

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ZONE COMMITTEE (EDZC) MINUTES
MONDAY, MARCH 19, 2018 10:00 A.M.
CITY HALL, COUNCIL CHAMBERS, VERO BEACH, FLORIDA**

PRESENT: Chairman Jessica Hawkins, Vice Chairman Gary Rooney (arrived at 10: 40 a.m.); Members: Mike Williams, Joseph Cataldo, Bob DelVecchio, and Terry Torres (left at 11:08 a.m.) **Also Present:** Kira Honse, Assistant City Attorney and Heather McCarty, Records Retention Specialist

Excused Absence: Nick Novak

1. CALL TO ORDER

Today's meeting was called to order at 10:06 a.m.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A) January 22, 2018

Mr. Williams made a motion to approve the January 22, 2018 minutes. Mr. Cataldo seconded the motion and it passed unanimously

3. PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Scott Chisholm, owner of Scott's Sporting Goods, said that five (5) years ago, Blue Agave approached the City regarding making outdoor seating. He said he is for anything that improves the walkability of downtown, which that would do. He talked about the more than 300 people walking around on St. Patrick's Day Saturday. He came today to plant a seed with them about that idea. He said there are five (5) parking spaces along 14th Avenue and in front of their building. They would like to propose them as a potential income source. He explained they could take several parking spots and turn them into outdoor seating area. He talked about Stuart and what they did downtown. He noted that Stuart put in certain requirements with the outside platform that the owner paid for. He said for this group, it could become a potential income source by some type of leasing those spaces for a nominal fee. He pointed out it wouldn't be a huge source of income for the restaurants, such as Blue Agave, because they would have to staff and service it, but he thinks it would be a gainer.

Mr. DelVecchio pointed out that some places have tables on the sidewalks. He asked if he meant in the actual parking spaces.

Mr. Chisholm answered yes, because that would be more of an attraction when you are walking downtown. He said that he has met with Mr. Monte Falls, City of Vero Beach Public Work's Director about this. He said Mr. Falls was familiar with Stuart and was going to see how it has been going. He said the biggest drawback is the potential of an accident. He talked about how it was done in Stuart. Stuart let them have it for a year free, but they had to pay for it. After that, they would be charged, but he was not sure what the charge was. He asked this group to look at it from the income source. He said if he owned one (1) of those spaces, he would be willing to pay a couple hundred dollars a year because it would make you an attraction. He felt there were very few areas that this could happen in presently and they would need to think of the future.

Mr. Williams said the only negative he sees is losing parking spots. Mr. Chisholm said he has thought in those terms and in the downtown area, when they do SR 60, there is going to be more parking.

Mrs. Hawkins said she drove downtown Saturday and people were parking everywhere. She referred to the empty lot on 19th and Old Dixie and said the owners are finally letting people park there. She added people are parking in the lot across the street from Jetson's. The problem is they need a crosswalk.

Mr. Williams thought if it was a three (3) lane road, they couldn't have one.

Mrs. Hawkins felt they should contact the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT). She added there is a cross walk right here at City Hall.

Mr. Chisholm said FDOT is doing the final plans for the repaving of SR 60. He feels if they get in on the plan to begin with, it should be easy.

Mr. Williams commented that he would like to see several crosswalks in downtown.

The Committee briefly discussed some of the issues with trains and their speed.

Mrs. Hawkins noted that they have areas that have more parking than is needed and areas where there is not enough spaces, but all the parking in downtown is shared parking.

Mr. Williams agreed and noted that for Downtown Friday, there was no parking available in the American Icon parking lot. Mrs. Hawkins said that she parks in the Courthouse parking lot for Downtown Friday.

Mr. Chisholm said that when he was on this Committee, they talked about a downtown shuttle. He said they could have a phone in certain spots that someone could use to call the shuttle. He thinks it is becoming a mode of transportation and will be in the future.

