WESTMONT THE PROGRESSIVE VILLAGE
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Community Development Department
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Community Development Committee Regular Meeting
Thursday, May 04, 2023 at 4:30 PM
Minutes - Approved

I. Called to Order: At **4:30 P.M**.

II. Present: Mayor Ron Gunter, Manager Steve May, Trustee Frank Brady, Trustee Linda Liddle, Trustee Bruce Barker, Trustee Amylee Hogan Simonovich, Trustee Marie Johanik-Guzzo, Trustee Steve Nero, Clerk Jinny Szymski, Interim Director of Community Development Doug Pollock, Deputy Director of Community Development Jason Vitell, Deputy Director of Community Development Joe Hennerfeind, Assistant Manager Spencer Parker Fire Chief Steve Riley, Public Works Director Amy Ries, Human Resources Director Renee' Brainerd, Economic Development Partnership Director Larry Forssberg, Guest Speaker/Consultant Kon Savoy, and Village Planner Scott Williams

III. Pledge of Allegiance

IV. Approval of Minutes: Trustee Nero made a motion to approve the minutes from the February 09, 2023 Regular Meeting and Trustee Liddle seconded the motion. Motion passed on a voice vote.

V. Public Comment - No one spoke during the Open Forum.

VI. UNFINISHED BUSINESS - None

VII. NEW BUSINESS

A. Directors Report

a. Interim Director Doug Pollock stated that the main focus of the meeting was to review the downtown incentive program and indicated that Deputy Director Joe Hennerfeind would be going over that with the Board.

B. Planning Report - None

C. Building Report - None

D. Code Enforcement Report - None

E. Items for Trustee Discussion and Feedback:

a. Special Project–Downtown Incentive Program Update -

Hennerfeined mentioned that Kon Savoy, the Village's consultant, was stuck in traffic and apologized for not being present.

Hennerfeind continued the discussion from the previous Community Development Committee meeting where the general program basics were covered. The downtown incentive program's purpose is to provide incentives to existing owners, properties, and businesses in the downtown that will have a significant impact on property improvement, enhance the viability of existing business, and encourage new businesses to locate to downtown Westmont. The focus of the program is to provide financial incentives for improvements to private properties and businesses.

Hennerfeind described the new program to be different from the existing program in the following ways.

The old program was a 50% Match, up to $5,000 for facade improvements and up to $3,000 for life safety. The maximum grant a project could get would be $8,000. Staff recommended an expansion of that program so that it would have a greater impact on the community. Hennerfeind commented that if you increase budgets, you need to have budgeting for both small and large projects. The new program would include a tiered system that includes a tier 1 (small grants, small projects), to tier 3 (large grants, large projects). This would give flexibility in funding on an annual basis, and each tier would have its own dollar amount. Hennerfeind added that there was still a three year ownership/lease requirement, same as the previous grant program.

Eligible improvements would be simplified in the new program by fundable activities based on the tier.

Tier 1 eligible improvements would include facade, accessibility (ADA), fire/life safety, and signage. Project cost would need to be a minimum of $5,000, with a maximum grant of $20,000.

Hennerfeined described the new program funding to be a "two cycle" system. Hennerfeind stated that after the budget is adopted, and it is known how much money is in the fund, the village would advertise that the grants are available. If those grant requests exceed the dollars that are there, the village would need to have to figure out a project scoring/ranking system to actually judge the projects for the public benefit. As the budget is wrapping up, if there are additional funds left over, the second cycle can be run. Hennerfeind commented that the budget has already been adopted this year, and $100,000 dollars was put into this fund, however the village hasn't figured out how to distribute the grant funds yet. Hennerfeind added that because there is a time element to advertise and promote, put applications together, he thinks that the program funding would be run the old way which was with a rolling system.

Hennerfeind proposed that the program be available to the TIF boundary which is basically the Central Business District with a prioritization of the B-1 zoning district.

Hennerfeined went further into the program details and matching percentages based on tier.

Trustee Brady asked if any businesses have taken advantage of the program. Hennerfeind replied that there has not been a grant issued in three years, but when the grant program was running, it was about 2-4 grants per year.

Hennerfeind asked the committee for direction on if staff should honor prior grant requests during the 3 year gap, and issue the re-formed grants after the fact. Staff's recommendation was to award no more than half of the $100,000 that was budgeted for prior requests, and that those prior requests that are eligible only get half of the amount. It was also staff's recommendation to only accept Tier 1 requests for the first year.

Barker commented that it was found in the research that the funding levels in the previous program were much lower than surrounding towns, so it really needed to come up and Barker felt that the new program funding was up within reason and a nice approach.

After going over a couple project examples for Tier 1, and Tier 2, Hennerfeind asked the board if they are comfortable launching the program with just Tier 1 for the first year. Mayor Gunter asked for clarification on the possibility of funding past projects over the last three years. Hennerfeind replied that they would be maxed out at $10,000 per project, and no more than $50,000 total could be used for previous projects.

Trustee Simonovich had concerns that business owners could be upset if they were unaware that Tier 2 and 3 would be available the following year, where there could have been opportunities for more funding. The board had good discussion and agreed that they wouldn't want to discourage progress, and that there are no guarantees for the Tier 2 or 3 to be approved in the budget next year.

Mayor Gunter asked who would be reviewing the projects. Hennerfeind replied that initially it would be staff, then the planning and zoning commission if there is a related zoning entitlement, and eventually the board. Staff is not recommending a design review committee as there are now commercial downtown and main street design guidelines in place.

Trustee Nero felt that the scoring system, even with the Tier 1 was necessary and had concerns that people would take advantage of the program without one in place. Hennerfeind noted that there were not many examples of scoring systems found in the research that was conducted, and did not think there would be much competition in the first year. Parker added that since we are continuing with the rolling system until the next budget cycle, that will give staff time to construct a scoring system.

The board was in general agreement with Hennerfiends program recommendations which included the following :

- Tier 1 for the first year.
- $100,000 parameters ($5,000 minimum project cost, $20,000 cap, plus incentive bonus)
- Four categories of the initial program (facade, accessibility (ADA), fire/life safety, and signage) and Hennerfeined noted that the board can always annually prioritize a category if they wish.
- Administrative provisions - Two cycles per year. Assistant Manager Spencer Parker added that structuring the program that way would tend to focus on existing businesses as they would have more time to prepare for the deadlines.
- Review process (no design review committee)
- Funding projects in the last three years that are already done that were told the grant program was on hold. The board agreed to fund projects completed in the last three years, but using the prior incentive program guidelines using no more than $50,000 of the total budgeted program funds.

Trustee Nero stated he was more excited about getting new projects started with the new incentive program. With that said, Hennerfeind suggested that another option is to only fund new projects up until a certain date, and any left over funds could be used for the older projects. The board preferred that method instead.

Hennerfeind added that there are other non-grant issues that can save people money that staff is not necessarily proposing at the moment, such as permit fee reductions and waivers. Hennerfiend asked the Board if that is something they want staff to investigate. Trustee Guzzo replied that she did agree there should be some sort of water tap rebate or reduction, especially for those businesses that are on the East side of Cass whereas the water main is on the West side of Cass. Barker agreed that he'd like to see something like that roll out in the future after understanding the needs of the businesses after the first year or so. Trustee Nero recommended "express service" as another option.

Hennerfeiend stated that staff will move forward and after tweaks are made, will bring the program to the board for approval.

IX. MISCELLANEOUS - None

X. ADJOURN - Trustee Liddle made a motion to adjourn at 5:22 PM, and Trustee Simonovich seconded the motion. The motion to adjourn was approved by unanimous consent.