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Community Development Department

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MINUTES

Village of Westmont
Regular Meeting
Economic Development Committee
Wednesday, November 6, 2013, 9:00 A.M.

Westmont Village Hall Executive Session Room
31 West Quincy Street, Westmont, IL

1. Call to Order

Chairman, Bob Scott called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

2. Roll Call

Bob Scott, Chairman - Present
Ron Gunter, Mayor - Absent
Susann Senicka, Trustee - Absent
Harold Barry III, Trustee - Absent
Nancy Martens, Citizen Representative - Present
Virginia Szymiski, Village Clerk - Present
Ron Searl, Village Manager - Absent
Corinne Beller, Citizen Representative - Present
Catherine Berning, School Representative - Absent
Kevin Carey, School Representative - Present
Frank Brady, Business/Resident Representative - Present
Larry Forssberg, Chamber Executive Director - Present
Craig Grember, Citizen Representative - Present
Bill Kalafut, Business/Resident Representative - Present
Steve May, Public Works Director - Absent
Shannon Malik, Community Development Director - Present
Gregg Pill, Business/Resident Representative - Absent
Bob Fleck, Landscape Architect - Absent
Thomas Mulhearn, Police Chief - Absent
Larry Kaufman - Acting Director of Fire Prevention
Dave Weiss, Fire Chief - Absent
Jill Ziegler, Village Planner - Present
Jim Addington, Trustee - Present
Karen Remkus, Administrative Assistant - Present

3. Pledge of Allegiance

4. Minutes

The Minutes from the August 7, 2013 meeting were reviewed. A motion was made to accept the minutes and it was approved.

5. Old Business

6. New Business

A. 25 S. Cass Avenue - This was the location of the old Westmont Theater and was a popular spot in the 1950's. China Furniture purchased the property in 2010. The second floor has been vacant. In May, 2012, Custom 1 Hour Photo and Frame Shop, an 18-year tenant, had severe water damage and moved out and the space on the first floor has been vacant since.

China Furniture & Arts established its showroom in downtown Westmont in 1991 and built an addition in 1999. They have had more than 35,000 customers and are now looking to expand operations by extending the showroom to 25 S. Cass Avenue where it will offer new, luxury lines of furniture. There will be staff in both buildings with the new showroom open to the public. They may also have a studio to shoot pictures of the furniture in the rear of the first floor.

There is an apartment upstairs and office space where a dentist was located at one time. This space will be renovated to make one apartment. It cannot be made into office space as it is not ADA compliant. Most of the roof repairs have been done. Community Development Director Malik mentioned that the wood trusses should be checked by a structural engineer. The heating and air conditioning will be brought up to date. There are 6 to 7 parking spaces at the rear of the building and they will also share parking with 35 S. Cass Avenue. Presently, China Furniture rents out spaces to commuters but will reduce or eliminate the number if necessary.

The business owner feels it will be a good tie-in with Burr Ridge Lighting across the street. They are the number one Chinese furniture store from all over the world. About 60% of their business is over the internet presently. Five years ago, it was 100% from the showroom. Since shipping is difficult, they would like to attract more customers from Hinsdale, Oak Brook and the North Shore.

On the first floor, the slanted floor from the theater was leveled with concrete many years ago.

Comments -

Trustee Addington was concerned about the leasing of parking spaces. This may go to Planning and Zoning and the parking spaces will be checked when plans are submitted to staff.

Anything is better than what is there now.

Originally they wanted to use the first floor for storage. They changed the plans to be a showroom with storage in the rear. The storage will be less than 50% and this will be reiterated with the Development Permit. They ship a lot of furniture out and need room for their shipping area.

It is better for the Village if they expand the showroom.

They have been long time members of the Chamber but not actively involved. Hopefully, structural issues won't be too severe. It will be a nice niche with the Burr Ridge Lighting.

Motion to accept was passed.

7. Updates

Community Development Director Malik provided an update on current projects. Mariano's Fresh Market received approval from the Village Board. Pompei is moving to 200 W. Ogden Avenue where Emmy's was located. It was the father's business. He originally had three stores and sold two of them. The menu and recipes were changed in the restaurants that were sold. The grandson is going to restore all the old recipes for this new location. The original Pompei restaurant is still operating on Taylor Street. The new business operators seem very enthusiastic.

