

CITY OF PALOS HEIGHTS
Business/ Economic Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes
August 20, 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 City Hall. Present were: Bob Grossart, Rick Powell, Dr. Chuck Polcaster, Paul Muehlnickel, Barb Bergamo, Alderman Jeff Key, Ken Busse, and Recording Secretary Pat Sheppard. Also present was Pete Iosue with Teska Associates.

Approval of Minutes

Chairman Grossart requested a motion to approve the minutes of the July 16, 2018 meeting. So moved by Chuck Polcastor, seconded by Paul Muehlnickel. On a unanimous voice vote, the motion carried.

Comprehensive Plan Update

Chairman Grossart turned the floor over to Pete Iosue with Teska Associates. Pete reported they had given a presentation to the Comp Plan Steering Committee in July updating them on the City's Comp Plan and the Parks & Recreation Master Plan. He told the BEAC members he would send them that presentation for their review. As of today's date, they had 380 responses to the online survey for the Comp Plan, and a little over 200 responses for the Parks & Rec Plan. They have been reviewing and analyzing all the data and are working on the draft plan. Their goal is to have the draft completed by the end of August. The draft will be sent to Ken Busse for the City's review and comments. Revisions will then be made and when the final draft is done, a public meeting/open house would be held for the community and from there the approval process would begin: Plan Commission, Planning and Zoning Committee, and City Council.

Alderman Key inquired if they had met with the Mayor and the City Administrator to find out what their vision was for the Comp Plan and Pete confirmed they had. Alderman Key believed all Aldermen should be able to share their vision and have some input for the plan and did not feel the online survey met that requirement for them. Pete said at the very beginning of the process, they had conducted key person interviews which included the Mayor, two (2) Aldermen, the Police Chief and other Department Heads. Since that time, they have been working closely with the City Administrator and Ken for interpretation and implementation of realistic goals. The committee agreed with Alderman Key and thought it was an error not getting feedback from all the aldermen. Ken Busse said he had a valid point and he would talk to the City Administrator about having Pete meet with the other aldermen before the draft is done and Pete agreed. He also reminded the committee that a Steering Committee of key people representing many facets of the city had been formed who have been very involved in the process.

Rick Powell inquired if Pete was aware of discussion or recommendations for a City pavilion. Pete said that had come up in reviewing the Harlem Avenue Corridor and their designers were trying to include that into the plan.

Chairman Grossart inquired if they were going to recognize or explain why certain ideas or recommendations (from the surveys or public comments) did not make it into the plan. Pete said if he was interested in a more in-depth summary/report of ideas and comments he would work on something.

Barb Bergamo, who is on the Steering Committee, felt that what she has seen thus far has been very detailed with lots of comments. The last meeting was very informative, and although everyone has their own thoughts/opinions and may not agree on everything, it is going in the right direction.

In conclusion, Alderman Key said he was very excited the Comp Plan was being updated and felt it was a very important document for the City because it is a 10-year document and it will be something for current and future City Officials and staff to work towards.

Open Air Pavilion (Recommendation #7 under Old Business)

Rick Powell felt it was appropriate to discuss this agenda item next. He reported that a meeting had been held the previous week at his office with Trinity's Head of the Business Department, Professor John Wightkin, and President Kurt Dykstra, as well as Chairman Grossart, Alderman Jeff Key, and himself. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss having Trinity senior students conduct a study for an open air pavilion with a family interactive water feature. The discussion was very successful and they (Professor Wightkin and President Dykstra) agreed to have the study conducted. The timing was good with classes starting soon. The first thing would be to write a scope of work which would be reviewed by Chairman Grossart, Alderman Key, and himself. Professor Wightkin inquired if they would have latitude to give recommendations after they had gathered all the necessary information and it was agreed they would. Pete Iosue noted that of all the comments made on the surveys for both the Comp Plan and Parks & Recreation Plan, this was the number one request made, especially for a splash pad. Pete was glad to hear they were going to have a separate study done. Ken agreed and felt the study could dovetail with the Comp Plan. Discussion ensued.

