

APPROVED MINUTES

VILLAGE OF DOWNERS GROVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

Village Hall, Committee Room
801 Burlington Avenue
Downers Grove, IL
September 8, 2004
7:30 a.m.

Commission Chair Riordan called the meeting to order at 7:45 a.m.

PRESENT: Commission Chair Riordan, Jeff Bilek, Liz Chalberg, Phil Cullen, John Luka, Mike Parilla, and Gary Vlk

STAFF: David Van Vooren, Deputy Village Manager
Joseph Skach, Director, Planning and Community Development
Rita Trainor, Director, Finance
Ginny Mindo, Admin. Assistant, Planning and Community Development (Economic Development)

ABSENT: Ken Bohanon, Mike Kelch, Mike Ryan, John Randall, Bill Weiss, and Barb Wysocki

GUESTS: None

APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM JULY 14, 2004

Commission Chair Riordan requested a motion to APPROVE THE MINUTES from July 14, 2004. Commissioner Parilla noted a typo. Ms. Mindo said she would correct the error. Commissioner Parilla motioned to approve the minutes with the noted amendment; Commissioner Cullen seconded the motion.

Vote: Yay: Commission Chair Riordan, Jeff Bilek, Liz Chalberg, Phil Cullen, John Luka, Mike Parilla, and Gary Vlk

Nay: None

Motion carried 7:0

Mr. Skach informed the Commission that Commissioner Weiss has decided to change to a Board that would have evening meetings as he has moved out of the area and early morning meetings are no longer convenient. Commission Chair Riordan noted that Commissioner Zabloudil of the Council had already handled the necessary paperwork.

ATTRACTION/RETENTION SUBCOMMITTEE

The Commission reviewed the Economic Assistance Application noting that it was much more warmer and friendlier than the ones in the past. Commission Chair Riordan asked if it was clear enough and a discussion ensued regarding the content, which included whether it fully explained the TIF or sales tax. Mr. Skach noted that based on discussions with the Committee, the document is purposefully vague about specific assistance to act more as a "tickler" to begin the discussion and that it can be modified in some fashion to address the particular request. Commissioner Parilla added that the application should not necessarily define specifics as they may need to be adapted to the situation. And that other websites from other Villages listed all the things they have done in the past, and what they consider doing in the future,

APPROVED MINUTES

which might be helpful for this organization to do. Deputy Village Manager Van Vooren gave some background on past projects where industrial revenue bonds were authorized. He added that the Village has no liability and works as a third-party. In addition, in past years, the Village has been selling their bond caps to private investors. More discussion ensued regarding bonds and fixed rates, and Deputy Village Manager Van Vooren said he would get additional documentation for the group.

Commission Chair Riordan asked about a sentence that mentioned “funding gaps”. Commissioner Parilla explained that this pertains to getting negotiations started and that the Village would like the petitioner to ‘throw out’ [identify] the first number for the Village. Deputy Village Manager Van Vooren noted that the key component is the location and if there is marketable space, we can attract the players that will come and provide an opportunity to expand our base. Mr. Skach pointed out the strategic need for the “But For” clause, which helps to determine the best use for public funds.

Commissioner Bilek asked if the verbiage on the first page regarding Economic Enhancement needed to be revised because it referred more to a person’s ability to demonstrate need as opposed to the Village’s need. He also noted a few other areas that the verbiage needed to be refined.

Commissioner Chalberg asked what if a big industry desired to move into one of the industrial parks. Mr. Skach replied that the Village would be able to give them a sense of how easy or how difficult the process would be for them. Commissioner Chalberg asked if the petitioner’s determination would be made mainly from the documents they are given or would it be covered mostly through the initial conversations. Mr. Skach replied that the petitioners would get the majority of their preliminary guidance through discussions. Mr. Skach asked if this group wanted any more changes done at the Subcommittee level, or should the next move be to take it to Council for adoption. Commissioner Parilla suggested sending out an e-mail first for more study before taking it to Council. The group concurred.

Commissioner Chalberg asked what specifically the phrase “The time is right” meant. Mr. Skach replied that it was that the “Time was right to Come Home to Downers Grove”. Further discussion ensued regarding this phrase and there was consensus to leave the phrase out and make the “Come Home” more prominent.

STRATEGIC PLANNING SUBCOMMITTEE

Commissioner Chalberg began a discussion regarding the status of the work of the Signage Subcommittee. She noted some of issues they have been working on included definitions and prohibited signs that they plan to revisit each time they begin to work on another section of the community. She noted that there has been quite a bit of concern on the business community’s part that they are not getting enough of a chance to make comments, which is something they are trying to work through, since members of the community are only given 10 minutes each to make comment, and there was time enough at the last meeting for only two people to comment. Commissioner Chalberg added that the timing of the meetings (noon) might be inconvenient for some of the business representatives. Commissioner Chalberg noted that at the beginning of the process, the discussion focused on a few signs; now they are looking at the ordinance and all of the signs and getting businesses to comply with code.

