

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ZONE COMMITTEE (EDZC) MINUTES
MONDAY, APRIL 16, 2018 10:00 A.M.
CITY HALL, COUNCIL CHAMBERS, VERO BEACH, FLORIDA**

PRESENT: Vice Chairman Gary Rooney; Members: Mike Williams, Joseph Cataldo, Bob DeVecchio, and Terry Torres **Also Present:** Kira Honse, Assistant City Attorney and Heather McCarty, Records Retention Specialist

Unexcused Absences: Jessica Hawkins and Nick Novak

1. CALL TO ORDER

Today's meeting was called to order at 10:00 a.m.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A) March 19, 2018

Mr. Williams made a motion to approve the April 16, 2018 minutes. Mr. DeVecchio seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

3. PUBLIC COMMENT

None

4. NEW BUSINESS

None

5. OLD BUSINESS

A) Update on the Economic Development Plan

This item was not discussed.

B) Outdoor Seating

This item was heard first.

Mr. Cataldo commented that his brother runs Blue Agave and met there with a group of people from the City. He said that Main Street also came to him and said they would like to get involved. He asked Mr. McGarry what his thoughts are about creating outdoor dining areas like they did in Stuart.

Mr. McGarry said he does not think they have any problems with it. Public Works is looking to see what would be do-able, practical locations. He said they do need to be separated from the traffic. He thinks 14th Avenue would be a good candidate for it. He does not have any specific ideas about design and has seen them done with planters and other things to make them look attractive. He said it is a matter of working out license agreements with the City, which they have been willing to do.

Mr. Cataldo thinks the issues are who constructs it and who pays for it. He said that they have discussed having them movable. In Stuart they are permanent, and he thinks that might be the way to go. He brought up what was talked about being done in front of Blue Agave. He said the design never got finalized but the concept of licensing the use of a parking space was widely accepted back then.

Mr. Torres asked if they ever submitted plans. Mr. McGarry said that he hasn't seen anything, but that would go through Public Works.

Mr. McGarry did not think the City would pay for these. Mr. Cataldo said they have funds that they want to recommend be spent on creating some outdoor seating, which would enhance the downtown and hopefully slow traffic down.

Ms. Suzy Feeney said that Stuart's downtown area has much narrower roads and their parking goes sideways and not at an angle. She said people are frustrated with what they feel is a lack of parking downtown. She thinks being able to get the community's support behind this initiative is important.

Mr. Cataldo said that Stuart does have angle parking, like the west side of 14th Avenue. He said the candidates that come to mind would be Blue Agave and possibly Taco Dive. Mr. Williams suggested they talk to Italian Kitchen as well.

The Committee talked about some of the places downtown and where they could possibly have outdoor seating.

Mr. Williams thought the only objection would be if businesses weren't given the opportunity.

Mr. Cataldo said the first step would be to do a poll and see who wants it and if it can be accommodating.

Mr. Torres asked if there is a lease payment associated with the rental of City parking spaces currently.

Mr. McGarry said they don't normally lease out public parking spaces.

Mr. Torres pointed out if there was a lease payment associated with it, the City could receive compensation on an annual basis for the loss of that space from whatever business it is. Mr. McGarry said that could be a possibility. First they need to look at the design and see if people are going to be happy with the locations.

Mr. Cataldo said that the money that is collected could be earmarked to create more parking downtown.

Mr. Williams thought the store owners would pay something to have that in front of their store.

Mr. Cataldo said they would need to decide who uses it, or if it would be just an outdoor seating area that is not used exclusively, which could have liability issues.

Mr. DelVecchio said if the City provided the seating and if people got food and went there themselves, it would not be the restaurants responsibility. He said it would be like the benches.

Ms. Honse said it would depend on how it is organized. If it is a license with a restaurant, they would be responsible for liability.

Mr. DelVecchio said they could create outdoor seating areas that are common like the benches.

Mr. Cataldo said they need to start with seeing who is interested.

Ms. Feeney said that a lot of the restaurants have been struggling recently because of the new restaurants that are coming. Some of them are already paying significant fees for parking. They are looking for ways to maximize to be able to stay and being able to put an extension of their premises would help to make up what they are losing. She added that there are a number of the restaurants for sale right now.

Mr. Torres suggested it might be more reasonable to amortize that over a five (5) year period, which would be about \$600 a year. Mr. Williams said maybe the City could use that money for other improvements downtown. He said what stops them so often is that they don't have any money and are always waiting for grants or something.

Mr. Cataldo said he would like to push this forward. They have funds available for lighting or outdoor seating or both. They should recommend that something be done that is appealing.

Mr. Williams questioned how they get this started. Mr. Torres said they have about \$18,000 that could easily be used for something like this. They would have to pass a motion and make their recommendation to City Council.

