



Economic Development Commission

**Wednesday, December 20, 2017
Council Chambers Room**

Commissioners Present

James Kucienski, Chairman
Patrick McCoy, Vice Chair
Rivak Albazi
James Berger
Myles Berman
Maureen Ehrenberg
Genelle Iocca

Commissioners Absent

Peter Dyer
Joe Spagnoli

Staff Present

Timothy Wiberg, Village Manager
Steve McNellis, Community Development Director
Bob Merkel, Finance Director

Others Present

Barry Bass, Village President
Georjean Nickell, Village Trustee

1. Call to Order/ Quorum Declaration

Noting that a quorum of six members were present, the meeting was called to order by Chairman Kucienski at 8:03 AM.

2. Minutes Approval

Chairman Kucienski asked the Commission if any edits were to be made to the November 15, 2017 meeting minutes. Director McNellis noted that Finance Director, Bob Merkel, was present at the November 15 meeting, but was not listed under Staff Present.

Additionally, Commissioner Ehrenberg noted that in the last paragraph of the Development Updates, her comments regarding a meeting with the Lincolnwood Taskforce to review and reinforce the Village's mission were not correct, and should

have stated “Commissioner Ehrenberg recommended that the Commission should take a look at the now-dated Lincoln Avenue Task Force report (Corridor Plan).”

Hearing no additional corrections, Vice-Chairman McCoy called for a motion for approval. Commissioner Berger seconded this motion. There was a consensus to approve the minutes.

3. Business Newsletter Review

Community Development Director, Steve McNellis, provided a draft copy of the first edition of the Lincolnwood Business newsletter, entitled “Business Connections.” It contained the content and graphics requested by the EDC in the September meeting discussion. Director McNellis reminded the Commission that this will appear in the January/ February 2018 issue of the bi-monthly Village newsletter. Director McNellis reviewed the sections of the Business Connections section of the Village newsletter newsletter, which serves to increase connectivity with Lincolnwood businesses and staff, in response to the Commissioner’s comments and suggestions at the September EDC meeting.

Vice-Chair McCoy expressed that the newsletter was missing a “Did You Know” section involving questions such as 1.) Does a business qualify for a PEP grant, and 2.) Are there specific zoning ordinances or special benefits that a business could qualify for? Chairman Kucienski agreed and also suggested the use of an example, such as a photo of the AT&T store, located at 3701 W. Touhy Ave, to illustrate the benefits of a Retail Overlay District.

Commissioner Ehrenberg reinforced some of the comments from the November EDC meeting and reiterated the need for rebranding, and that Lincolnwood’s prime location should be highlighted as the most important feature of the community and should serve as a driver to target new business. Vice-Chair McCoy suggested that the Newsletter illustrate how the new 2018 federal tax law may present Lincolnwood as a leading community regarding its competitive school district and housing prices.

Commissioner Albazi suggested the use of a Lincolnwood Business (Geo) app, separate from the current Lincolnwood municipal app, which could notify app-users of promotions and deals by text on their phones, upon crossing into the Village limits.

Discussion ensued regarding the distribution of the Business Newsletter. Commissioners discussed including realtors, commercial brokers, and current business owners in Lincolnwood in the distribution list. Director McNellis noted that the distribution list of the Newsletter did include all local businesses. Commissioner Albazi suggested the possibility of a “Brokers Open House” to highlight the available properties and discuss future development strategies with realtors and commercial brokers. Director McNellis mentioned that plans for an economic development/business open house are currently proposed as part of the Economic Development Work Plan, developed by staff in 2016.

The EDC requested that a copy of the Economic Development Work Plan be forwarded to each Commissioner.

At 8:23, Commissioner Iocca joined the meeting.

Commissioner discussion continued regarding Lincolnwood's rebranding and vision. Director McNellis suggested that the Commission review this topic at an upcoming meeting after evaluating Lincolnwood's current and past initiatives. Further discussion could then be considered with the Mayor and Board, and the Plan Commission, if appropriate.

