

City of Dunkirk

Economic Development Committee Meeting

Meeting Minutes

June 16, 2014

1:45 pm Mayor's Conference Room

Attendees: Stephanie Kiyak, Council Member-At-Large, Chair
Bill Rivera, Councilman, Board Member
Stacy Szukala, Councilwoman, Board Member
Steve Neratko, Director of Planning and Development
Lacy Lawrence, Deputy Director of Planning and Development
Rich Halas, Fiscal Affairs Officer
Nicole Waite, CDBG Administrator
AJ Dolce, Mayor
Ron Szot, City Attorney
Gib Synder, Observer
Susan Chipone, Buffalo News

Guests: Ashley Switzer, STEL, Inc.
Steve Ald, STEL, Inc.
Tom Whitney, STEL, Inc.
Shelly Wells, Chautauqua County Heath Network, Creating Healthy Places To Live, Work and Play
Andrew Dickson, Chautauqua County Heath Network, Creating Healthy Places To Live, Work and Play
Steve Rees, Revitalize Dunkirk
Marty Sanden, Citizen & Revitalize Dunkirk

Call to Order: 1:49 PM

Approval of Meeting Minutes

A motion was made by Stacy Szukala and a second from Bill Rivera to approve minutes of February 2014 meeting.

Issues Discussed

Guest Speaker Shelly: Community gardens are in place, with all boxes planted. Lacy said that applications and fees have been received for all boxes. The farmer's market will be having its grand opening at 9:00 am on Wednesday. Everything but the EBT machine is ready to go (the EBT machine allows SNAP recipients to use their card to shop). Procuring this machine is a process and it will take another 30 days or so before we receive it. Office of the Aging and WIC coupons can still be accepted. Dunkirk had a pilot day for WIC recipients to pick up their coupons early – 240 were distributed. It's estimated that current participation is only at 50%, and there are 624 available in Dunkirk. There will be two farmers participating at the market. Approximately 100 people monthly in Dunkirk apply for SNAP benefits. A sign for the market will be provided to us and is currently on order, as well as signs for the community gardens.

Guest Speaker Andy: Andy handed out a study funded by Creating Healthy Places to Live, Work and Play to present various options for connecting the bike trail from Point Gratiot to the existing trail that continues along the waterfront in front of the yacht club. In addition, there was a cost estimate for the widening of the fishing pier access, which is currently 6 feet but is recommended to be widened to 10 feet to include a bike path. Steve brought up issues that the trail currently faces, one of which is having a location down by the lake for cyclists to be able to come, and we have two bike paths that although are close together still require a cyclist to ride down Route 5 to get from one section to the other. It was pointed out that the City lacks funding at this time to proceed with any of these recommendations; however, when the time does come this report will be useful at that time. Stacy pointed out that in the past there was resistance from commercial residents such as Country Store and Bart's Cove, and unless there was a change of heart, this is not a project that can move forward, in addition to a lack of funds. Andy pointed out that there is trail funding available through the DOT and that 80% of this type of construction could also be covered by a TAP (transportation alternative) grant, and that would require a 20% local match. There's also consolidated funding program that could potentially cover the 20%.

Guest Speaker STE: The organization is coming to the City with a plan to renovate 30 houses for \$10 million, requesting a match from the City of \$100,000 (which could come from future housing funding (HUD), and not taxpayer funds [Fund 1]). Steve went on to explain that STEL approached the City about 2 years ago about a potential project along 2nd Street – at that time, it wasn't feasible to move forward. Now they are coming back proposing a project along the Route 60 corridor (that would be within our CDBG prequalified area of the city). The tax credits STEL would be using would come from the state, with the City providing the \$100,000 from CDBG housing rehab funding in 2015 (which is the usual amount spent yearly on housing out of CDBG funds). The COI contract is up this year, and they would be joining STEL in this large rehab project. The homes would then be sold to folks who attend classes on homeownership responsibilities (these classes are currently conducted by COI for some of their other programs). Steve pointed out that COI may not complete some of the projects they are currently working on for the city under the CDBG program, and that unused funding could also be applied towards this project. A handout was provided to the committee outlining the proposed project (attached). STEL would own the homes for 15 years, after which they can sell the homes. So the first 15 years homeowners would lease the homes directly from STEL, then they can purchase. They pointed out that they have managed the old Manzetti High School so that speaks to how they would handle the upkeep of these homes. The next step would entail STEL contacting homeowners in the corridor they are interested in to obtain "site control". Some property may already be vacant; some may be in foreclosure, while others may need demolition. Being a "tax credit" project, STEL would need to submit the application by the beginning of December 2014. They will keep the committee posted of their progress and will ask to attend meetings in the future to do so. It was pointed out that the tax credit program is very competitive, and a letter of support from the Council, coupled with community support of CDBG funds, will help with the application. Although this will be the first time they are embarking on a project of this magnitude, they told the committee that they are in contact with a general contractor who has done projects like this around the state and who can bring his expertise to the project. The main point of this project is the impact that 30 homes will make, rather than taking a building and providing 30 units.