Mr. Williams pointed out that a lot of employees park in American Icon's parking lot too, which is long term parking. Mrs. Hawkins added that the employees of Post and Vine would be utilizing it too, which is where that idea of a trolley comes into play.

Mr. Torres thinks this is a great idea. He pointed out the Blue Agave people had come up with a concept and an engineer plan and Main Street approved it, the City approved it, but they never executed the plan. He thinks it is a great idea and another way to expand downtown.

Mr. Chisholm said the other concept that they are working on now is the lighting. He said he has a proposal for his building to do what they are talking about doing across the street. He talked about the lighting on his building that he personally did. He said with the LED lights, it would look wonderful. He received a price of \$5,000 to do his building, which includes the top edge and the band that goes around it the entire half a block and down into the alley. He feels they are going to become an event town and they should prepare for it.

Mr. Williams pointed out that it is like that every Friday and Saturday, and not just holidays. He asked if they have any control of the City parking lot in City Hall because it is utilized by Wells Fargo employees a lot. He noted at least six (6) park there all day. He felt they should do something about that.

Mrs. Hawkins asked if this is a public parking lot or a City parking lot. She said there is a parking lot on the other side of their building on the back side of Vero Magazine that is designed to be an employee parking lot

Mrs. Honse said that she would look into it.

There was some more discussion of the parking lots in the surrounding areas.

4. NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Cataldo pointed said that Mr. O'Connor has prepared an agenda item for an investor who is interested in purchasing the Post Office downtown, which is City owned property. He hoped that the City would go out to bid. He said that could be an integral part of the renaissance of downtown.

The Committee agreed.

Mrs. Honse pointed out that it is on the March 20, 2018 City Council agenda at 9:30 a.m.

Mr. Torres said it is City owned property and typically post office leases are five (5) year leases. He said that lease is coming up for renewal and it is an opportunity for an investor. He agreed with Mr. Cataldo that it should be a Request for Proposal (RFP), including what they are going to do with the property. He added they need to look at the intended use and not just the price.

Mr. Cataldo thinks it should be treated like the Old Diesel Plant and go out for an RFP. He said it is not vacant land and whoever buys it can't do what they want with it until the Post Office ceases to exist, which is all the more reason to not sell it today, or sell it to someone with an intention.

Mr. Cataldo referred to what Mr. Chisholm was saying about the Blue Agave. He noted he is a minority partner of it. He said it is about downtown and anytime you can put umbrellas up or create some lighting that would make people look and slow down and make it more walkable. He thinks they should seriously consider how they could jump start that, even if this group could use their funds. He didn't know if it was possible to create it as an income stream for the future. Whatever the fee is, it's money that could be reinvested. He feels they should pick two (2) or three (3) spots and do them and use that money to fund the next project. He said that Blue Agave wants to do it.

Mrs. Hawkins suggested they talk to the players of Blue Agave. She said they already received approval from the City.

Mr. Cataldo said they are looking to figure out how to take it to the next level. He referred to the issues Mr. Chisholm brought up, such as what's it made out of, what it looks like, who has jurisdiction over it...

Mrs. Hawkins asked if they (Blue Agave) have an engineered plan.

Mr. Chisholm thought they were approved for the concept. He said they knew the drawback was taking away a parking space.

Mr. Cataldo recalled that the City was on board and it would be like a license, and if there was ever an issue, the City could take it away. He pointed out that they would charge the restaurant for using it.

Mrs. Hawkins said they need to have that discussion with Mr. McGarry and Mr. Falls.

Mr. Cataldo explained what they were talking about was like a portable platform that would line up with the curb and if there was a problem, they could remove it.

Mrs. Hawkins pointed out that something like that would not impede the stormwater runoff.

Mr. Chisholm said there are already plans for the engineering of this concept and Mr. Falls has already contacted Stuart and has copies of all the paperwork. He feels this would be the perfect group to take on this concept. He reiterated that it could be an income source.