Mr. Williams asked how many tables could be put in a spot like this. Mr. DelVecchio thought in two (2) parking spaces, they could have maybe four (4) or five (5) tables. He noted that everybody who is allowed outdoor seating has it.

Mr. Cataldo felt taking two (2) parking spaces anywhere could be difficult and they should look where there are adjoining islands. He added they have to allow for some type of perimeter of landscaping or a barrier to protect from traffic. He felt they could maybe get four (4) tables, but two (2) or three (3) would be good. He is more interested in the umbrellas, the looks, and the aesthetics.

Mr. Cataldo said there are places where they could get more parking in some parking lots by consolidating the trash refuse. He thinks there are opportunities to create a few more parking spaces for minimal cost through consolidation of dumpsters that could offset the loss of parking spaces.

Ms. Feeney said since they are starting to talk about using some of their TIFF money, she wanted to bring up that it was about a year ago when Mr. Michael Naffziger, Charter High School Drama Teacher, gave them a proposal on the lighting downtown. She said they have the funds available. She said this is a project they started and they should finish it. She added that Mr. Naffziger has spent a significant amount of time on this project. She hopes they will put this back on the agenda.

Mr. Cataldo said they need to have Public Works involved because the issue was where the power would come from.

Ms. Feeney thinks doing the lighting and the outdoor seating is critical for what the businesses need.

Mr. Cataldo agreed. He said they all like the idea of the lighting. He said that Main Street spoke with his brother about helping out with creating these areas because they want to be consistent with the program that was already started on 14th Avenue. He said there is a certain look to Main Street that they want to encourage. He wants to see this start to happen. He agreed the restaurants downtown are starting to struggle because there is competition and lack of convenient parking. He commented that the more attractive downtown is, the farther people will park away and walk.

Mr. McGarry pointed out that they are starting to enter the budget process so they need to put something together if they want to use their TIFF money because they need approval from Council.

Mr. Rooney said he noticed they have the radar detectors back on SR 60 now. Mr. McGarry said they are trying to slow traffic.

Mr. Cataldo said they had talked about having the Twin Pairs on every agenda. Mr. Rooney agreed that was something they wanted. Mr. Cataldo said they want it to be an item that never goes away and they can start to discuss how they can educate the public and get their support.

Mr. Rooney said that once again there is nobody new in the audience either pro or con.

Ms. Feeney reviewed that they spent a year doing a lot working with FDOT and Kimley-Horn and other organizations to be able to get educated and figure out what needs to be done. She said this group needs to be able to share what Complete Streets is. She added that is not called road calming because it is not about a road; it is about safety, quality of life, and economic development. They need to educate City Council.

Mr. Rooney said they have spent a lot of hours on this, but this Committee will have zero impact on the City Council without the residents who aren't here because the only time they will voice an opinion is at the City Council meeting.

Mr. Cataldo said if they make a recommendation, it will go to City Council. Mr. Rooney said that Council meetings would be where they hear the negatives. He said they don't hear them here or any positives either.

Mr. Cataldo suggested they invite the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) and get their ducks in a row and make a recommendation and then get in front of City Council. He added that there were both pro's and con's at the last Council meeting.

Mr. Rooney said they all have great logic here at this table. They need to hear some negatives before they hear them for the first time at a City Council meeting.

Mr. Cataldo said they need to develop their own case and present it. He said that everyone that turns out the first round may be negative, but he doesn't see this as being only one (1) round. They need to understand what the negatives are and then combat them.

Mr. Rooney agreed. He pointed out that there is a lack of knowledge that these meetings are taking place. Mr. Williams asked how they get people to these meetings.

Ms. Feeney said months ago, this Committee passed a unanimous vote to be able to do the road calming unless they have the pressure for whatever they vote on to be able to be listened to, then it is not going to make a difference. She said this group needs to be educated as to what Complete Streets is. They need to go out and educate the community so that they are going to care. She said this is more than being able to do a road calming project because that's failed miserably for 12 plus years. She said with Thrive Vero, she is setting up a date where they are bringing Mr. Dewayne Carver, the head of FDOT's complete Streets, to do a public seminar on Complete Streets. They are going to videotape it and have it available to all the City Council.

Mr. Cataldo suggested Mr. Carver comes to one of their meetings and gets them educated. Ms. Feeney said that Mr. Carver can't come here without a special request, but FDOT could send someone else.

Mr. Williams made a motion that they ask Mr. Carver to one of their meetings. Mr. Torres seconded the motion.

Ms. Feeney reiterated that he cannot come here. She said they have made the request through FDOT's channels to get him to come and they are going to pay for him to come and talk and educate the community.

Mr. Williams said until they see the public wants this project, it is not going to happen. If they can have the secondary man come here to show that there is a want for this project, then maybe they can move forward from there.