The Village will be sharing the TIF and sales revenue with the new Mariano's. The total package was three million dollars. They will keep 1/2 of the sales tax that they generate. They generate one million dollars a week conservatively. Staff feels the project won't hurt Westbrook Market as they have their own niche.

Mariano's opening, worst case scenario, would be early 2016. Bob Mariano indicated they are committed to Westmont despite Dominick's closing. Their concept is having an eating area, gelato, coffee, and sushi bars along with the grocery. They will be leasing the property from Bradford.

A permit will be issued shortly for Dotty's.

Jay Riordon has been out of town on personal business and a family member is working with Eldon Olmstead and Keith Erickson on the buildout of the Westmont Theater at 9-11 W. Quincy.

Chase Bank is opening at 6320 S. Cass Avenue and Friday, November 22, 2013 is the date of the Ribbon Cutting Ceremony.

Oakwood Lighting has been painting and fixing up the exterior of their new building. It looks very nice.

The Sight and Sound building has been purchased by an investor. He is looking to rent it out as a vanilla box.

Irv Kaplan Interiors looks fantastic.

Trustee Addington - The Village has entered into a partnership with the the Chamber called the Westmont Economic Development Partnership.

Larry Forssberg explained on November 1, 2013 the Westmont Economic Development Partnership was formed which will provide us with a platform to retain existing businesses and and bring in new business. This will strengthen the partnership.

This is an ideal time here in Westmont with the TIF districts in place and new Comprehensive Plan, and therefore, we can be very aggressive in how we market ourselves. We have a lot to offer and we want them to come over and we will talk. We need to be pro-active. Downers Grove and Woodridge put out a video with Woodridge is being very aggressive. The Naperville partnership has been very successful and, also, Oak Brook has been pro-business. We need to engage local businesses. We need to work with our Comprehensive Plan and not let it sit on a shelf. We want to develop it. Everybody, every elected official, the Economic Development Committee has a key role. Our Committee members can be ambassadors. We can bring in developers, business leaders and education.

We need a rapid response team such as fire safety, liquor license, so there will be nothing unexpected, and they meet their expectations.

The Chamber will hire a part-time person to free up Larry's time by 20 hours to give him time to work on the recruitment and retention.

We need to develop a good working relationship with real estate. There should be an annual meeting for EDC with brokers, benefits and resources so we can react instantly. We need to have a strong working relationship with lenders, elected official and DuPage County. We need to launch a marketing exercise and be clear with a single focus. We need a lot of online and social media. We need portals to the community for outside developers. We need to define our activity by using barometers to define success such as property transactions or sales tax. We need to have branding process workshops in the next 4 weeks. The website is only 80% written. We need to fine tune the message and the delivery.

Corrine Beller - We need to be armed with the information and create a sheet with all the specifics. Every business is different and we need data.

The demographic market for DuPage County is phenomenal and we are surrounded. Have the demographics available and the traffic counts for future business.

Questioned included how the Partnership would affect the Economic Development Committee and what will the Committee be doing? We will have more people to present our story for others looking to expand or find new locations. We are all leaders in the community. The Committee could be part of the rapid response group. We could have a sheet with questions. How do we react to a new business? We can rehearse what we would do in certain cases and decide what kind of business we want to bring into the Village. We can be selective as to what we want to recruit. The EDC meeting could provide them with more information. We could suggest what we would like to see in the old Sight and Sound building or as with Boeing, have a recruiting team.

We need to have a warm welcome for future businesses and make it easy and quick.

We need to compliment businesses for keeping lights on in their business. They can use low voltage lighting. We need to discourage people from writing on the windows as it looks tacky. We need to talk with them.

More updates -

Staff has heard that the old Arby's has changed hands and that Hardy's will be moving to that location. We will be setting up a meeting with them. In the fall of 2014, the Connie's Pizza building will be built out to include a carryout and two other businesses. The Lincoln Dealership will be moving to the Lamborghini building.

Urban Legends is open for beer tasting and brick oven pizza by Chicago Pizza Boss is available on Fridays and Saturdays at Urban Legends. Urban Legends would like to expand. There will be a Westmont Craft Beer Bus Tour November 22 and one of the destinations will be Urban Legends Brewery Company.

There was a motion to adjourn and it passed.

8. Adjourn The meeting was adjourned at 10:35 a.m.