

All Council members who are EDC member were present, as was member-at-large Eli Klein. Reid chaired remotely, and Wynne attended remotely. Staff present were Economic Development Manager Paul Zalmezak, Economic Development Specialist Kate Boden, and I believe an assistant city attorney.

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I. ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

- A. Contract with Interface Studio, LLC to provide Evanston Business District Improvement Strategy and Implementation Plan Consulting Services (RFP 22-22).

Staff from Interface were present via Google meet and gave a presentation about how they would approach Evanston, understanding that each business district is unique. Annie Coakley of Downtown Evanston and Sandeep Ghaey of Vinic Wine spoke in person in favor of the proposal. Others, by remote, said they supported it as well. Trisha Connelly said she supported it but would like to see the plan – or the City – monitor business proposals so that similar businesses would not locate near each other. In response, Zalmezak pointed to downtown Wilmette, where clusters of restaurants are thriving.

**The contract, for \$245,000, was approved unanimously by voice vote. The item will move to City Council.**

ARPA funds will cover half the costs; the other half will come proportionally from TIF districts. Central Street may not be included for two reasons – it is doing well, and there is no TIF in that area. Dempster-Dodge, a TIF in itself, may also not be included in the study – perhaps because it is being sold (that was alluded to).

- B. Request for Funding for The Musical Offering Through the Storefront Modernization Program

**The request, for an amount not to exceed \$1,403.75, was approved unanimously and without discussion. The item will move to City Council.**

The Musical Offering is located at 743 Custer Ave.

- C. Request for funding for Nature's Perspective through the West Evanston Tax Increment Financing (TIF) District

**The request, for an amount not to exceed \$6,613 to purchase an “Edge of Dock” leveler, was approved unanimously and without discussion. The item will move to City Council.**

Nature's Perspective is located at 2000 Greenleaf St.

- D. Request to craft an agreement with Vinic Wine Co. for Upsy Daisy Café to operate the Arrington Lagoon Building Café.

Staff seeks the Economic Development Committee approval to proceed with crafting an agreement with Upsy-Daisy Café presented by **Vinic Wine Co. to operate a café at the Arrington Lagoon building.**

Several people spoke, via Google Meet, in favor of this proposal. Wynne began the discussion saying she had heard there were changes to the proposal, which had been to operate a café serving meals, beer, wine and soft drinks on a daily basis. Sandeep Ghaey of Vinic Wine said instead there would be a soft rollout through a series of one-day pop-ups. The city had already promised the space for some summer camps, he said, so it would not be available. Reid said he thought an ordinance would have to be changed to allow consumption of alcohol in city parks, but Wynne said that would not be necessary because the café would apply for special one-day licenses. She said she had received both support for and opposition to the proposal: It is a much-needed asset but it represents commercialization of the lakefront. Other Council members reported overall positive reaction to the proposal.

**By voice vote the café was approved, to be sent to Council.**

- E. Approval of a Sole Source Grant Agreement not to exceed \$760,000 with 37 Oaks Consulting to Implement an Evanston Retail Incubator Program through the period ending December 31, 2023.

**Although discussion of this item took up a lot of time in this three-hour meeting, the sentiment appeared to be against it from the start, and the unanimous vote, by voice, was "No." The measure will not move to Council.**

Committee members felt that the amount was excessive and that there is already a lot of work being done in the City toward business incubation and workforce development, such as The Aux, Northwestern University's support, and Evanston Hospital's apprentice/training program.

Zalmezak said he hoped it would be possible at some later point to bring a different proposal from 37 Oaks to the committee.

## II. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

### A. City Financial Support for the creation of a Shared Commercial Kitchen

**There was a wide-ranging discussion about this, all of it very positive about support a measure like this.** Zalmezak gave a short history of Now We're Cookin', a shared commercial

kitchen on Payne Street (where Feast & Imbibe/Soul & Smoke is now located) that was quite successful in helping other businesses succeed.

Council member Burns said people have expressed interest in a shared commercial kitchen. Braithwaite said he thought that since the country is still in a pandemic, investing in a restaurant was unwise. Others said that food-carts and takeout options make food establishments good and safe investments.

Spaces in churches, at Family Focus (where Noir d’Ebene started) and at Evanston Township High School were mentioned. This concept is likely to resurface at EDC within the next few months.

#### **B. Update City Code to Permit Hookah Lounges For Discussion at the Request of Councilmember Reid For Discussion Update City Code to Permit Hookah Lounges**

Reid backs this proposal. He said allowing a hookah lounge would be a sign that Evanston is a welcoming community to Muslims. Committee members expressed concerns over approving a business for smoking, citing health concerns. Wynne said she did not know enough about the issue to support it, and Reid accused her of being anti-Muslim. She defended herself, again saying that there was not enough information but she would listen if someone had a specific case to make for a hookah lounge. Others said similarly that they would listen if someone had a specific proposal but most appeared to be opposed to a smoking lounge.

**It is not clear what the next step or move will be.**

#### **B. Other items**

Braithwaite asked if it would be possible to use some EDC funds to help landscaping companies, many of which are minority-owned, obtain electric leaf-blowers. He said doing that would help the companies and could also cut down on the 911 calls for enforcement of the leaf-blower ordinance. Zalmezak seemed open to the idea but there was no concrete way of how to do this agreed upon in the discussion.

Zalmezak said there would be a change in composition of the EDC.