

CITY OF WEST CHICAGO

WHERE HISTORY & PROGRESS MEET

Approved December 14, 2020

MINUTES

DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

November 9, 2020 7:00 P.M.

The Development Committee meeting of November 9, 2020 was held part remotely and partly in person due to the Coronavirus pandemic.

1. Call to Order, Roll Call, and Establishment of a Quorum.

Alderman Stout called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and announced that Mayor Pineda has determined that in-person meetings are not practical and prudent.

All Aldermen in attendance were present remotely unless indicated otherwise. Roll call found Aldermen James Beifuss, Melissa Birch Ferguson, Michael Ferguson, John Jakabscin, Jayme Sheahan and Rebecca Stout (in person) present.

Also in attendance was Community Development Director, Tom Dabareiner.

2. Approval of Minutes.

A. October 12, 2020.

Alderman Beifuss moved and Alderman Sheahan seconded a motion to approve the minutes. Voting Aye: Aldermen Beifuss, Sheahan and Stout. Voting to Abstain: Birch Ferguson, Ferguson and Jakabscin. Voting Nay: 0.

3. Public Participation. None.

4. Items for Consent.

- A. **Process for Re-establishing Nonconforming Uses** – The City seeks to alter Section 8.9 of the Zoning Ordinance to eliminate the amortization period and define a process for re-establishing formerly legal nonconforming uses under certain conditions.

- B. Final Development Plan** – Greco DeRosa Investment Group seeks approval of its Final Development Plan for 2575 Enterprise Circle in the DuPage Business Centers.
- C. Renaissance Square PUD Extension** – Central Development Corporation seeks an extension to its Special Use for a PUD, originally approved by Ordinance 12-O-0038.

Alderman Beifuss requested that Item 4. A. be pulled for discussion.

Alderman Beifuss moved, and Alderman Ferguson seconded the motion to approve Items 4. B. and 4. C. Voting Aye: Aldermen Beifuss, Birch Ferguson, Ferguson, Jakabscin, Sheahan and Stout. Voting Nay: 0.

Tom Dabareiner provided a staff update of Item 4.A. This proposed change resulted from discussions about how to allow Cascade Drive-In Theater to reopen. Staff is proposing to add a section to the Zoning Code to allow the resumption of a legal nonconforming use that has been discontinued for a period of 12 consecutive months or longer. The current section 8.9 would be replaced with this Text Amendment. It would allow 36 months to get the nonconforming use restarted, assuming certain conditions are met. These conditions are laid out in the draft Ordinance. The current allotment of 12 months to reestablish a use has been found to be an insufficient period to get a property back in use. Mr. Dabareiner provided a couple of other recent examples of properties in the same situation. At their November 4, 2020, the Plan Commission/Zoning Board of Appeals (PC/ZBA) voted unanimously in favor (5 to 0) of recommending the Text Amendment.

Alderman Beifuss stated that this seems like a reasonable approach in that it gives more flexibility in some instances. It is also important that certain conditions be imposed. He talked about general instances he recalled where some industrial-type uses were found spotted within residential areas. This created friction with the residents due to things such as noise or dust. Therefore, it is useful to have some ways to control the new uses coming in after a special use has ended. He asked how staff arrived at the decision of granting a 36-month period. Mr. Dabareiner replied that nothing can really get done in less than 18 to 24 months. The 36 months is designed to provide a bit more cushion. In the case of Cascade, they are already exceeding 24 months. Alderman Ferguson asked what would happen if they exceed the 36 months. Mr. Dabareiner replied that if everything is in motion, granting an additional month is not a problem.

Alderman Birch Ferguson remarked that she agrees with Alderman Beifuss. The criteria are reasonable and to be expected. She is looking forward to having this benefit other businesses within their community.

Alderman Jakabscin moved and Alderman Beifuss seconded the motion to approve Items 4. . Voting Aye: Aldermen Beifuss, Birch Ferguson, Ferguson, Jakabscin, Sheahan and Stout. Voting Nay: 0.

5. Items for Discussion

- A. **Draft Economic Development Plan** – Staff drafted the City of West Chicago Economic Development Plan. Discussion will occur about the SWOT section. Copies of the Draft Plan were distributed in September.

Tom Dabareiner provided this staff update. Last month they covered many statistics to help understand the economic character of the community. Tonight, they would be covering the Strengths-Weaknesses-Opportunities-Threats (SWOT) analysis. In terms of the City's strengths, West Chicago is an employment center. There are 16,000 employees in the community, most of whom are not residents. The City has excellent access to the region by air, highways, or train. We also have a robust and mature manufacturing base, which is something to build on, along with warehousing and transportation. Mr. Dabareiner stated that we have affordable housing for a wide range of incomes, a proactive City Council, a quality park system, inexpensive land costs and some tax incentive programs. Alderman Beifuss asked about a question raised at last month's discussion, which was ascertaining in which sectors West Chicago residents are employed outside of the City. Mr. Dabareiner replied that the Census has some of this information, but it is 10 years old. He stated this is something staff can investigate. Alderman Beifuss commented that they should focus on their strengths when it comes to development. One of the things they have developed are warehouses and logistics. Focusing on manufacturing is appropriate, as wages tend to be higher than in the warehouse and logistics industries. He added that if a manufacturer has its sales operations in the City, then retail sales tax can be collected rather than just property tax. Mr. Dabareiner said this is a good point, and he mentioned that Amazon has plans to offer pick up at their warehouse. This would have the potential for some sales tax benefit, and it is important to keep this in mind for the future recruiting of manufacturing.

