

CITY OF WEST CHICAGO

WHERE HISTORY & PROGRESS MEET

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes

January 23, 2024 – 10:30 a.m.

1. Call to Order

Chairperson Beles called the meeting to order at 10:35 a.m.

2. Roll Call

Roll call found Chairperson Beles, and Commissioners Harms, Moran, Espinosa (arrived at 10:54 a.m.), Johnson, and Sabathne present. Commissioner Ventimiglia was absent. With six members present, a quorum was established.

Staff in attendance included Assistant Community Development Director/City Planner John Sterrett and Economic Development Coordinator Kelley Chrisse.

3. Public Comment

None.

4. Approval of the October 24, 2023 Meeting Minutes

Commissioner Moran made a motion to approve the October 24, 2023 Meeting Minutes, which was seconded by Commissioner Harms. The motion passed unanimously via voice vote (Commissioner Espinosa had not yet arrived).

5. 2023 Economic Development Commission Annual Report

Chair Beles provided an overview of the Commission's activities in 2023. Commissioner Sabathne made a motion to approve and forward the 2023 Economic Development Commission Annual Report to the City Council, which was seconded by Commissioner Moran. The motion passed unanimously via voice vote (Commissioner Espinosa had not yet arrived).

6. Façade Improvement Grant Program Discussion

Ms. Chrisse provided an overview of the Façade Improvement Grant Program. Commissioners Harms and Sabathne shared their experience with the program. Concerns about the current program include: the need to obtain three estimates for the same scope of work, particularly for smaller projects; the desire to secure quality contractors while only being funded at the lowest estimate; not being able to apply for funding if there is a documented violation (it was also noted that many violations exist without having been documented yet but they would be able to apply); the funding amount is not enough to offset the amount of work required for grant approval; and grant applications are not accepted if there is no remaining funding for the

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fiscal year despite the varying times when funding for the approved projects will be dispersed and Council is able to amend the budget to increase funding, if desired.

Other comments included the importance of including maintenance items as eligible expenses since these items contribute to the aesthetic appeal of the downtown. However, there seemed to be agreement that maintenance expenses should not carry the same weight as other improvements so they may need to be funded at a lower level. There was some discussion about allowing a cost and material reimbursement for certain types of improvements, which will need to be determined. The EDC agreed that due to the timing of these meetings, they should not be involved in the review and/or approval of the applications at this time.

Some suggestions for the program included:

- Categorize improvements to fund certain types of improvements at different levels based on their impact to the downtown streetscape.
- Create a category for streetscape improvements to include elements like signage, landscaping, and lighting that support the downtown design guidelines.
- Determining a project timeline based on the type and scope of project, as opposed to a 12-month timeline for all projects.
- Creating a list of participating contractors to provide a starting point for property owners as they consider a project.

7. Staff Report – Ms. Chrissy summarized business activity in 2023, described business retention/support efforts in 2023, provided a status update on the annual business registration process, updated the Commission on new businesses and developments in the community, and described communications efforts with the business community. Ms. Chrissy requested that future meetings include Commissioner reports where each Commissioner verbally identifies any updates in their respective area of expertise/industry, which may include opportunities, challenges, and/or general comments.

8. Adjournment – Commissioner Moran made a motion to adjourn, which was seconded by Commissioner Espinosa. The motion passed unanimously by voice vote. The meeting was adjourned at 12:07 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Kelley Chrissy, Economic Development Coordinator