Another issue Commissioner Chalberg brought up was that currently tent signs are not allowed in the Downtown, and should the Village start enforcing this immediately? She cited that when the Downtown was being restored, they were allowed, but that has now changed. Commissioner Luka noted that businesses would always find ways around these issues, whether it is temporary signs or something else. Commissioner Chalberg mentioned that the Council moratorium felt rushed, and that they put a guideline in the Downtown of 8 feet with an 8-foot setback and 4 feet above grade. She noted that the process did not feel good right now, but that would probably improve and they have been meeting every week.

APPROVED MINUTES

Commission Chair Riordan suggested that more of a plan be put in place. Commissioner Chalberg said that the next section they planned to work on was Ogden Avenue. Commissioner Luka asked if two of the same stores at different locations in Downers Grove could come under different restrictions. Commissioner Chalberg confirmed that they could.

Mr. Skach noted that the Subcommittee is working from a draft, first getting the derelict signs cleaned up, and then getting a focus team together because the draft is a rewrite and hard to structure. It will eventually move down to the Council. Commissioner Cullen said that he felt it was not pro-business. He suggested gathering pictures of sites that are positive scenes instead of negative ones.

A discussion ensued regarding sandwich signs and the fact that many businesses want to put them up.

Commissioner Chalberg noted that the process has gotten confused with legal working off the original document and staff working from the rewrite. She also noted that the Council came back two weeks ago stating that they did not agree with the 4 ft issue and asked us to do something about it.

Commissioner Bilek agreed with Commissioner Luka that there should be more guidelines in place. Deputy Village Manager Van Vooren noted that the Village was working on assembling a Design Guideline Committee. He also noted that some of the issues stem from people's tastes, which is something that cannot be legislated. Commissioner Chalberg noted that if a group of people is assembled, whether it is a Design Guideline Committee or Signage Court of Appeals, it should include Village business people. She also noted that there had been an Architectural Review Board in the past, but that it really did carry any "weight", so they would need to have something in place that did.

Commissioner Luka suggested promoting pendant signs. Commission Chair Riordan complimented everyone on their great comments and the meeting moved on to the next Subcommittee.

MARKETING

Commissioner Vlk informed everyone that the Subcommittee was currently looking at two paths, #1) attracting the consumer and #2) attracting the people that determine the land selection for the business market. He noted that, over the next month, they would most likely produce a paper brochure product to start getting the word out and have a good response piece for when calls do come in or for locating or targeting businesses. On the consumer side, Commissioner Vlk said they plan to take advantage of the numerous Downers Grove events that are coordinated through Tourism and Events and work with Ms. Mary Scalzetti and her department to coordinate some events.

PLANNING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Skach referred back to the Activities Report, reporting that Council approved the Community Bank. A discussion ensued regarding the issue of flooding, which was something they had to contend with at this site, and that LPDA (Localized Poor Drainage Areas) and FEMA standards are now being reevaluated.

He then reported that in terms of the Future Land Use Map, Map A (the housekeeping portion), would be considered by the Plan Commission on September 20, 2004. He added that it would take more time because it included talking with the business owners. He also added that the whole proceeding is on the website.

Also of note, is that on September 4, 2004, the Strategic Planning Subcommittee is meeting to review Ogden Land Use, focusing on auto dealers.

APPROVED MINUTES

Commissioner Chalberg asked for a briefing of the possible multi-family site at the Esplanade. Mr. Skach confirmed that Hamilton Partners is interested in a multistory high-end housing product. He added that Hamilton Partners was waiting on feedback from the Village.

Mr. Skach informed the group that Culver's Restaurant has purchased a site a Cross and Ogden Avenue and the Mr. B's site has been demolished and will be replaced by a retail center. Mr. Skach noted the developer of the Aldi site has been able to acquire a substantial majority of the parcels surrounding it and the Village needs to meet with them soon to get the status on that.

In addition, of note, Mr. Skach reported that Fairview Plaza is going forward with their expansion, and that is an indication that the retailers have a more positive outlook on what is happening. He added that Burger King at Butterfield Plaza was still redeveloping and has renewed their lease for another five years. Commissioner Chalberg asked what the status of Scuttlebutts was. Mr. Skach said they were looking at a drive through at Meadowbrook. Mr. Skach said they have had discussions with Baskin Robbins/Dunkin Donuts, but with the underpass coming in, everyone is evaluating their options. Commissioner Luka asked when Baskin Robbins/Dunkin Donuts planned to break ground. Mr. Skach did not know, because Baskin Robins/Dunkin Donuts was also looking at an area near the Belmont Train Station. A discussion then ensued regarding the rising prices per square foot and the impact of this from an economic development standpoint.

