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**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES**  
**March 22, 2023 6:00 P.M.**

**Members Present (in person)**

Councilmembers: Nieuwsma, Kelly, Burns, Wynne, and Harris

Members: Pennisi and Klein

**Virtual:** Councilmember Reid

**Members Absent:** Member Dziekan

**Staff Present:** Paul Zalmezak, Neal Reeves, Katie Boden

**1. CALL TO ORDER/DECLARATION OF A QUORUM**

Call to order at 6:08 PM. Quorum was declared.

**2. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES**

A. Minutes from February 22, 2023

**Wynne. 2nd by Harris. Minutes approved**

**3. PUBLIC COMMENT**

**4. ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION**

A. Recommendation to City Council to purchase Meridian Barricades for Special Event Support

Nieuwsma moved. 2nd by Wynne

Presenter Remarks: Audrey Thompson presented the project. The memo addresses the questions that were raised at the previous meeting. Sgt. Sophier discussed the product and the reaction from the community when it was used at a previous event.

CM Reid shared that he is not in support of the item citing ARPA funds etc

CM Nieuwsma spoke in support of the barriers due to safety and the Evanston Thrives recommendation of more Special Events. He asked how many do we need

- Thompson shared the cost range for events
- Sophier shared the \$250,580 is for a smaller scale event in the Downtown. A larger event, such as WGN Event, would be closer to the \$612,000 figure.
- Nieuwsma asked if there is a lower scale or number. The 16 barricade bid would be a good starting point according to Sophier.
- Nieuwsma asked if we can do 1 less trailer? Sophier shared that it can be explored.
- He also shared that he would prefer a more welcoming color

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- Renting the product doesn't make the best fiscal sense

CM Harris spoke in support of getting the barriers to be proactive and provide safety for residents.

CM Kelly sought clarification

- We're still using trucks for block parties
- She asked if there were any alternatives. Sophier shared that there are some but this option is the best fit.

CM Wynne believes that this is a good idea and supports the idea

- Shared that the barriers could have been used years ago during a construction project with an open vault near Lincoln school where people drove around the signs and nearly drove in.
- Sophier suggested that he can go back and model the quote around a larger Evanston event

Pennisi inquired about the maintenance of the barriers.

- She inquired about the quote. The items are itemized by what is included in the kit in the amount column.

CM Reid shared that last of the ARPA could be better used for tangible issues in Evanston

CM Kelly generally agreed and requested more data to speak to the situation in Evanston

CM Harris asked if delayed, will we be able to have them for summer events.

- Sophier will check

Motion to recommend 16 barriers with the understanding that more research is to be done

Roll Call Vote. Motion passed unanimously

- B. Approval of a Contract with Herrera Landscape and Snow Removal (8836 Lincolnwood Dr., Evanston IL 60203) for the 2023 Great Merchant Grant Program and Business District Landscaping (RFP 23-13)

Moved by Harris. Second by Wynne.

Nieuwsma expressed that he was shocked at only one bidder. Manager Zalmezak shared that many contractors were extended the opportunity but didn't apply. CM

CM Reid emphasized that the priority is for local planting and species. Boden will reemphasize that with Herrera.

CM Kelly asked about the SSAs. The program was put in place to support the smaller districts. The one exception is the Main Dempster Mile for some streetscape areas. We would have not done the landscaping for Main Street if the project started this year.

Burns clarified that the CEBA component covered specific areas.

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**Roll Call Vote. Motion passed unanimously.**

**5. Items for Discussion**

A. Sustain Evanston Business Incentive Program

Motion Harris. Second by Wynne.

Presentation Comments: Cara Pratt shared the background on the project. Boden shared that we generally used the storefront guidelines to help fund as many projects as possible.

CM Nieuwsma supports the project. He thinks access and information sent to businesses will help. Boden added that it will be shared via Social Media , City media avenues, dedicated websites and new staff will reach out to businesses.

