

CITY OF PALOS HEIGHTS
Business/ Economic Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes
January 22, 2018

Call to Order

Chairman Grossart called the meeting of the Business/Economic Advisory Committee to order at 12:00 Noon. Present were: Bob Grossart, Paul Muehlinicke, Rick Powell, Chuck Polcaster, Lori Mazeika, Stacy Schuble, Alderman Jeff Key, Diane Goerg, and Ken Busse. Also present were Recording Secretary Pat Sheppard and the owner of Richard's Bicycles. Absent was Barb Bergamo.

Approval of Minutes

Chairman Grossart requested a motion to approve the minutes of the December 11, 2017 meeting. So moved by Chuck Polcaster, seconded by Rick Powell. On a unanimous voice vote, the motion carried.

Opening Remarks

Chairman Grossart stated he had contacted all the current committee members in regards to serving on the BEAC for 2018 and all agreed to.

He explained the reason why a couple of the meeting dates were not on the regular schedule date was due to federal holidays.

He thought the items/subjects placed on the meeting agendas should be determined by the Community Development Coordinator Ken Busse with suggestions from the committee. Ken disagreed noting he was not the chairman of the committee. He said, however, from time to time he may have something that would need to be placed on the agenda as he did today.

Occupancy Study/Report

Chairman Grossart explained he was working on updating the report as of 12/31/17 and would have a report at the next meeting

Parking Concerns

Chairman Grossart said there was a parking study done in 2013 by CDC Marissa Koleman which indicated at that time there were ebbs and tides in the parking but it was adequate. He felt conditions had changed dramatically since 2013, especially in the vicinity between 122nd and 123rd and Harlem Avenue, as well as in the strip mall by Harvest Room on the NE corner of 127th Harlem. He hoped this committee could discuss the parking issues and formulate a list of ideas to address the issues/concerns. He thought it would be a good idea to then meet with the business owners in those areas to get their input and ideas. The final step would be to meet with the Mayor and/or the City Administrator, and get on the agenda to address the City Council.

Ken Busse said he had been speaking with many of the business owners/merchants, especially in the southeast quadrant of 123rd and Harlem. The opening of Franklins House on the

west side had created more parking issues. He noted each of the property owners own from Harlem Avenue to the street behind the building (either 71st Ct or 72nd Ct.) and each parcel provides its own parking. He noted this area was developed when Harlem Avenue was a 2-lane road and more parking was available. Over time, Harlem Avenue was widened to 4 lanes and empty parcels/lots were developed. He also noted at that time parking standards had not yet been established, but now the area does not meet today's parking standards. He thought it was time to start addressing the problems and talk with the business owners. In updating the Comprehensive Plan in 2018, that sub-area of Harlem Avenue will be looked at and he encouraged input. As part of the update, he would like to address the present-day standards.

Chairman Grossart referred to the handout he had distributed, Section 153.55 of the City's Zoning Code, *Parking Capacity, Configuration, and Access*, which were adopted in October 2015. He noted these were the guidelines the City followed. Ideas the Chairman had to address the parking problems were: 1.) Suggest to business owners to have their employees park in the municipal parking lot, and 2.) Explore valet service. In regards to valet service, Diane Goerg said there would be insurance issues, it would be an additional cost to the business owners, and where would they valet to. Chairman Grossart said the municipal parking lot. Ken Busse stated Capri and Highlander House Restaurants use a valet service, who happens to be a resident, and it was possible he may be able to expand his services. His valet service was licensed and bonded. Diane did not feel her business warranted valet service. Ken told Diane he had worked out an agreement with Advocate, on the west side of Harlem, and they have opened up 19 parking spaces along the south side of their parking lot for additional parking for surrounding businesses and restaurants, preferably staff/employees, at no charge, which would free up closer parking spaces for patrons/customers. Ken stated that it was also important to get support from the property owners to help address the parking issues and possibly offer some financial assistance should the City consider purchasing property for an additional municipal lot in the southeast and/or southwest quadrant. The absence of sidewalks in that area was another problem— there was no consistency and the width was inadequate. Ken realized there was limited space for sidewalks, especially on the east side of Harlem, but it would be an advantage to have them. He mentioned the addition of art/public art along sidewalks is inviting and encourages people to look and walk ahead to the next piece. This has been done successfully in other towns to enhance the downtown area and draw people in.