Weaknesses were discussed next. In terms of national and global weaknesses, trade wars may impact growth and stability. At the state level, the financial condition and tax structure are weaknesses. As for West Chicago, we have a lagging median income level compared with the rest of DuPage County and an aging housing stock and lack of quality rentals. Another weakness is retail spending leakage. We want to keep the retail spending in the community. We do well in the Menard's /Ace Hardware category. In terms of other types of retail, there is a shift to online purchases. The Plan identified the need for additional training, which may help to increase wages. There are programs available at some of the technical colleges in the area that are willing to work with manufacturers to provide the needed training. In addition, Mr. Dabareiner continued, there is outdated and poor-quality retail space and a perception in the region that is not accurately reflective of how the community really is. In addition, there are segments of some main corridors that lack appeal such as Roosevelt Road and Neltnor. Finally, the low density of households in the community is insufficient to support major retailers. Alderman Beifuss asked if staff was able to find out what the rental rate is per square foot and whether the existing rentals include single family homes or only apartments. Mr. Dabareiner answered that single-family homes are included in the rental numbers and in terms of the square foot rental cost, they are below average compared to other communities. However, the developers staff are meeting with

believe the square foot rental prices can be boosted with the addition of new buildings. Alderman Beifuss commented that most of the people who live in West Chicago work outside the community, and they need to retain the residents and attract new ones. They need to enhance and maintain the quality of life. Green space is a plus, especially with people working remotely now. He stated that quality of life is an economic development strategy. Mr. Dabareiner agreed. The retail community, however, is still looking for rooftops. Alderman Ferguson commented that he heard there is not much to do in the community. He raised this as a point to consider in the future. Mr. Dabareiner acknowledged the point and added that as more rooftops are gained, they can attract more entertainment and more retail, and this would give people more to do.

In terms of opportunities, Mr. Dabareiner stated there has been a national trend called reshoring to bring manufacturing back to the United States. This is something West Chicago might be able to take advantage of. He gave an example of a local business that might bring their manufacturing here. At the state level, there are programs to assist with worker retraining. Where the local level is concerned, there are new housing and commercial development opportunities downtown along with strong parks and recreation. Staff think it is important to provide housing stock that will appeal to Millennials. In addition, there are opportunities for additional commercial growth near Routes 59 and 64 and near Roosevelt and Fabyan. This goes along with enhancing the appearance along certain corridors. In addition, Mr. Dabareiner mentioned several other opportunities such as revitalizing the downtown, reusing the former General Mills plant, emphasizing an artist community in the downtown, looking at incubator spaces for retail and restaurants, and finally, attracting suppliers and customers to the existing manufacturing here already.

The final topic presented by Mr. Dabareiner are threats. Nationally, he mentioned there are several threats including trade wars, protectionism, low wages, overseas labor, and the transition to a knowledge economy. In the State of Illinois, there are concerns about State pension obligations, a budget deficit and a slow regulatory process. Here in West Chicago, we need to worry about the brain drain, where young and talented workers leave the City for other opportunities. They need to find employment and housing opportunities here to prevent that from happening. Continued utilization of the former General Mills space is also an area for concern. However, the current firm drafting the Comprehensive Plan has noted this property and is looking into this. Alderman Beifuss asked about the threat of limited options for diversifying a tax base. Mr. Dabareiner responded that while it is good to have a strong manufacturing base, it is also good to have a diversified base in the event manufacturing were to falter. Mr. Beifuss stated there are some clusters where West Chicago does not have a representative base but suggested those may be opportunities. A lot of the current tax base are the residents and the businesses, but he wondered if there is not an opportunity for healthcare. Mr. Dabareiner said that the City is in need a range of healthcare opportunities. This type of development will help them now and in the long run. The presentation was concluded with Mr. Dabareiner mentioning the next discussion where they plan to address Tasks. He asked the members for their input at next month's meeting.

6. Unfinished Business. None.

7. **New Business.**

8. **Reports from Staff.**

- A. **Mosaic Shopping Center TIF Disbursement** – The report is the same as last month's in that a copy of the lease was received but no permits are ready to be issued. They hope to issue the permit soon. The owners are anxious to be reimbursed for a portion of the parking lot work done there.

He also mentioned that the Cascade Drive-In is seeking an exemption from the water tie-in requirement. They have agreed to construct a lift station to handle the sanitary, but as the water tie in is a long way away, it would be very expensive to do. They may go straight to the next Council meeting to make this request. Alderman Ferguson asked if there is a well onsite and Mr. Dabareiner said there is.

9. **Adjournment.**

Alderman Birch Ferguson moved, and Alderman Ferguson seconded the motion to adjourn the Development Committee meeting at 8:05 p.m. Voting Aye: Aldermen Beifuss, Birch Ferguson, Ferguson, Jakabscin, Sheahan and Stout. Voting Nay: 0.

Respectfully submitted,

Jane Burke