Mr. Williams thinks it would be well worth it to a restaurant. He does feel that \$250 a year is not high enough.

Mr. Chisholm said that \$250 a month would not be feasible. He said this could be an income source for this group and if they had three (3) of them downtown, that could be \$1,000 a year.

Mr. Cataldo said it would be valuable to a restaurant and there needs to be a fee associated with it. He doesn't think there would be whole lot of money in it, but it would be an attraction. He thinks it would be great for downtown.

Mr. Williams agreed. He added that outside tables are the most sought after tables in some places.

Mrs. Honse noted that this was first discussed in 2014 in the fall and she could only find a potential draft lease, but not any drawings.

Mr. Torres talked about the land value of a 10' x 20' space.

Mr. Chisholm said it would not make much, but would strictly be a service to this community to make it more walkable.

Mr. Williams said that now all the restaurants that can have outdoor seating, have it.

Mr. Chisholm said this is to get them thinking of an income source. He said what Stuart charged was per month and you can't make enough profit in a year off of one parking space to justify \$250 a month.

Mr. Williams said they have to figure out something in between. He said it has to be viable for both the City and the restaurant.

Mrs. Hawkins thought it would be a better source if it was a removable structure.

Mr. Williams said that it wouldn't be something they would move regularly, but if they were having accidents, they could remove it.

Mr. Cataldo said that is another reason this group should consider funding it, rather than the restaurant.

Mrs. Honse didn't know if this Board had the ability to get the funds from the leasing. She said their funding source is from tax monies and the leasing money would go in to the General Fund.

Mr. Cataldo would like to make it an agenda item to get Mr. Falls and Mr. McGarry's input. He said part of the discussion today is what they are going to do with their funds. He felt that this and the lighting would both slow down traffic.

Mr. Torres gave an example that if they took 200 square feet at \$15 a square foot and capitalized it at 6.5% for five (5) years, the payment would be \$610 a year, which would be a return to the City. He suggested a five (5) year lease would be a reasonable term.

Mr. Chisholm believes in Stuart they did it yearly, rather than long term because if they decided they didn't want it there anymore because of accidents, it would be more difficult to get out of a long term lease. Also, they did it on a trial basis for a year for free. He said they have been trying to get more walkability downtown since this group started and this is exactly what their group is trying to do.

Mrs. Hawkins requested they place this on their next agenda and have Mr. Falls and Mr. McGarry at that meeting so they can get their input and then make a recommendation to go to City Council. She requested that the Clerk's office get a copy of the Stuart lease from Mr. Falls and send that to the members.

5. OLD BUSINESS

A) Update on the Economic Development Plan

Mrs. Hawkins said she feels the standards of what they were originally doing are coherent with what they are doing today. She said the only thing is that the SR 60 plan is on their long range plan because there is nothing that they can do now.

Mr. Chisholm brought up what took place in the past and explained why they got the bulb out in front of his store. He said they can't come on board when they are a year in to the five (5) year plan and say lets re-engineer. It has to be done ahead of time and the City needs to be on board with it.

Mr. Cataldo agreed. He said the one risk they have been running into is that they haven't taken charge of getting the City on board to do anything. He added this was pulled from the Comprehensive Plan. He said it is a political issue.

Mr. Williams said they have talked about it over and over for a year and are all on the same page. He said the City decided they didn't want it in the Comprehensive Plan and took it out.

Mr. Cataldo said it has never gone to the City Council and they have never had to take a position. Mr. Williams said they took a position when they removed it from the Comprehensive Plan.

Mrs. Hawkins said they just remain neutral. She said the City needs the Comprehensive Plan to get approved and move forward, but they can make amendments to it.

Mr. Cataldo said that it doesn't have to be in the Comprehensive Plan to happen. But it is a political issue and the longer they wait, the harder it will be to get people on board.

Mr. Rooney said an issue is that no one from the public attends their meetings. But when they go to Council with this, voices of opposition will be there for the first time. He said they are here to hear the pros and cons, yet they have never heard any cons except what they read about. He said that no one has come to their meetings with actual evidence against the idea.