Chairman Grossart continued with the list of ideas he had developed: 3.) reinforce the good neighbor policy in order to get the business and/or property owners to work together, 4.) change the mindset/behavior of people and promote walking. He mentioned other towns, like LaGrange, have municipal parking lots and have a thriving downtown where patrons/customers don't seem to mind walking a block or two to their destination. Chuck Polcaster thought a way to do that would be with signage, such as was recently done with the Police Department's portable lighted sign. It had been placed by the muni-lot and read "Additional Parking Here". Another suggestion Chuck had was to offer a shuttle service on the weekends.

Diane Goerg said there were major parking problems by her businesses in Palos Place. People park in the handicap spot who are clearly are not handicap. The residents in the apartments above Palos Place were having their designated spots taken by customers, even when cones were placed on them.

Aldermen Key felt the City needed to put in place a long-range strategy to buy properties as they become available in strategic locations. He also felt the need for the Mayor, City Council, City Administrator and other key staff, to all be on board/in agreement with a plan.

Ken Busse stated that he had met with John Hyland (owner of United Trust Bank next to Franklins Public House) and they discussed the parking issues. Mr. Hyland's main reason for posting the "Bank Parking Only" signs was primarily for the safety of his customers, noting although the bank has set hours, customers come to the bank 24/7 to use the ATM's. Diane Goerg said she understood and Palos Place patrons should not have to rely on parking elsewhere. Businesses should not be approved that will not be able to provide adequate parking. Discussion ensued.

Rick Powell felt it was necessary for some immediate action, short-term and long-term solutions, and that was something this committee could work on. Chuck Polcastor mentioned that 123rd Street is closed for one block east and west of Harlem for the Classic Car Show which provides additional parking. If the City would allow closure at key times on the east side with temporary barriers, he thought it would provide parking for at least 50 vehicles, noting a parking attendant would be required. Rick Powell inquired what the process would be to implement that and who would make that decision. Discussion ensued. Alderman Key thought it would be a good idea to look at parking solutions in other municipalities. Chuck Polcastor said in order to change people's behavior, the City needs to focus on showing them where to park by using positive, informational signage. Alderman Key volunteered to contact the proper city staff to put the portable electronic sign out on the weekends.

It was questioned if parking was allowed on the streets in the adjacent residential neighborhoods. Ken Busse was not aware of an ordinance prohibiting parking on the residential streets.

Chairman Grossart felt the committee had come up with some good ideas and recommendations. The first step would be to put them all in writing (make a list) and approach the business owners for their ideas/suggestions within the next couple of weeks. Rick Powell thought it was a good idea to gather information from the business owners as well as to educate them. The next step would then be to meet with key people from the City, preferably the Mayor and the City Administrator. Chairman Grossart felt the need to let the Mayor know this committee supports finding short-term and long-term solutions to the parking issues. He questioned if the Mayor would be more open to listening to the committee's ideas if he were presented with a list of businesses that would encourage their employees to park in the municipal lot. Discussion again ensued on the subject.

Alderman Key offered another suggestion: to place brochures in the restaurants and businesses which showed where there was available parking. Chuck Polcastor thought it would be nice to see restaurants and businesses help each other out by giving customers coupons to use at another location in town.

Chairman Grossart stated he would report to the committee at next month's meeting about the outcome of these meetings.

Proposed F/Y 2018 Committee Budget

Ken Busse referred to the proposed budget noting the following: Website improvements were being addressed by the City as well as a marketing position. Ken informed the committee that Stacy Schuble had been engaged to do the social media, email blasts, and the like for the City. A real estate portal will be added to the City's new website. The City will budget \$10,000 for BEAC expenses of which the salary for a summer intern will be taken.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 1:00 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Patricia M. Sheppard
Recording Secretary