

CITY OF PALOS HEIGHTS
Business/ Economic Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes
April 16, 2018

Call to Order

Chairman Grossart called the meeting of the Business/Economic Advisory Committee to order at 12:00 Noon at the Palos Heights Recreation Center. Present were: Bob Grossart, Chuck Polcaster, Paul Muehlnickel, Lori Mazeika, Alderman Jeff Key, and Ken Busse. Also present were Stacy Schuble and Recording Secretary Pat Sheppard.

Approval of Minutes

Chairman Grossart moved to approve the minutes of the March 19, 2018 meeting, seconded by Paul Muehlnickel. On a unanimous voice vote, the motion carried.

Chairman Grossart explained to the committee that he was trying a new approach on the agenda items, some of which have not moved forward. He said the role of the committee has been/is an advisory committee. The intent of the committee is to provide suggestions to be discussed and considered by the City Council. In return, he hoped the City Council would respond back to the committee on any action taken. Chairman Grossart then preceded with his new approach on this month's agenda items:

Parking Update

Chairman Grossart said this committee has been discussing the parking issues for a couple of months. Taking the municipal parking lot into consideration, he noted there was ample parking downtown, but there was congestion around 123rd and Harlem. He referred to the audit that was performed and discussed at last month's meeting. He said that he and Ken had met the three (3) restaurant owners and asked them to encourage their employee's to park in either the municipal parking lot or Advocates' designated parking spaces. Ken Busse stated that the employees of Franklin's Public House were utilizing the parking spaces at Advocate; only about 3 employees from Highlander House utilize Advocate's spaces, but use alternate parking on the east side of Harlem; and Capri is not utilizing either option for their employees. After speaking with the owner of Capri, she indicated she would ask her male employees to park in the municipal parking lot. Ken would follow-up with another audit in a couple of weeks to see if the alternative parking was being utilized.

Next, Ken stated he had spoken with the City Administrator about on-street parking and was informed it would entail much more than just striping the streets and require some engineering. Ken referred to a map which indicated the additional parking that could be obtained with on-street parking – approximately 30+ spaces. Alderman Key had also spoken with the City Administrator as well as the Public Safety Committee. It was his intention to attend the next Roads and Construction Committee meeting (in May) and suggest an engineering study be conducted specifically for parking in the Harlem Avenue Business District by the same company that had recently conducted the traffic study in the Old Palos neighborhood.

Chairman Grossart referred to Resolution No. 1 and the recommendation to City Council he was proposing was “to consider the use of additional offsite parking on some of the local side streets near this location. It is the recommendation of this committee that the City consider working with various business locations to remove all of the no parking and towing signs in the area and the committee would be willing to assist in any way possible to help. Maybe it could be tied into the plan for off street parking”. He asked the committee he if they agreed with the recommendation and would want a formal response from the City Council.

Chuck Polcastor thought Alderman Key already had the ball rolling on the issue but this action would add a little fuel to it. In regards to the removal of the no parking signs, Ken said it was a very sensitive subject with the business owners and would have to be approached accordingly. He noted the “parking wars”, so to speak, were not new and had been going on for many years on and off. Discussion ensued. No one on the committee was opposed to the proposed resolution.

Holidays in the Heights, 2018

Chairman Grossart presented the motives for proposed Resolution No. 2:

- The BEAC has provided a leadership position for the Holiday in the Heights event.
- The committee had developed plans to expand the event in 2018.
- A Holiday in the Heights committee had been formed with 21 members.
- A preliminary budget had been developed.
- The committee requested a donation from the Beautification Committee to help fund the event which will be voted on at their May meeting.

Chairman Grossart reviewed the proposed budget noting that the required funds and projected costs were both around \$18,000. The highest expense was the rental of two (2) 60’ x 90’ heated and lighted tents at about \$7,000.00. The tents would need to be ordered by July. The next highest was advertising and printing at approximately \$4,000. He noted the proposed means of raising funds was based largely on merchant participant fees (\$8,000) and donations from the City (\$7,000), and the Beautification Committee (\$5,000). Lake Katherine offered to provide the tables and chairs at no cost.