Mr. Cataldo commented that when they ask Council to endorse it, that is when all the feedback would come.

Mr. Rooney said that they have not had a single person at their meetings that wasn't for the idea. They have not heard any negatives, even though they invite anyone who is against it to come and explain it to them so they can investigate it.

Mr. Williams pointed out that they have already voted for it a couple meetings ago.

Mr. Rooney said that everyone in this group is on board and wants to push forward with it. He wants the meetings to have more public input. He asked if they could send a letter to the known objectors so they can hear from them.

Mr. Williams said that the only negative he has ever heard is that it would take too long to get through town.

Mrs. Hawkins pointed out that you can't cross SR 60 in peak times. She explained the issue is not the timing, but that it is not fluid traffic. She said that the County has control of those traffic lights, and they have not been cooperative. They asked for additional time and got an extra four (4) seconds for crossing. She did point out that the new people with the County in the Traffic Engineering and in the Public Works department are more cooperative.

Mr. Cataldo said that he has watched people trying to cross SR 60 and it is not safe or comfortable in any way. Mr. Williams brought up the age of the people trying to cross those streets.

Mr. Rooney pointed out that there are many people who go in excess of 60 mph along that stretch.

Mr. Chisholm said that he invited Mr. Chris Mora with Indian River County, to come to his building and watch and time the traffic. He said that Mr. Mora told him that there was no accident data that supported what he was saying. Mr. Chisholm said that the front door of his building has been hit four (4) times, which is why the bulb out is there, but Mr. Mora told him that there were not enough accidents to say it's a hazard.

Mrs. Hawkins said that at her building, they have had people come up over the curb in to the landscaped area, which is why they don't have a flag pole anymore.

Mr. Williams brought up how many times the Wells Fargo bank building has been hit.

Mr. Chisholm pointed out that the only four (4) lane piece of SR 60 is from US1 to 20th Avenue.

Mr. Rooney feels that it is inevitable that someone is going to get hit trying to cross SR 60 to get to American Icon.

Mr. Chisholm said that he had requested putting an awning in front of his store on SR 60, but was told no by the State because there was not enough space in front of his store. He added that for safety, the County put in a covered walkway along SR 60 instead of having people walking on the sidewalk when coming to the Courthouse.

Mrs. Hawkins said they could talk to Mr. McGarry and Mr. Falls about this and see if it is something they can add to their Economic Development Plan. She added that they could also incorporate the lighting into their Plan.

Mr. Rooney requested that they put a discussion of SR 60 on every agenda. Mr. Williams said they have never not talked about it.

The Committee agreed to have SR 60 traffic calming on every agenda.

Mr. Rooney said there was someone taking signatures of who was in support of it. He said there were 300 to 400 signatures for it and wondered why that isn't relevant. Mr. Williams said that he got a lot of signatures in his store. Mr. Rooney said the people against it could do the same thing.

Mr. Williams said he didn't understand how they voted on something and it never went to the City Council. He questioned who pushed it back. They voted on something to present to the City Council

Mr. Rooney said it was his understanding that it was decided that it was better to withdraw it so the Comprehensive Plan got passed and then add it later rather than make it controversial.

Mr. Cataldo said it doesn't have to be a part of the Comprehensive Plan. He said Council has never taken a position on the SR 60 calming. He said it is a political issue. He thinks they need to stay on it and get the support.

Mr. Rooney asked how or why it is a political issue. He questioned if there was really that much opposition.

Mr. Cataldo didn't think there was that much opposition. He felt it had to do with a concern for election. He said he has talked to people who say they don't need to slow SR 60 down. He feels if it went to a vote, they would lose.

Mr. Rooney asked if their recommendation could be for them to vote on whether they are going to accept the Kimley Horn plan. He thought the time might be better now.