Commissioner Luka brought up code enforcement and their letting certain businesses not comply to code standards, which lets them not keep their properties up and drives up land prices because they don't have to sell because they don't have to do anything with the property. Deputy Village Manager Van Vooren stated that they have taken an active role in that, but it needs to be fair and put across all levels of the Village. Commissioner Bilek noted that some of the businesses are grand fathered in anyway, and they need to be brought up to code for safety and attractiveness purposes.

Deputy Village Manager Van Vooren brought up the issue of space, which at this time is unavailable to the major retailer. He also noted the one of the major retailer's key components would be I-355 and I-88. Commissioner Chalberg mentioned that the Lakota Plan specifically identified some opportunity for moving and assembling parcels. Deputy Village Manager Van Vooren noted that it was not the assemblage that was the focus, but the rezoning. He added that they need to make the space deeper and broader for redevelopment opportunities. He added that this includes looking at Residential [Yellow] land use areas. [Finance Director Trainor left the meeting at 9:20 a.m.] Mr. Skach acknowledged that we have to maximize the areas that we currently have, and that is what Map B represents. He added that there are two basic strategies, 1.) to increase the "bang for the buck" per EAV and sales tax revenue dollar on commercial revenue generating properties that is currently there, and 2.) to physically expand those. Commissioner Bilek noted that it is easier to assemble the commercial property than it is the homes because there are more homes to deal with and they are more sensitive to the community. Commissioner Bilek asked if there are opportunities to do things with the Ogden Avenue to move it over to build property on the other side. Deputy Village Manager Van Vooren did not think that could happen; that it would need to be five lanes. Commissioner Bilek stated that something needed to change. He brought up the successful changes that occurred in the Downtown to get the sewers redone. Deputy Village Manager Van Vooren noted that it is a money issue. Commissioner Chalberg suggested at least bury the power lines on Ogden Avenue. She added that residential should be looked at more seriously, possibly producing a proposal, because there are approximately 75 residential properties that may be affected on a long-term basis along with the Ogden corridor. Mr. Skach noted that they have talked about that as part of the Ogden Finance Economic Impacts, but have currently been focusing on signs. Commissioner Chalberg suggested hiring someone to do an impact study on the residential rezoning project. Mr. Skach added that potentially an update may warrant a Gruen Gruen +Associates, or a group similar might be beneficial.

APPROVED MINUTES

Mr. Skach wrapped up the segment noted Alpine Confections, who has purchased Fannie May will reopen the Ogden and Belmont store. He added that the Village informed them of the Ogden Plan and hopes to meet with them before they open.

Mr. Skach also pointed out that in today's packet were the Downers Grove Home Rule Sales Tax Report and also a grant that they submitted for the IT database, which was a joint effort between the Village, the Chamber and the Downtown Management Board. He also included a couple more documents, one regarding the second quarter US and local economy, and an article on Sam's Wines and Liquors.

Ms. Chalberg asked if there was any information regarding the status of the McDonalds at Fairview and Ogden. Commissioner Chair Riordan replied that it was going to be rebuilt. [Commissioner Bilek left at 9:30a.m.]

Commission Chair Riordan questioned the 2nd Quarter's Economic View stating that it slowed down significantly from the last report. Commissioner Luka replied that it is better to review it on a quarterly basis because they go by averages. Mr. Skach noted that last month's report also reflected a huge spike in residential.

Commissioner Chair Riordan asked if Mr. Baker's document regarding the Village's Home Rule Sales Tax Report had gone to Council yet and are they going to let it sunset. Mr. Skach replied that it was. Deputy Village Manager Van Vooren said it was a revenue source that because of our destination and contractiveness of our stores, we see it as a non resident paying tax; but we are operating on the pretense that it has been approved to sunset and take a significant revenue stream to replace. He added that they will not be able to do it, and we will see other areas that will have to be evaluated. When we went to the home rule sales tax a year ½ ago, it was under the guise of making about a \$3 million cut in our village budget relative to services because revenues weren't there or raising other revenue to make up for that. They chose this revenue source to make up for that. Those same scenarios will be present when it goes away. Commissioner Parilla said that he thought Downers Grove would miss the ½ percent sales tax and that it would not make sense to sunset. He added that most communities have similar taxes. Commissioner Cullen added that it would not drive a person out of the community. [Commissioner Cullen left at 9:40 a.m.]

ADJOURNMENT

Commission Chair Riordan requested a motion to adjourn the meeting; so motioned by Commissioner Chalberg, seconded by Commissioner Luka. The meeting adjourned at 9:42 a.m.

COMMISSION CHAIR RIORDAN
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION