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ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES
September 28 6:00 P.M.

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Members Present (in person): Councilmember Nieuwsma, Councilmember Kelly, Councilmember Harris, Member Dziekan, Councilmember Burns (joined virtually after call to order)

Members Absent: Councilmember Wynne, Member Pennisi, Member Klein, Councilmember Reid

Staff Present: Paul Zalmezak, Neal Reeves, Katie Boden

1. CALL TO ORDER/DECLARATION OF A QUORUM

Call to order at 6:05. Quorum was not met

2. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES
 A. Minutes from July 27, 2022

Minutes could not be approved due to the lack of quorum.

3. PUBLIC COMMENT
No comment

4. ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

None

5. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

A. "Evanston Thrives" Retail District Action Plan Update and Retail Market Presentation

Sarah Kellerman was present to give the presentation on the plan date. She was joined by Scott Page and Michael with MJB Consulting.

CM Nieuwsma asked about the definition of retail. For the sake of the presentation, retail includes all stores that consumers can walk into and shop at.

Dzieken asked about the comparison of the Evanston downtown retail vacancy rate versus other communities. Data was not readily available/prepared by staff. Healthy vacancy is at ~10% according to MJB.

Dzieken asked if there was a difference with ground floor retail vacancy. Those details will be recorded in the next phase of research. She followed with a sales tax question compared to the size of the community. The data was indexed to the 2011 level for comparison.She also inquired about the comparison of independent retailers versus chain/franchise stores. That data will be shared after data is collected.

Kelly inquired about the analysis of the anchors in the city. It was explained that once the retail and non retail anchors are identified, it will better explain the foot traffic that exists or shopping that may occur in the specific areas.

Nieuwsma inquired about Northlight theater. Implied that the space might be better for bars/restaurants vs. retail toy stores.

Burns asked how much of the retail recruitment efforts responsibility falls to the city staff versus the consultant. He hopes the study can better identify the changes/strategy to better support the ED Staff to recruit etc.

Dzierken inquired about the outdoor dining experience that Evanston has versus other communities. Nieuwsma shared that he would appreciate feedback on the outdoor dining regulatory environment versus the experience.

Kelly added that she would like to see more quality of living measures included in the study.

Dzieken asked about the placemaking component as it affects the retail element. Those need to be addressed.

Nieuwsma followed by asking about the perception of the retailers and the customers. Berne shared that the results will share how Evanston is viewed across the region by employers and customers. Surveys to discuss why retailers are leaving are also important to solicit.

Zalmezak shared that we should be cautious about recommendations for the ARPA funds. The goal is to have a complete plan before making recommendations. The Economic Development line item is decreasing because there are other competing interests. Immediate line items are taking precedence over the potential recommendations coming from this plan.

B. Legacy Business Program Update

Kelly shared that the program is going well. Thirty businesses signed up and/or are interested. The RFP for logos and graphics are out and awaiting the submissions.

6. COMMUNICATIONS
   A. ED Reports

The farmers market is not planning to be moved at this point. Fountain Square is in the midst of a lawsuit and action is forthcoming. Zalmezak expressed concern about the condition of the fountain amenities, including the pine tree, lawn, and cafe furniture.   Dzieken shared that it's an opportunity to have more communication and demonstrate momentum

  B. RISE Grant Update
  C. Sustain Evanston Program Update
  D. Sidewalk Cafe Permit Memo
  E. Announcements / Updates from EDC Members

7. ADJOURNMENT
Meeting was adjourned at 7:39PM