

**CITY OF PALOS HEIGHTS**  
Business/ Economic Advisory Committee  
Meeting Minutes  
August 19, 2019

**Call to Order**

Chairman Grossart called the meeting of the Business/Economic Advisory Committee to order at 12:00 Noon at City Hall in Palos Heights. Present were: Bob Grossart, Ken Busse, Alderman Jeff Key, Barb Bergamo, Mike Coogan, Rick Powell, Judi Weber, Dr. Chuck Polcaster, City Administrator Dan Nisavic, and members of the public Abby Wieggers and Rojean Gager.

**Approval of Minutes**

Chairman Grossart requested a motion to approve the minutes of the July 15, 2019 meeting. So moved by Chuck Polcaster, seconded by Mike Coogan. On a unanimous voice vote, the motion carried.

**Regional Start-Up Hub:**

Bob Grossart mentioned that John Wightkin would not be attending the meeting, but that Mr. Wightkin would provide an update on the progress of the Simple Taste/Fusion59 program later that evening. Mr. Grossart mentioned that agreements had been signed between Simple Taste and Fusion59, and that the first prototype of the website was in the process of being made. Fusion59 would also be working with Legacy Insurance in the near future.

Interns Abby Wieggers and Nolani Schnabel worked to create a draft Scope of Service for Fusion59 to use for future engagements with businesses.

**Welcome Back Trinity Update:**

Bob Grossart reported that Welcome Back Trinity 2019 would take place on Friday, August 23<sup>rd</sup>. Interns Abby Wieggers and Nolani Schnabel worked to gather 75 local businesses to offer discounts to Trinity Christian College students and staff.

**Holidays in the Heights:**

Bob Grossart gave a general update on the progress of the Kris Kringle Market. He stated that the committee has currently gathered \$2,700 in sponsorship funds. Additionally, Kris Kringle Market vendor participation is approximately halfway completed. He also mentioned that Noral Jewelers agreed to allow for a third tent to be placed behind their storefront during the event, which would be used as a food court area.

Dr. Chuck Polcaster expressed concern over parking during the event. He stated that last year the parking and shuttle service was not marketed well to the public. Mr. Grossart hopes to have a trolley this year, provided enough sponsorship money is available. This could help with the parking issue. Discussion ensued regarding the trolley and sponsorship funding. Alderman Jeff Key mentioned that the committee will do a better job of marketing parking locations and the event hours.

**Comprehensive Plan:**

Bob Grossart began by stating that there would be several important meetings in the near future which he believes members should attend to make comments regarding issues important to the BEAC, such as the Gateway property, located at the northeast corner of Harlem Avenue and College Drive. He also mentioned that he had received a copy of the revised comprehensive plan and nearly all of the changes that were suggested by the committee had been accounted for in the updated document.

Mr. Grossart wanted to spend the bulk of time discussing the aforementioned Gateway property. He stated that Mike Coogan had helped to draft a letter which would be sent to the Mayor, Aldermen, and the Planning and Zoning Committee to express interest and concern over the Gateway property.

Dr. Chuck Polcaster wanted to strengthen the letter by referencing research that had been done previously that conveys the significance of gateway properties. Mike Coogan responded in agreement, and stated the letter should talk from a City perspective as to why that parcel was important, rather than just being a source of tax revenue.

Ken Busse reminded the committee of the 2008 Comprehensive Plan and 2005 Gateway TIF Plan that incorporate goals and objectives for the Gateway. Mike Coogan made the point then that there has been much discussion and conversation regarding the Gateway property since then, and that gaining control of the property now is crucial.

There is current discussion regarding a gas station being placed on the Gateway property. However, Judi Weber mentioned that there are already many gas stations placed in significant entrances to the City. Therefore, BEAC members want the parcel to become a higher and greater use. Discussion ensued.

Mike Coogan stated that the goal of the letter should be twofold: to encourage a thoughtful review process among the decision makers who will vote on the matter, and to consider acquiring the property as a City. Alderman Jeff Key mentioned that many members of the Planning and Zoning Commission are not on board with having a gas station on the property. Discussion ensued. Alderman Key believes it is important to meet with Spectrum to make the intentions for that property clear. Discussion ensued regarding how the letter should be distributed to those on the Planning and Zoning Committee, the City Council, and the Mayor.

Alderman Jeff Key reminded those present that the four gateway entrances to the City are struggling and are surrounded with vacancies and contain gas stations. Mr. Key believes that the property located on the northeast corner of Harlem and Ridgeland would be incredibly influential and important. Mike Coogan stated that even though a gas station produces sales tax, we should look for the highest and best use from a community character standpoint.

Ken Busse stated that gas stations are single-purpose buildings, meaning that the space would not be repurposed easily. He mentioned a possible sinking fund be created for possible clean-up and repurposing in the event underground tanks leak and the ownership interests dissolve.

Discussion ensued. Members of the committee expressed concerns over Spectrum's lack of transparency concerning the marketing and development of the property.

Ken Busse also stated that he recently spoke with the developer and reminded the developer that approval of a gas station may be slim, and is not guaranteed. Mike Coogan clarified that nothing has officially been presented to the City. Discussion ensued. Alderman Jeff Key made the point that even though the Planning and Zoning Commission may fail a motion to recommend approval of a gas station, the City Council could still pass it. Jeff Key reminded the committee of the importance of attending meetings and speaking about the importance of the Gateway property.

Dr. Chuck Polcaster inquired how the Comprehensive Plan would be implemented to preserve the goals and objectives of gateway parcels. Mike Coogan questioned to whom the letter should be addressed. Dan Nisavic stated that the letter should be sent as a correspondence to the Planning and Zoning Committee and copied to the Mayor and Aldermen. He also suggested making some of the language of the letter more straight-forward in addressing the development of the site. Discussion ensued.

Alderman Jeff Key stated that in the near future, it would be appropriate to discuss what they want to do with the TIF district. Dan Nisavic stated that the TIF district will be addressed in the coming months ahead. Alderman Key suggested having a dialogue to teach elected and appointed officials about the process and options of a TIF district.

Barb Bergamo suggested some changes to the draft letter. Discussion continued regarding the layout and language of the letter. Mike Coogan wanted to make a final point that if the City does not control the destiny of the parcel, it will be lost.

### **Adjournment**

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 1:06 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

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Abby Wiegers  
Recording Secretary