

# CITY OF WEST CHICAGO

WHERE HISTORY & PROGRESS MEET

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

July 23, 2024 – 10:30 a.m.

### 1. Call to Order

Chairperson Beles called the meeting to order at 10:32 a.m.

### 2. Roll Call

Roll call found Chairperson Beles, and Commissioners Harms, Espinosa, Johnson (arrived at 10:45 a.m.), Sabathne, and Ventimiglia (left at 11:43 a.m.) present. With five members present at the start of the meeting, a quorum was established.

The following staff were in attendance: Community Development Director Tom Dabareiner (arrived at 10:35 a.m. and left at 11:03 a.m.), Assistant Community Development Director/City Planner John Sterrett, and Economic Development Coordinator Kelley Chrisse.

### 3. Public Comment

None.

### 4. Approval of the April 30, 2024 Meeting Minutes

Commissioner Espinosa made a motion to approve the April 30, 2024 Special Meeting Minutes, which was seconded by Commissioner Harms. The motion passed unanimously via voice vote (Commissioner Johnson had not yet arrived).

### 5. Downtown Investment Grant Program

Ms. Chrisse explained the City Council had previous conversations about the use of funding to address property maintenance violations. There had not been support for using public funding in this manner in those discussions, but it was unclear how long ago those conversations took place. The Commission, however, explained their perspective on fighting against blight and that there is not an issue with abuse of this program. Rather, the problem is that the program is not used. It was also noted that residential and commercial properties are different so there isn't a precedent being set by assisting property owners to improve their property, which would benefit the entire downtown area. There was discussion about the code violation process and it was agreed that when the property owner is put on notice (given a warning), that the City would provide information on this program to assist them in addressing the issue. However, if no action is taken on the warning and it progresses to a ticket (Notice to Appear), the property owner would be ineligible for assistance with the Downtown Investment Program.

Additional discussion included eliminating a maximum funding available per Applicant, as the Commission suggested that there could be a developer that wants to make improvements to multiple buildings in the downtown, which would be encouraged. It was also agreed, however, that if this becomes problematic in the future, that the Commission would revisit the matter.

The Commission also discussed the amount of time that an Applicant must wait before applying for subsequent funding. The consensus was that five years was too long, especially if a property owner can only take on either smaller projects or one at a time. As a result, the Commission agreed that an Applicant can apply for funding every two years. However, there was also a clarification offered that the wait period does not apply to Applicants who did not complete a previously approved project, as they would not have received the funding.

Staff inquired about the need to have some security for the larger grant awards but the Commission agreed that a forgivable loan structure is not necessary from their perspective. However, if the City Council were to have reservations about the significantly larger grant awards, then the forgivable loan structure would be a recommended option. The Commission agreed that this program, if approved, should not be effective until January 1 to coincide with the fiscal year budget.

**6. Retail & Restaurant Grant Program**

Ms. Chrise reviewed the proposed revisions. The Commission discussed adding a requirement to only reimburse expenses paid to a legitimate business. With the proliferation of many online services, there was some conversation about the challenges that might exist with proving the business is legally established. Additionally, there was a desire to show proof of work as part of the reimbursement process to ensure that the funding was used for a service that was actually rendered.

- 7. Staff Report** – Ms. Chrise provided updates on businesses within the community to include the closure of Cocoa Notes Bakeshop, the fire in the building occupied by Good Morning Family, and Jel Sert’s major investment to add new manufacturing lines at their facility on Charles Ct that will add at least 50 new jobs. Other updates include: the bowling alley has been purchased and the new owners intend to renovate the space for entertainment uses; the former Shell station will be redeveloped but has not yet been scheduled for the Plan Commission; insufficient electrical capacity is limiting the ability for property in the Roosevelt Rd-Fabyan Pkwy TIF District; and there was a grant application submitted for aesthetic and safety improvements, as well as service upgrades.

**8. Commissioner Reports - None**

- 9. Adjournment** – Commissioner Harms made a motion to adjourn, which was seconded by Commissioner Espinosa. The motion passed unanimously by voice vote. The meeting was adjourned at 11:58 a.m. (Commissioner Ventimiglia left prior to adjournment.).

Respectfully Submitted,  
Kelley Chrise, Economic Development Coordinator