Mr. Torres said it would be up to FDOT on who they want to send. He said this has already come to the City Council and they have already voted to support the traffic calming subject to the availability of the funds from FDOT. He said they are approaching the City about a State road. It is up to the State to fund these improvements. He said maybe they should look at it differently and maybe they can be the impetus that gets this thing put together. He loves the idea of bringing in an FDOT representative to discuss this because it is really a State issue. Maybe they can spearhead this again to City Council because that gets the public engaged in the conversation. He said it is really a City, a County and a State problem. They need to engage the bigger parties because the City can't do anything. It is beyond him why they can't raise \$200,000 to do this particular project. He loves the idea of having traffic calming on every agenda and they should continue to push it. He suggested maybe they need to engage State Representative Debbie Mayfield or another State legislator to push this at the State level. Traffic calming has been in the Comprehensive Plan and the Vision Plan for many years and it has been supported by many City Councils and continues to be supported.

Mr. Rooney said it has been a conversation of this Committee since its inception. They did ask for it to be on the agenda last time. He added that even if it is not written down, they need to talk about it.

Mr. Cataldo said if there is a program, Complete Streets, and if SR60 would qualify, irrespective of what the City wants to start with, if the FDOT determines this is a candidate, they can they ask the City to show their support and stand behind it. He said if FDOT will do it, it might not require any funds.

Mr. Williams suggested that maybe they could get 100 business people in downtown to give \$2,000 each over a two (2) year period.

Mr. Cataldo doesn't think the funding is going to be the biggest problem. He said it is not about money yet.

Ms. Feeney said this Committee needs to be able to understand what Complete Streets is. She said one thing that Mr. Carver says to communities is that if they are waiting for this to be on the list of when the next road calming is formed, they are already too late. They need to have a group of people to apply the pressure and educate people on what Complete Streets is. She added that this past year, Complete Streets became the model and is the only way that FDOT is going forward with any road calming project as long as the City wants it.

Mr. Rooney asked if she has information on Complete Streets that she could forward to the City Clerk's office to send to them prior to their next meeting.

Mr. DelVecchio asked what she means by too late. Ms. Feeney said they have been told that when it gets on the list of the road calming project, it is too late because they have already done the work that they need to ahead of time.

Mr. Cataldo said they made a motion to ask FDOT to send a representative to talk about Complete Streets.

Mr. Torres called the question. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Rooney said they will do what they need to do to get FDOT here. He asked her to forward her information to the City Clerk so they can become knowledgeable before the next meeting.

Mr. Cataldo asked in regards to the outdoor seating, is there anyone here who would be willing to poll the downtown businesses to see who has an interest and if they would be willing to pay.

Mr. DelVecchio said he would do that. Mr. Williams didn't think there would be any objections to it.

Mr. Cataldo said the Post Office downtown is on the City Council agenda again tomorrow. They are going to be voting on whether to accept the offer on the table of \$1.2 million. He said at their last meeting, they all voiced concern that it is not a great idea to sell the property. He attended the City Council meeting and voiced his concerns. He added that Mr. Michael Rechter has said he would be interested in buying it. His concern is that an investor could buy it that doesn't care about the use of the property. He feels that particular property is as important or more important than the Old Diesel Plant due to its location and size and potential.

Mr. Cataldo said money is just one aspect of it. He said what is more important is what is going to happen and how it is going to help the City and create jobs and taxes. He said the Post Office is bound to a lease and they need to give a one (1) year notice before they terminate so if and when they decide to terminate, that is when the City should initiate the RFP process. They need to voice their concerns. He feels that one (1) project can make or break downtown. If somebody comes along like what happened with the Old Diesel Plant and they get the community engaged, that would be good. He added that once the City sells it, if it meets the Code, they can do it and the City will not have any say.

Mr. Williams added that it would help them to spread the City out too. He commented that downtown is not just 14th Avenue. He said they need to stop thinking about downtown as a one (1) block area.

Mr. Cataldo said that someone from their group should speak at tomorrow's City Council meeting. He would be willing to do it, but he has already done that and thought a different voice would be good.

Mr. Rooney pointed out that Mr. Cataldo and Mr. Torres have the knowledge of the real estate market and the trends.

Mr. Torres said that he would not be able to attend that meeting.

Mr. Cataldo said that he would attend. He thinks the City shouldn't sell it, but if they decide to sell, they should do an RFP similar to what they did with the Old Diesel Plant.

Ms. Feeney asked if they would add the lighting to their next agenda and she would have Mr. Naffziger and Mr. Scott Chisholm, of Scott's Sporting Goods, there.

The next meeting is scheduled for May 21, 2018.

6. ADJOURNMENT

Today's meeting adjourned at 10:51a.m.

/hm