

**Observer:** Betty Hayford

**Committee present:** Aldermen Braithwaite (Chair), Rainey, Rue Simmons, Wilson, Wynne; Mary Beth Berns (ZBA), Andrew Pigozzi (Planning Commission), Hecky Powell. Jeanmarie Sierant absent.

**Media present:** Evanston Now

**Meeting started:** 7:30

**Meeting ended:** 9:50

Approval of Minutes. The minutes for the July 25 meeting were approved.

**Items for consideration. A. RFP for 2222 Oakton Avenue.**

**Public comment.** Six speakers. 4 supported the proposal from Peckish Pig for a meeting and event space at 2222 Oakton, a local business that would provide sale tax revenue and a needed social space for Evanston. 1 supported affordable housing and thought 2222 Oakton could become mixed use including housing. 1 urged transparency and support for social services and suggested 2222 Oakton could be a site for Evanston Building Warehouse.

Paul Zalmezak introduced the issue and said there are two proposals both of which are complete. Staff scored the proposals on a multiple set of factors; First Ascent scored 84 and Palmhouse Productions scored 68. Staff wants the committee to recommend one proposal and recommend terms for an agreement to be approved by Council at the November 5 meeting.

First Assent, partnered with Clark Street Development, proposed a climbing gym with yoga and other fitness classes. They are a new business based in Chicago with four locations. Climbing is a popular activity for people of all ages and family, bringing people together who often meet up at local restaurants and bars. They propose to purchase the land for \$1 million and invest in renovation and equipment, a total investment of \$3 – 3.5 million. They would start construction at the end of 2019 and open for business in summer 2020.

Palmhouse Productions is an enterprise from the owners of Peckish Pig, which has experience in creating a successful restaurant in a vacant storefront. Peckish Pig hosts numerous events like weddings and bar mitzvahs, and knows there is demand for more event space which it would offer in phase one of their proposal. They will use bank loans and investments to create an event space which could open before the end of 2019. They propose to rent the space from the city, with an option to buy. Once operating, they will plan a food hall with six vendors in the building.

Braithwaite solicited questions or comments from aldermen. Rainey expressed opposition to selling city property which is surrounded by city land and parks. She compared the two projects. First Ascent is a strong proposal but Clark Street Development is a global operation with no Evanston connection. The proposed event space is Evanston “through and through.” Wilson said both proposals are strong, and he favors selling the property and getting the city away

from a landlord role. He thinks a rock climbing operation is a good fit for Evanston. Pigozzi agreed that rock climbing is a good Evanston fit and asked about zoning issues. Berns explained that both proposals need a special permit to operate in what is now zoned I-2. Rainey said selling city land to a development company is risky. Powell asked both groups about expected employment; each suggested 5 to 7 or 10 full time employees and 20 to 30 part time. Wynne likes both proposals but prefers selling the property to First Ascent. Rainey questioned whether First Ascent would keep its promises.

Wilson moved to request staff to prepare terms for the First Ascent proposal to send to Council, including a current appraisal of the value of the property. The motion was seconded and passed, 6 to 1. Rainey voted no and Powell abstained.

**Item B. Howard Street holiday lights.** A proposal to purchase holiday lights for Howard Street for \$9750.40 funded from the Howard Street TIF was approved with no discussion.

**Item C. Proposed changes to Business License Requirements.** Zalmezak explained a proposed change to require all businesses to register. This would include home businesses and professional services which currently do not pay business tax. This would give the city better information about all the businesses operating in Evanston. Registration fees would be a sliding scale starting at \$25. This would increase revenue from license/registration fees from about \$53,000 to \$200,000, allowing the city to provide additional services. Wilson moved to approve and Rue Simmons said this will provide useful information about the range of businesses in the city. Powell and Berns, business owners, opposed establishing new fees. The motion passed, with no votes from Powell and Berns.

Item 4 A on reviewing the Entrepreneurship Grant Program was postponed to the next meeting.

Item 4 B is a follow up on past discussion about the West Evanston TIF. It proposes to review tax code classifications and isolate poor performing PINs from strong performers. This will enable capturing the tax value increment to be invested in the TIF area. Zalmezak explained that the change can be made administratively but he wanted to inform the committee and Council. He will also inform the other taxing bodies. This change should support development, but the change will be gradual. It was moved and seconded to approve the action, with no opposition.

The meeting adjourned at 9:50.