

Observer Report

Council or Committee: Economic Development Committee

Date: April 24, 2019

Observer: Julianne Dieterich

Meeting began: 7:40 pm

Meeting Ended: 8:45 pm

Committee Members Present: Rue Simmons (chair), Rainey, Braithwaite, Mary Beth Berns (Zoning Board of Appeals), Hecky Powell (at large), Wynne (arrived at 7:55) **Absent:** Wilson, Jeannemarie Sierant (at large) and Andrew Pigozzi (Plan Commission)

Staff Present: Paul Zalmezak, Paulina Martinez, Katie Bodin (sp?, new staff)

Media Present: Evanston Now (arrived late)

Citizen comment: None.

AGENDA

1. CALL TO ORDER / DECLARATION OF QUORUM

2. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES OF February 27, 2019

3. ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

NONE

4. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

A. Economic Development Annual Report – Paul Zalmezak reviewed many positive economic indicators in Evanston over the last year (low vacancy rates, new businesses, low unemployment). Also rising commercial rental rates, which is a double-edged sword that points to the continuing need for more office space. Pointed to the large (nearly \$75,000) investment from storefront modernization program to improve the appearance of businesses at Church and Dodge as good example of impact of city funds.

Hecky Powell asked a question about sources of funding for youth programs, and argued that it's inappropriate for the summer youth employment program to be named for the mayor (any mayor, not intended as an attack on Mayor Hagerty), when it's funded by taxpayers. Rainey pointed to the history going back to Lorraine Morton; Braithwaite pointed to other initiatives that reference the mayor. Simmons redirected the discussion, while noting Powell's concern.

B. Financial Wellness Initiative – Simmons expressed excitement for idea for an initiative to help empower residents to be more financially prepared. Zalmezak reported that staff will try to use city staff to convene group of businesses to develop an initiative to collaborate on a financial wellness initiative focused on debt reduction, credit, building wealth. Staff will try to update in 90 days or less; Simmons would like it faster. She would like to see a badging system or steps to acknowledge people's progress; would like elements to include a youth component, particularly for students in youth employment program who don't have checking accounts; also baby bonds or some way to parents to invest early in their children's future; and insurance. This initiative seems to be driven largely by Simmons' interest. Wynne suggested coordinating with ETHS to see what the consumer education program there requires (it may be quite rudimentary) and try to make sure that the

curriculums connect. Rainey suggested that other city committees already are or should be addressing some of these issues, such as housing/homeownership; she's not sure that this is all the purview of the economic development committee.

C. ComEd / Alley Lighting – Com Ed representative explained that property owners can agree to get together and request light(s) in alleys through Com Ed. Com Ed installs them and it gets billed to one property owner, for about \$80/year per light. Braithwaite also asked about opportunities for development that are limited by high tension power lines. He wanted to know about the cost of burying those lines. Com Ed will work with staff to help develop that information; it sounds like it might be very expensive, and potentially challenging to figure out how to route those lines.

D. MWEBE Report – Zalmezak introduced Sharon Johnson, City's Business Workforce Compliance Coordinator to help provide an update on the activities of the MWEBE committee. The purpose of the committee is to provide equitable access to business opportunities to minority-owned, women-owned, and locally-owned businesses. They pointed to the annual procurement fair; resource fair to provide information on procurement and job opportunities with major contractor; coordination with trade unions to distribute information on training/employment opportunities to local residents; offering resources for contractors through the library; the funding of the Evanston Rebuilding Warehouse to train local residents in union apprentice programs; and monitoring compliance with the city's MWEBE participation goal (25% for major contracts; average for last 6 years has been 27%) and local hiring requirements. Braithwaite celebrated the progress that they city has made in adopting and enforcing the ordinance. He particularly noted the effort that has gone into holding the contractor for Robert Crown accountable for meeting the MWEBE goals. There's also a green jobs fair in the works.

5. COMMUNICATIONS

A. Monthly Economic Development Communication - No discussion. Zalmezak mentioned that the coding initiative that the committee had approved for funding last year (about \$75,000) was mostly not completed; he will provide an update at a future meeting.

B. Announcements/Updates from EDC Members - Mary Beth Berns is transitioning off the committee after this meeting.

6. ADJOURNMENT