

MINUTES
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MEETING
July 1, 2020

CALL TO ORDER:

Vice Chair Tony Schiappa called the meeting to order at 6:07 p.m. The meeting was held in person at the Village Hall.

ROLL CALL:

Present: Mayor Gary Grasso (arrived at 6:09), Trustee Tony Schiappa, Leslie Bowman, Mark Stangle, Sam Odeh (on the phone), Debbie Hamilton, Ramzi Hassan, Michael Simmons, and Kirsten Jepsen

Absent: Paul Stettin and Bhagwan Sharma

Also Present: Village Administrator Doug Pollock, Assistant Village Administrator Evan Walter, Communications & Public Relations Coordinator Janet Kowal, Management Analyst Andrez Beltran, and Taylor Blagrove (Edwards Realty Corporation)

MINUTES:

A **MOTION** was made by Mr. Simmons to approve the Minutes from the June 16, 2020 meeting. The **MOTION** was seconded by Ms. Jepsen and approved by a vote of 8-0.

UPDATE REGARDING OUTDOOR DINING PROGRAM

Trustee Schiappa asked for an update regarding the outdoor dining program in the Village. Mr. Walter stated that the program originally ran from May 29 through July 6. The Board voted to extend the program past July 6 at a fifty percent cost share with the businesses if they choose to continue with the program. He believed that many would continue with the program. Otherwise, reviews for outdoor dining were highly positive, and sales were strong, including increased per person outdoor sales compared to indoor. Turnover of tables was higher as well. Overall, the consensus was the high quality tents and furniture led to higher spending and satisfaction compared to those in other locals.

Mayor Grasso stated that after reviewing the CARES Act, the tents and furniture, as well as the previous Tourism Recovery grants, may be reimbursable. While that was not the Board's original goal with the programs, it would be a nice outcome as well. Additionally, he said come August the Board might vote to continue the program as well.

DISCUSSION OF LONG TERM VILLAGE CENTER STRATEGY

Mayor Grasso stated the Village Center has been his focus since he became Mayor, and its future is important to the Village. Mayor Grasso asked Mr. Hassan to present on the current condition of the Village Center and possible ways the Village could help going forward.

Mr. Hassan thanked Mayor Grasso and stated he wanted to start by showing the current condition of the Village Center, especially since COVID has accelerated the retail trends that were already present. He stated that afterwards he will share his vision but wants to work with the Village as it should be a shared vision with the community.

Mr. Hassan presented on the current leasing status of the Village Center; of the current leases, approximately two-thirds were projected to be out of business by the end of the year. Mr. Hassan contrasted that slide with those that would be in business on January 1 without deep discounts or subsidization from ownership. Overall, only about 5% of all leaseable space was projected to be in good financial standing by the end of the year.

Mr. Hassan stated there were four key critical issues related to his vision: Signage, Village Green and other Open Areas, Leasing and Uses, and Parking. For Signage, Village Center is a hidden gem. Unfortunately, that makes it difficult to find. Better signage to Village Center and Downtown from the interstate and County Line Road would help. For Village Green and Open Areas, the Village Green is a great amenity. The Village Center was hoping to activate it and other open areas for events that directly drive sales to their businesses. For Leasing and Uses, the Village Center was designed for a Pre-2008 Economy. While the bones of the Village Center are good, the uses need to evolve to keep up with the market demand. This evolution needs to be balanced with the community character. He hopes to approach re-doing the uses holistically rather than doing it piecemeal. For Parking, it is less of a parking issue but a perception issue. With better signage directing people to the parking garage, this could be remedied. Mr. Hassan believed that if these issues can be addressed with the Village in a shared vision, that the Village Center could become a great "village center," not just a shopping center.

Mayor Grasso agreed that urgent action was necessary. He continued that it is similar to 2005 when they were designing it, but this time the buildings are already there. It is almost a blank slate so there is a lot of opportunity. Mayor Grasso asked what was needed to help keep it open and make it successful.

Ms. Bowman stated that another design issue that Mr. Hassan had not touched on was loading docks. The only area available would likely be behind Kohler Spa. Mr. Hassan agreed and stated he understood that it was purposely designed without loading docks. However, the loading dock issue has hurt several deals, including a possible look from Amazon. Ms. Bowman also stated that activating the Village Green was important, as right now it seems that the Village Green and shops down there seem disconnected and activating it would connect the entire Center.

Mr. Hassan stated one thing that needed to be looked at was growing sectors. Medical, office, restaurants, and pop up shops help bring energy and foot traffic to the Center. Additionally, another possibility was even hosting spaces for entrepreneurs as at a discount once the Center starts being filled. A possible modification is also to create "districts" of clustered businesses. Either way, a major part of the solution would be to make the process for new businesses and uses as painless as possible, as businesses look at that process in choosing locations. Finally, he thought maybe creating a Business Development District, like what had previously been discussed at EDC, could be a good idea not just for Village Center but downtown too.

Mayor Grasso agreed that there needed to be a hard look at solutions, including those residents in the area and also those not in the area in developing the process. He asked Mr. Hassan to put together a possible vision and solutions for the next meeting.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

No other considerations were brought forward.

PUBLIC COMMENT

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There were no public comments.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Stangle made the **MOTION** to adjourn the meeting to August 5, 2020; **SECONDED** by Ms. Hamilton. **APPROVED 8-0**. The meeting was adjourned at 7:28 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Andres Beltran". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Andres" and last name "Beltran" clearly distinguishable.

Andrez Beltran
Management Analyst