Chairman Grossart summarized Resolution No. 2 as a recommendation for City Council to consider their request for funding in the amount of \$7,000 to cover the cost of the tent rentals, noting 44% of the revenue would come from vendors/businesses, 19% from the Beautification Committee, and 38% from the City. Chuck Polcastor questioned why this request had to be approved by the City Council. Ken did not think it had to because the BEAC’s budget was about \$10,000, but he would run it by the City Administrator. There was some discussion on the proposed advertising costs. Chuck Polcastor suggested the committee look into providing music for the event that could be heard throughout.

City Parking Lot Plans

Chairman Grossart provided the background for Resolution No. 3:

- The BEAC had numerous discussions for the improvement and use of the City parking lot.

- The BEAC was aware that there were development steps in place to improve the parking lot with landscaping via a sprinkler unit and benches.
- Business locations have suggested that the reason the parking lot is not used more is the lack of lighting and a safe way to walk to the lot.
- It was felt that this area could be used for concerts, art fairs, Holiday in the Heights, etc.

The BEAC's recommendation for the City Council's consideration was "to consider expanding the development project to include improved lighting of the area, a connecting sidewalk to 123rd and Harlem, and the purchase of an electronic sign to promote city events. Possible funding could be the use of grants and donations from the Beautification Committee".

Chairman Grossart noted a year ago when the BEAC proposed installing an electronic sign on the Cal Sag Trail at Lake Katherine, the City Council was not opposed to the sign but to the location, and Alderman McGovern had suggested the installation of a sign on Harlem Avenue.

In regards to the lighting, Ken said additional and improved lighting was included in the parking lot expansion project as well as an enlarged brick paver section and a water feature.

Chairman Grossart asked if anyone on the committee was in disagreement with the proposal. There was none.

Occupancy Status - Resolution No. 4:

1. For the past few years a Business Occupancy Report had been prepared at the end of the year, however the 2017 report had not yet been completed. He also noted the 2016 was never presented to the City Council. It was his recommendation that a report be prepared for the year ending 12/31/17 and that the data be shared with the City Council.
2. In order to use this information from the occupancy report effectively, a goal should be developed for the occupancy level at 12/31/18. This goal could consist of either and/or both of the following:
 - a. A numeric goal
 - b. An activity goal, such as ideas which were found on Orland Park's website:
 - Review incentives for competitiveness in the area
 - Review development approval process for competitiveness in the area
 - Review goal/action steps, large property development
 - Subscribe to Co-Star with updated city information
 - Review use of website/apps for local development
 - Attend trade shows to promote Palos Heights
 - Review branding/economic development
 - Identify/purchase property for future development/parking.

In regards to subscribing to Co-Star, Ken Busse said the City has subscribed and started using it in February.

It was Chairman Grossart's recommendations for the City Council's consideration was to: 1.) Ensure the occupancy report for the ending 12/31/17 is prepared, 2.) Share the Occupancy Report with the City Council, and 3.) That a numeric or activity goal be developed for the occupancy level for 2018. Chuck Polcastor suggested combining recommendations 1 and 2 together, and then present the occupancy report and goals separately to the City Council. He also inquired who would present these to the recommendations to the City Council. Chairman Grossart said they would have to be presented at the appropriate level and he would work on that with Alderman Key.

Welcome Back Program 2018

Chairman Grossart presented the background for Resolution No. 5:

- The BEAC was focused on improving the relationship between Trinity College and the business community by holding a Welcome Back event for students and their families returning to campus in August. The 5th annual Welcome Back event was held in 2017.
- The BEAC believes this event has been well received by both Trinity College and the business community, therefore it was the recommendation of this committee that the Welcome Back event be continued this year – 2018.
- Staffing was needed to work on the program to obtain business discounts from various locations in Palos Heights. Normally, 75 or more discounts are obtained and it takes approximately 60 hours to obtain the appropriate documentation. The work needs to be completed no later than June 30.

The BEAC's recommendation for the City Council's consideration was "to consider the use of an intern to help with this project".

Ken Busse noted he had already been in contact with Trinity regarding interns for this summer.

Alderman Key had no objections to the proposed resolutions, but for clarity purposes, he recommended giving each resolution a title along with the number.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:50 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Patricia M. Sheppard
Recording Secretary