Mr. Cataldo said that the Kimley Horn plan may be outdated a little bit. Mr. DeVecchio said that it does have to be revised, especially because of the bike lanes and the new bike laws.

Mr. Williams pointed out that the Kimley Horn plan is only from the railroad tracks to 20th Avenue and the vast majority don't want to do half a plan.

Mrs. Hawkins explained that DOT looks at every mode of transportation for every road they build now, including walkers, bikers, cars, trucks, semis, and trains. She said they are taking everything into consideration when they do something to a road now.

Mr. Cataldo said if the City would take a position that they would like to see the road calmed or two (2) lanes in each direction, that would be a great start. He added that the parking would be a real win.

Mr. DeVecchio said Kimley Horn's plans showed just under 200 extra spaces.

Mr. Williams suggested they make a motion to put it on every agenda.

The Committee agreed they should keep it on their agenda.

Mr. Rooney said that he wants the public to be involved.

Mr. Cataldo said they could go to City Council and make a recommendation to use their funds for a bulb out. Mr. Rooney suggested they could put a bulb out in front of Mr. Sullivan's office.

Mr. Chisholm said what he proposed when they did this was why don't they temporary stripe off that fourth lane against the buildings all the way down to Mr. Sullivan's and put the bulb out there and use it as a trail period and have parking in that section.

Mr. Williams said he would love to do that, but he thought FDOT had complete control of that road.

Mr. Rooney said they were told it was going to be \$1 million to restripe that.

Mr. Chisholm referred to the parking that was put on US1 in Sebastian.

Mrs. Hawkins explained that is their downtown and they lowered the speed limit from 40 mph to 25 mph in that area. She said their City Council voted for it and brought it to the State.

The Committee had a brief discussion on speed limits in Sebastian.

Mrs. Hawkins said they need to get someone from the City, such as the City Manager or the Mayor, to say something needs to be done.

Mr. Cataldo suggested they invite the City Manager to one of their meetings. He said they should find out if Mr. O'Connor supports it, and if not, why not.

Mr. Chisholm said he would invite Mr. Falls and Mr. O'Connor to his store and to lunch so they could form an opinion first hand.

Mr. Chisholm commented that they did a nice job on the crosswalk on 14th Avenue. Mrs. Hawkins agreed. She said as a driver and a pedestrian on that road, she has seen it work.

Mr. Williams said that Mr. Falls's argument was there were too many lanes to put in a crosswalk. He said if there were that many lanes, they could not put in a crosswalk. He felt that crosswalks could solve so many problems.

Mrs. Hawkins did not know why they couldn't have a crosswalk. She said they need to look at the safety factor.

Mr. Rooney asked about putting in another traffic light.

The Committee had a brief discussion on where crosswalks are in the area.

Mr. Rooney asked if they could make a motion for City Council to tell them what their opinion is at this point and see if they need more information brought to them.

Mrs. Hawkins felt if they got an opinion from Mr. Falls and Mr. O'Connor first that it might help.

The Committee agreed to invite Mr. McGarry, Mr. Falls and Mr. O'Connor to their next meeting to talk about SR 60 and outside seating.

Mr. Chisholm said that he would invite all three (3) of them to his store before their meeting.

Mrs. Hawkins suggested they pick a time around lunch time and walk to lunch and cross the street. She added that she can see a drunk person getting hit crossing SR 60 leaving American Icon late at night.

Mr. Chisholm said he has had three (3) City Councilmembers come to his store and say something needed to be done, but no one has made a stand.

B) Update on Lighting

This item was not discussed.

6. NEXT MEETING DATE

A) April 16, 2019

The next meeting is scheduled for April 16, 2018 at 10:00 a.m.

Mrs. Hawkins brought up that they have always had a hard time in the summer with meetings so they should try to get as much done at their April meeting as they can.

The members agreed to hold their summer meetings if they could get a quorum.

7. ADJOURNMENT

Today's meeting adjourned at 11:46 a.m.

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