There was some discussion regarding TIF Districts, pending legislation and how it might affect the City's existing TIF Districts. Pete Iosue said he was attending the Illinois TIF Conference in a couple of weeks and could report on it. Chairman Grossart said that could be on next month's agenda.

New Recommendation

Rick Powell stated that in their meeting with Trinity, they were informed of a new initiative that Trinity was starting. He explained there was a very large incubator called 1871 (technological term for "a residence that new technology companies use") which is located in downtown Chicago and was supported by several universities, including Trinity. After doing some research and realizing there were no such incubators in the southwest suburbs, Trinity has started their own incubator and are calling it Fusion 59. In time, it could morph into a City initiative. Rick said that Professor Wightkin offered to give a 10 minute presentation to the committee at next month's meeting.

OLD BUSINESS

- Parking Concerns. Still on hold.
- City Parking Lot. The water feature was complete, new light poles/lighting had been installed and the cement parking blocks were removed. Still an issue was the lack of a sidewalk to connect the parking lot to businesses. Alderman Key inquired if the wall on Noral's building where the mural was installed was going to be repainted. Ken did know, but thought Public Works could answer that question.
- Branding Project. Chairman Grossart said he had recently met with Tom Barcelona and asked him if he could give the committee an update on the project. Tom said possibly in a month or so. Pat Sheppard explained it was not so much a branding project as it was a marketing effort with the "catch phrase" *Come Alive*.
- Holidays in the Heights.
 - Seven (7) merchants were signed up for the Merchant Program, \$700.
 - 37 vendors were registered for the Kris Kringle Market, \$2,725.
 - One (1) sponsor, Providence Bank, \$700.
 - Big Top Tents is working on layouts for the tents.
- Welcome Back 2018 was held on Friday, August 17 and there was a great turnout. 62 businesses offered discounts to students and faculty for the school year. Twelve (12) businesses supplied food for the event. Alderman Key shared an idea he had heard from John Hanley about displaying signs in businesses around town that say "I ♥ PH".
- Occupancy Report. Ken Busse distributed the Commercial Occupancy Report (attached) which he had prepared for the year ending 12/31/17, noting Chairman Grossart had assisted by going out to survey the community to update the inventory from the previous year. The overall occupancy rate had not changed much: 89.4% in 2017 vs. 89% in 2016. The purpose of the report is to record and track commercial trends with regard to business openings, closures, and retention in Palos Heights, as well as to maintain and grow a database of commercial properties within the City. The report documents occupied and vacant commercial spaces within three (3) major zoning districts: B, B-1, and PUD Districts. Ken reviewed and explained the 9-page report and several pages of tables and percentages. Of particular importance was the 66,777 sq. ft. vacant Dominick's which continues to have a large impact on the commercial vacancy rate in the City. Dominick's accounted for approximately 43% of the vacant commercial space throughout the B and PUD Districts. It is unfortunate that an existing leasehold interest over the vacant property continues to hinder the space from being marketed and/or occupied anytime in the near future. Other factors that affect retail occupancies and vacancies were: geographical features, location of destination uses, demographics and location of population centers, impact of the internet on retail sales, obsolete buildings and parcel configurations, current and future mix of use, and leasehold interest. Ken noted according to a commercial real estate survey published in Marketview, Palos Heights' commercial occupancy rate was consistent with surrounding communities.

Chairman Grossart thanked Ken for the report. He said the next step would be to use the report to set goals for attracting and keeping businesses in Palos Heights.

Barb Bergamo thought the report was very good and she realized that trying to fill the vacant Dominick's was an unattainable goal and hoped the committee could place their

focus on more attainable goals. There was some discussion relating to vacant Dominick's store and the property owner Albertsons (Jewel).

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 1:04 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Patricia M. Sheppard
Recording Secretary