

City of Dunkirk

Economic Development Committee Meeting

Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, September 18, 2013
11:00 am, Conference Room

Attendees: Stephanie Kiyak, Council Member-At-Large, Chair
Bill Rivera, Councilman, Board Member
Steve Neratko, Director of Planning and Development
Tim Gornikiewicz, Recreation Program Coordinator
Lacy Lawrence, Deputy Director of Planning and Development
Richard Halas, Fiscal Affairs Officer
AJ Dolce, Mayor
Ron Szot, City Attorney
Gib Synder, Observer
Susan Chapone, Buffalo News

Absent: Andy Gonzalez, Councilman, Board Member

Call to Order: 11:03am

Approval of Meeting Minutes

Lacking a quorum, meeting minutes for June, July and August 2013 were not approved.

Issues Discussed

Old Business:

CDBG activity reports – Steve said no word yet regarding the resubmitted 1 & 5-year plans, and that a meeting with HUD officials is scheduled for next week to go over the past and future of the program. Steve mentioned that Nicole is absent today in order to prepare for the upcoming meeting with HUD. Steve believes that no news regarding the resubmitted plans could be considered as good news. No reports were provided to the committee since there was no activity in the month of July.

Boardwalk -- Steve informed the committee that there is a tentative meeting scheduled for the first week in October to meet with the tenants. He said he has been in contact with the tenants in person, as well as sending out formal letter of invite. Lacey will be the point person for the boardwalk.

ATM machine -- It was requested back in July that Tim check to see if there was a contract made between Lake Shore Savings Bank and the City for their ATM machine at the Boardwalk, and he reported to the committee that one did not exist, finding only the original resolution passed by Council in the file. The reason for the request was for Development to put together an RFP to see if the City could find a better deal, since the current contract does not provide the City with any income (flat fee or percentage of transactions). Unfortunately, a contract has since been located by the law department, with the terms including a 5-year automatic renewal clause, and the window to notify cancelation has already expired.

Festivals -- Lacy Lawrence will now be overseeing the festivals. With the season pretty much over, it was requested that she put together a questionnaire to vendors that participated, as well as potential vendors, to help with planning for next year's season. It was suggested that she reach out to council members for their input with questions to include. She said she would have something put together by the next committee meeting in October.

Landbank -- No new properties added at this time. Steve said the City is working with them on a grant application for additional funding for demolition. Al Zurawski will also be sending a preliminary list to the Landbank by the end of the week of properties that have been deemed beyond repair and needing demolition. Another program is the "Sidelot Disposition" that involves properties that either went through a tax foreclosure option and are currently sitting vacant and can be sold to an interested party for \$1 in order to be put back on the tax rolls. It was questioned how properties are being selected and Steve said that Al already has a list and that we'd have to ask him how the properties are selected. Steve reiterated that the crux of the Landbank program is for a property to be repaired, with a commitment stipulated in the contract for the remaining repairs to be done by the purchaser. If the buyer falls through on the promises, the Landbank will take the property back. The whole idea is to make these properties physically and monetarily attractive to potential buyers to fix and either resell, rent or live in themselves, with the hope that the buyers personally occupy the premises as the first option.

Grants -- Mainstreet environmental review is complete except for certain parcels where additional work may be done, then additional reporting is required (for instance, asbestos removal). A checklist has also been provided to ensure compliance of what will require additional environmental reviews, such as paint removal. He said it's similar to any other governmental program requirements, such as CDBG. The next step the City will be taking is sending out letters to the property owners to set up a meeting -- Steve told the committee this will be done shortly, either before the next meeting or soon thereafter.

Marina -- Planning Board meeting is tentatively scheduled for the 26th for a review of the site plan and the SEQR form, depending on availability of members since a quorum is needed. It was questioned if the DEC has found additional underground tanks in the marina parking lot and Steve confirmed that they have found a 34x8 foot tank that's been since removed. They also found two smaller tanks. Steve met with the contractor, and they said they will be submitting their findings to the DEC and the steps they've already taken, and the DEC will then determine if those steps are adequate or more needs to be done (Steve confirmed that the DEC contracts the work, since they are only the administrators). We still don't know what the cost of the Bertges property cleanup is, since we have yet to be notified by the DEC.

Visit Dunkirk Website -- It was questioned if we receive revenues from advertising. Tim said that there advertisers are not paying to participate on the website at the moment, and that the first year has been offered for free. Tim said they are looking for an intern that can help with marketing to the businesses once the free year has expired. Bill asked if the responsibility for the website will be under Tim's new position, and he said it hasn't been figured out yet. We will be informed by the next meeting.

George Grasser City Planner "Smart Growth and Romancing the City" -- He is scheduled to come to Dunkirk on September 28th at 9 am, accompanied by several associates. The plan is for the group to walk around a small portion of Dunkirk with residents and city officials, then meet back with the group and discuss their findings. It will be held at the Incubator, and the public is strongly encouraged to attend.

It was requested that with the addition of Lacy to the department that there be a concerted effort made to visit local businesses. Steve said that he regularly meets with business owners daily, and he assured us that he is in regular contact with many businesses throughout the city. Steve said he recently met with a Canadian-company called "Pro Quip" that manufactures solar lighting and has made Dunkirk their base in the US. They have plans for some major projects in terms of solar power installation (even industrialized-size). They are hoping to expand and take advantage of NYSERTA grants, and Steve said they are enthusiastic about their future plans. They are currently sharing the building with "Lighting Circuits", another company based in Dunkirk.

It was also questioned about the tax break program (Startup NY) newly offered by the state for areas around the local colleges, and Steve said that he and AJ have been invited to talks by SUNY with regards to the program, and he promised to keep us updated with any new development as they happen.

Adjournment: 11:30