

Observer: Betty Hayford

Present: Aldermen Wynne, Holmes, Rainey; Hecky Powell, Mary Beth Berns, Terri Duban, Jeannemarie Serant.

Media present: Evanston Now.

Meeting called to order at 7:05pm.

Items for Consideration.

A. Storefront Modernization Grant for Grosse Point Plaza. Building includes 3 storefronts. Request includes replacement of doors and windows on façade. Request for \$16,500 a 50-50 match. There was some discussion about the figure requested, some positive comments about the effort, and the request was approved without dissent.

B. Storefront Modernization Grant for Lake City Cleaners, 600 Oakton Street. Again there was discussion about the amount requested. Discussion made clear that the upgrade of equipment requested was not required by code but sought by the owners as a condition of providing excellent service. The request for \$10,648 was approved without dissent.

C. Storefront Modernization Grant for Red Hot Chili Pepper, 500 Davis Street. This is a second restaurant planned by the owner of Mt. Everest on Church. He is installing new windows and doors. Powell asked the owner about hiring Evanston residents. The owner said he planned to and Powell expressed skepticism. The request for \$10,700 was approved without dissent.

D. (Actually E.) Financial Assistance for Good to Go Jamaican Restaurant, moving across Howard Street to 711 Howard. They are requesting \$50,000 and are eligible for that amount because they are in the Howard TIF area. Anne Rainey spoke in favor of the move, pointing out that the building was a church and has been off the tax rolls for years. It needs extensive work. The restaurant has been operating in a much smaller space on the other side of Howard for some years. Once it relocates it will provide tax revenue going into the TIF account. The request was approved. Then Sara Flax presented a proposal for a CDBG business loan of \$25,000 for equipment purchases. The debt payment will be deferred for a year which will help their cash flow. It is a ten year loan. The CDBG loan was approved. (It may be recalled that Anne Rainey was critical of this restaurant as a tenant for the proposed theater building, but she is now very supportive of their move.)

D. Financial Assistance for Kabul House, 2424 Dempster Street. A similar request had been made at the last meeting, but refused because the previous restaurant at that site had received a grant and a loan, and had failed and stiffed the city. Ann Rainey had asked staff to investigate ways to help. Marty Lyons explained several options. He pointed out, as all agreed, that the restaurant had critical and financial success in Skokie, and is seen as bringing benefits to Evanston. But no current program fits their situation. He explained several options for providing assistance. Most likely was a forgivable loan, or a

revenue sharing agreement involving tax sharing. A loan will be forgiven, but they will have to pay it back if they leave within five years. The risk to the city is limited, really to the first year. It might look like a bad precedent, providing a loan without collateral, but it is not because we know they are investing over \$500,000 and they have a very strong record. Rainey pointed out that the restaurant would be providing liquor and tax revenue to the city. Hecky Powell again asked about hiring Evanston residents, and urged the city to follow up on all the pledges made to hire Evanstonians which did not always materialize. Lyons asked approval to allow the City Manager to negotiate a grant of \$50,000 that would be repaid through some kind of revenue/tax sharing agreement. The motion passed, 5-1, with Powell voting no because he didn't think the city should provide assistance to a successful business that didn't really need it.

Staff pointed out Communications included in the packet.

The meeting adjourned at 8:15pm.