Returning to the Business Newsletter, Commissioner Berman provided his input by suggesting the following: including the publishing date on each page, working on content of each section to ensure it is written in a more dynamic way, using more catchy titles and photos (i.e. "Exciting New Businesses in Lincolnwood" rather than "New Businesses"), including Director McNellis' phone number in the "Business Communications" tab, altering the colors used in the "Building Permits" graph, and increasing the information listed for each new business. Commissioner Ehrenberg suggested including a footnote to describe why the graphs in the "Building Permit" section seem to look negative. Commissioner Ehrenberg also suggested that the "New Businesses" section could be organized by industry type, rather than in a list form.

Commissioner Iocca requested that the "Purple Hotel Site Foreclosure Settled" title be resituated away from the Lincolnwood Town Center photo as to not confuse readers. Commissioner Iocca also suggested including an "Events" column to the newsletter. Vice-Chair McCoy asked if the Village could post events such as farmers markets and art fairs on the Village website. Discussion ensued over whether there are any issues for the Village to consider when promoting for-profit events. Commissioner discussion continued regarding the role of the Village's Chamber of Commerce to promote such events and if the EDC had a responsibility to help lead the Chamber of Commerce in this regard. The Commission also discussed the possibility of collaborating with neighboring communities to promote local economic development in the Northern Suburbs. The Commission agreed to include this topic as an agenda item for a future EDC meeting.

4. Discussion of a Shop & Dine Guide

Director McNellis introduced the concept and preliminary research regarding the creation of a Shop & Dine Guide for the Village, a priority action items in staff's Economic Development Work Plan, scheduled to be completed in the first half of 2018.

Commissioners were provided with examples of similar projects produced by other

communities. In terms of distribution, the Shop & Dine Guide will primarily be accessed electronically, but will be available in a limited hardcopy format, “on demand”.

Commissioner Ehrenberg suggested that an app would be a beneficial form of distribution for the Shop & Dine Guide as it would be more interactive. Chairman Kucienski noted that if the Yelp app already serves as an interactive resource for restaurants, perhaps a map, similar to those used in malls, would be more useful. Commissioner Ehrenberg recommended that staff “stress-test” the Village’s restaurant selection on Yelp, to see how the ratings look, before considering any sort of a link to those ratings. There was also discussion and consideration regarding including Health Department scores, over time, for Village restaurants somewhere on the Village’s webpage. Village Manager, Tim Wiberg, added that the Shop & Dine Guide should serve to add value to what already exists, and that if value is not added, staff should focus energy elsewhere. Commissioner Iocca noted that if the purpose of the Guide is to provide a community feel, an app would be a valuable resource. Commissioner Iocca added that the City of Naperville has a useful app for their downtown which includes job postings, events, and dining recommendations. Commissioner Albazi noted the benefits of geo-mapping to best illustrate the Community’s highlights, adding that the use of an app would coincide with the EDC’s vision to market Lincolnwood to young families. Discussion ensued regarding visions for Lincolnwood’s future development.

5. Reports

Development Updates

Former Purple Hotel Site at 4500 West Touhy Ave

Director McNellis provided an update on the former Purple Hotel Site mentioning that Z-S Development of Chicago had signed a purchase contract for the site. Their development team met with Mayor Bass, Village Manager, Tim Wiberg, and Director McNellis in a preliminary meet and greet. Z-S Development discussed their vision of the site, including mixed-uses, a possible banquet hall, and entertainment uses. Commissioner Ehrenberg expressed her hesitation towards a banquet hall on this site, stating that it would not serve as an economic engine. Director McNellis reminded the Commission that the developers will be thoroughly vetted by the Village before next steps are taken.