- He suggested that we require they already have an electricity supplier
- Question: Who approves? Zalmezak asked the committee to provide feedback and we can administratively approve projects up to \$25,000 and provide a report.
- CM Harris suggested the awardees share their experience and how the money supported their event.
- Recommendation that we exclude churches.
  - Separation of church and state
- CM Harris shared that nonprofits, not churches, would be allowed to apply.

**B. Evanston Small Business Recovery and Growth Fund**

CM Kelley read the public comment of Sheryl Judice.

CM Kelly presented the program to bolster the ED programs. She shared that the qualified census tract has expanded. She advocates that this will continue to help.

CM Burns shared that Chicago focused on new business support to revitalize the areas that are blighted.

CM Nieuwsma shared that he would like to see more small business owners on the committee. He wants to keep open direct funding to businesses and would like to figure out a model that works and not have businesses come to the city and we'll provide them funding. We need to be really careful about taking the financial risks.

Pennisi asked if any programs support rental support etc.

- Zalmezak shared that we do have Entrepreneurship Support Grant Funding designed for that but a specific group MWBE. We have TIF and storefront build outs.
- She commented that we need to meet our workforce and business support needs in the same way as small business operation challenges.
- Kelly believes we should value independent businesses.

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CM Burns shared that we need to identify the technical ARPA components and if this is just about expanding current program budget allocations that are already established.

Create direct support for business or programs to support everyone with business challenges.

CM Harris supports having standards for providing support and all of our practices when having the discussion of fairness etc. Pennisi shared that we should have the City Values/priorities as guidance and base.

- Allocate money based on the quarterly need to account for future opportunities
- Kelly suggested that we cap at \$50,000

Klein feels strongly about putting rubrics in place. It can reduce confusion surrounding who to talk to and how to get support. We can demonstrate we are trying to support and challenge the perception that Evanston is hard to do business with.

CM Burns shared that we need to get the facts right or the City confuses the public. Two examples of business attraction / retention efforts with larger levels of investment include:

- Accuity Headquarters relocation from Skokie - Council approved a multiyear parking fee reduction totaling \$200,000
- ZS Associates support to keep the 350 employee headquarters in Evanston \$300,000 economic development grant when economic development budget was \$2m annually.

### **C. For Discussion: Use of Non-Traditional Public Space for Outdoor Dining**

Motion by Nieuwsma. Second by Wynne.

Manager Zalmezak presented the agenda item and the charge from the committee.

- They agreed to continue this practice.
- Fee. Bring back 50% and 100% in 2025

Committee agreed to waive the fees and remove challenges. We should waive all or have fairly equal pricing.

### **D. Evanston Thrives Retail District Action Plan Update and First Draft Review**

Nieuwsma motioned and Harris seconded.

Presenter Comments: Sarah Kellerman presented on the items she added via the executive summary.

CM Kelly started with comments about events and addressing storefronts. Burns asked about storefront utilization to track the issues.

- Owners have to be on board to support the districts with art activations etc.
- City can bring stakeholders to the table where SSAs cant

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- Burns shared that conflict is the goal/focus of owners vs. the legislative and community needs.

Burns inquired about investing in Small Businesses.

- Kellerman shared that more is more. Current programs are good programs
- Suggested that we increase the Great Merchant Grant and it's a challenge to budget and spend pending the amount.

CM Nieuwsma was very impressed with the program and believes we got our money's worth out of this.

Zalmezak shared the next steps and wants to get several things going. The survey will go up to provide the feedback on the plan that will go live tomorrow and be sent out by All Together.

CM Burns asked that we send out the Priorities and the committee discuss and decide if they are on board with it.

Committee agrees we are going to publish on the website and the goal is to have it on the agenda for April 24th to work on a work plan.

## **6. COMMUNICATIONS**

- A. Economic Development Activity Report 3.22.23
- B. Announcements from EDC Members

## **7. ADJOURNMENT**

Meeting was adjourned at 8:17 PM