Ongoing Business:

CDBG activity reports: Nicole passed around a CDBG activity report outlining two drawdowns that will be done this week. One is for Meals on Wheels for the first two quarters of the year. Meals delivered so far total 196 to four low-income seniors. Drawdowns were for \$979.16, leaving a balance of 6,505.70. Second drawdown came out of Planning and Administration set aside for studies. Drawdown was for \$2,000, which is the City's match portion for the local waterfront revitalization plan for the grant that Chautauqua County Planning and Development received. 2014 Annual Action Plan was submitted on May 19, 2014, and our HUD representatives will be coming down June 24, to meet with Nicole to go over the status of the Inspector General's report and the status of a due payment and review the Action plan as well.

Boardwalk Update: The current vacancy will be filled by the same owners of Spike Daily's – they plan on putting in a restaurant and it should be up and running soon. Everyone is paid to date. The new ice cream tenant will be naming their shop "Fortunato's". All tenants are currently open for business (other than the new restaurant).

Community Gardens: All boxes are rented out. So far, the program seems to be running smoothly. Funding for the signs went through and they should be done and ready for delivery to the sites shortly.

Festivals: The committee was brought up-to-date about ongoing festival planning for the season.

Landbank Update: Steve continues to work with them to get the demolition program underway. The program is currently working in Jamestown, making Jamestown the first to test the program on. It was questioned who is responsible for the upkeep of the properties in the program (since the property on Dove Street is in the program, and the lawn appeared to be uncut for almost a month). Steve said that in this case, since the landbank owns the property, then upkeep is their responsibility. They were notified and the lawn has since been cut. It was questioned who is responsible for upkeep in general; when a property is sold through the program, there are guidelines that the new owners agree to including property upkeep.

Grant(s) update: There have been applications submitted for the NY Mainstreet program, and at this time it would appear that the main project is going to be the Coburn Block building on Central Avenue. We're at the point where we need technical assistance in terms of architectural drawings, working with the state for SHPO (State Historic Preservation Office) and environmental issues, and as part of the grant there is \$15,000 set aside for administration duties. The City put out an RFP about a month ago seeking interested parties to administer the grant, and we received two proposals – one from Harrington, and one from Labella (two local entities). Steve said although both have the required credentials to handle the project, his recommendation would be to go with Labella, based on their extensive prior experience and projects they've handled. Steve pointed out that the funds from this grant need to be expended by the end of this year. Steve said that Labella has negotiated extensions in the past from the program for other projects and that it has been granted as long as progress is being shown for the overall project. Their services would include monitoring the entire project until completion, with an annual checkup once a year for the first five years after completion. Not all occupants of the building will be upgrading, but it will encompass the majority, including some apartments upstairs (interior and exterior). Other ongoing projects include the seawall project.

Complete Streets: No new updates. Stacy asked Steve to follow-up with the County to ensure they are aware that rerouted traffic due to the Millennium Parkway construction could conflict with work being done on Route 60/5.

Marina project update: Soil tests came back and it appears that the results aren't as bad as originally feared. There will still be some slight modifications to the second floor (reducing the area) to accommodate the reduced weight load the soil can bear (as compared to what was originally figured). These modifications will need to go through the Planning Board again for approval, and then subsequently approved by Council.

Start-Up NY program (SUNY): Steve has been working with Kevin Kerns on mapping and it should be a couple of more weeks to see if the plan is approved. In general, there are a few other cities that have received approval so the process is apparently underway.

New Business

Mayor Dolce mentioned that we should be hearing soon about the SUNY 20/20 Project.

Roberts Road: Steve said he was to hear some news today regarding the project there – he will bring us up-to-date at the next meeting.

Adjournment:

Motion made to adjourn at 2:47 pm by Stacy Szukala, seconded by Bill Rivera.