Director McNellis and Village Manager Wiberg provided the status of the current Lincoln-Touhy Avenue TIF which is currently six years into its twenty-three year term. The EAV for the TIF District is currently half of the base EAV. In the six years of its existence, no money has accrued to the TIF. The Village Board proposed to restart the TIF in the Spring of 2017, but ultimately decided to put the discussion on hold, and reconsider a new TIF when a developer for the site was in place. Director McNellis

opened the discussion to the EDC on their thoughts to restart the twenty-three year life of the TIF understanding that there is now a contract pending for the site.

Discussion ensued regarding Z-S Development and the lack of similar, past projects the development team has completed. Commissioners expressed their hesitation in selecting a development team that had not worked on a project to a similar scale as the Former Purple Hotel Site. Village Manager Wiberg reminded the Commission that the Village does not own the site, therefore they cannot choose the developer. Village Manager Wiberg also noted that currently municipalities have the authority to pursue restarting a TIF, but state policy changes may remove this power at some point, reverting the authority away from the community and back to the state. Additionally, when the current TIF ends, the Village would need to go through the state to reinstitute a new TIF.

Commissioner Ehrenberg requested that the EDC revisit the recommended Corridor Plan produced by the Lincoln Avenue Taskforce to ensure the plans are current to avoid drawing upon dated ideas.

Regarding the use of a banquet hall on this site, Vice-Chair McCoy noted that the Bridgeport Art Space is a thriving economic and cultural element of the Bridgeport neighborhood in Chicago. While it is technically a banquet hall, it has been a successful addition to that community. A similar space could have a positive effect on Lincolnwood, as well.

Returning to the TIF restart discussion, Commissioners agreed that they would be more comfortable tabling the conversation until more information regarding the Z-S Development group is provided. Director McNellis, at the request of the Commission, noted that he would distribute the documents which prospective developers of the site can see for discussion at a future meeting.

Commissioners discussed the need to address the Former Purple Hotel Site with a new name to better illustrate the development's future potential. "The North Lincolnwood Gateway" was one suggestion, as was the "Lincoln-Touhy Triangle".

At 9:40, Village President, Barry Bass, arrived.

New Business Licenses

Commissioners were provided with the list of new businesses in Lincolnwood for November and December of 2017.

6. Other Business

None

7. Public Forum

Village Trustee, Georjean Nickell, provided input on the Business Newsletter agreeing with Commissioner Berman that the graphs in the “Building Permit” section should avoid using red as it symbolizes negative economic status. Regarding the role of the Chamber of Commerce in terms of marketing local businesses and related events, Trustee Nickell suggested the use of an intern for the Chamber of Commerce to increase productivity. Trustee Nickell also voiced her support for a business app and suggested organizing a “think tank” session with young families and adult children who are living in Lincolnwood to brainstorm the best uses for the proposed app.

Commissioners restated the necessity to eliminate the use of the term “Former Purple Hotel Site.” Once a name is decided, the Commission unanimously stated, all entities should use the new title moving forward.

Regarding the discussion involving the Village’s ability to promote for-profit events, Commissioner Berman suggested to allow any business to purchase a permit for a Sale, which would then allow the Village to allocate space in the Business Newsletter for marketing purposes, as it would be related to said permit.

Commissioner Ehrenberg suggested that Lincolnwood’s vision should highlight the community’s sustainable initiatives. One branding approach could include marketing Lincolnwood as one of Illinois’ greenest communities, in addition to being idyllically located with competitive housing prices and schools. Commissioner Ehrenberg also suggested health care and research as a possible use that could be fostered in the Village. Trustee Nickell supported the sustainability approach and suggested that the Village utilize the green space & park square footage ratio as a highly marketable element, when compared to other communities.

Village President, Barry Bass, thanked the Commission for a great meeting. Additionally, Village President Bass expressed interest on behalf of the Skokie Economic Development Commission to collaborate on local economic development, supporting the partnership discussion previously suggested.

8. Prospective Business Forum

None

9. Adjournment

By consensus, the meeting was adjourned at 10:05 am.

Respectfully submitted:

Ashley Reimann
Community Development Intern