARDEN HILLS, MINNESOTA
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
JANUARY 6, 2016 8:00 AM
CITY HALL -- 1245 WEST HIGHWAY 96**

CALL MEETING TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Chair Heikkila at 8:03 am

ROLL CALL

Present: Chair Steve Heikkila and Commissioners Ed von Holtum, Dan Erickson, Liz Johnson, Kyle Lassen and David Radziej

Also Present: Jonathan Weinhagen, Vice President, St. Paul Area Chamber of Commerce; Community Development Director Jill Hutmacher; Senior Planner Matthew Bachler; and Deputy Clerk Julie Hanson

1. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Commissioner von Holtum moved to accept the agenda and it was the consensus of the Commission to accept said agenda.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Commissioner von Holtum moved to accept the minutes from the December 2, 2015, meeting, and it was the consensus of the Commission to accept said minutes.

3. UNFINISHED AND NEW BUSINESS

A. Business Retention and Expansion Report

The Commission discussed comments following their review of the draft Business Retention and Expansion Program Report (BRE Report) provided by Jonathan Weinhagen, Vice President, St. Paul Area Chamber of Commerce (SPACC).

Senior Planner Bachler stated the final report would be provided to the EDA at the Joint EDA/EDC meeting on January 25, 2016.

Community Development Director Hutmacher stated that the feedback in general was positive. One recommendation from City staff was to include an Executive Summary with the findings and recommendations at the beginning of the report.

Jonathan Weinhalten stated that the findings in the report shows the community is well-received and that businesses identify themselves as being Arden Hills companies.

A short discussion ensued regarding land capacity challenges and economic development options for existing businesses which are growing and looking to expand and that wish to remain in Arden Hills.

A discussion ensued regarding integration of data into the report in narrative form versus charts and graphs. Suggestions included highlighting key findings under general headings, which include traffic, transportation/transit, workforce recruitment, workforce retention, access and development.

A discussion ensued regarding the potential extension of the Metro Transit A-Line Bus Rapid Transit corridor through Arden Hills to the TCAAP site in order to increase transit opportunities for residents, local college students, and the local workforce. Discussion continued regarding how mass transit can affect a community in general.

Community Development Director Hutmacher indicated that initial feedback from the Met Council does not support an extension at this time and it has been the Met Council's opinion that the TCAAP redevelopment is not enough to financially justify an extension of the line. The Met Council has urged communities to consider pedestrian improvements and land use decisions along the entire route that would better support transit.

Community Development Director Hutmacher added that the City and SPACC have encouraged the Met Council to consider a phased extension at the A-Line or regular, improved transit service to serve businesses and the universities along the route.

Chair Heikkila asked for more information pertaining to the comments made by some businesses that included: "It is difficult to find reliable part time help." and "The employee pool lacks technical skills."

A discussion ensued regarding local educational institutions that serve Arden Hills (Mounds View High School, Bethel University, and University of Northwestern) and the technical skills needed by some of the local businesses. The importance of fostering workforce training through partnerships with community or technical colleges was also discussed as Arden Hills has a large number of manufacturing businesses. Other challenges the City faces include the number of skilled labor positions versus the available housing stock options and determining the City's role in attracting a varied workforce.

It was discussed that feedback on the draft report would be provided to Jonathan Weinhalten by January 14, 2016.

Community Development Director Hutmacher stated that as a Commission and as a community, a priority should be to prepare TCAAP for development so current Arden Hills businesses have the option to stay and expand within the city.

The Commissioners agreed to present the revised draft of the BRE Report to the Economic Development Authority (EDA) at the meeting on January 25, 2016.

Jonathan Weinhagen left the meeting at 8:40 a.m.

B. 2016 EDC Work Plan

Chair Heikkila stated the EDC supported the work tasks as outlined in the 2016 Work Plan but had postponed final approval until the Commission could review the BRE Report.

A discussion ensued regarding the role of the EDC and City pertaining to the BRE program.

MOTION: Commissioner von Holtum moved and Commissioner Radziej seconded a motion to accept the 2016 Work Plan. The motion carried unanimously (6-0).

C. New Business Update

Community Development Director Hutmacher provided a new business update and stated City staff will provide to the EDC a periodic update of businesses that opened or relocated to Arden Hills in 2015. She indicated City staff will visit the remaining businesses during the first quarter of 2016 and that several new businesses are expected to move in to the Red Fox Business Center this year. She also stated tracking new businesses through the permitting software is not entirely reliable since many businesses do not pull permits.

Chair Heikkila asked how the new business visits are structured and documented.

A discussion ensued regarding the City's approach to visiting new businesses in Arden Hills and also what the EDC's role could be.

D. Newsletter Topics

Community Development Director Hutmacher reported on her discussion with the Staff Liaison to the Communications Committee regarding business-focused newsletter articles.

A discussion ensued regarding the EDC's contributions for newsletter articles. The Commission agreed that it will provide suggestions, topics and photographs, if applicable, to the Communications Committee with the understanding the Communications Committee will format the articles to better fit the writing style utilized in the newsletter as a whole.

4. UPDATES

A. Rice Creek Commons Update

Community Development Director Hutmacher indicated the JDA met on January 4, 2016, and approved the Solicitation for a Master Developer to be released on February 1, 2016. She stated

the Solicitation will be marketed nationally and that it would be helpful if a Master Developer could be selected before final design decisions on the Spine Road were made.

A discussion ensued regarding elements related to the TCAAP redevelopment project, including the Rice Creek Remeander project and Rice Creek Trail project.

B. Commission Members

Chair Heikkila stated that this was his last meeting as an EDC member.

C. Council Liaison

None.

D. Staff Comments

Community Development Director Hutmacher stated that Commissioner Erickson indicated he is interested in the Chair position. She asked if any other EDC members were interested in the position and if so, to let her know. She then explained the process of appointing a new EDC Chair.

Community Development Director Hutmacher indicated that Brenda Holden was appointed as the new City Council Liaison.

The February 3, 2016, EDC meeting was cancelled. The next meeting is scheduled for March 2, 2016.

The Commission thanked Chair Heikkila for serving as the EDC Chair for the past few years.

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: Commissioner von Holtum moved and Commissioner Radziej seconded a motion to adjourn. The motion carried unanimously (6-0)

Chair Steve Heikkila adjourned the meeting at 9:15 a.m.



Dan Erickson, Chair



Jill Hutmacher
Community Development Director