

# City of Dunkirk

## Meeting Minutes

Economic Development Committee

November 27, 2012

Attendees: Andy Gonzalez, Councilman  
Bill Rivera, Councilman  
Stephanie Kiyak, Council Member-At-Large  
Steve Neratko, Director of Planning and Development  
Tim Gornikiewicz, CDBG Administrator, Planning and Development Department  
Nicole Waite, DLDC  
Councilwoman Stacy Szukala  
Councilman Mike Michalski  
City Attorney Ron Szot  
Mayor AJ Dolce  
Gib Snyder, Observer

*Call to Order:* 11:16 am

*Approval Meeting Minutes:* Meeting minutes for October 23, 2012, were approved by Councilman Rivera and seconded by Councilman Gonzalez.

### *Issues Discussed:*

**CDBG:** Steve Neratko met with Harry Sicherman and two associates to begin reviewing the state audit, while Tim Gornikiewicz worked with an associate to continue learning IDIS input. By Christmas 90-95% all information should be entered on the system (both past due and current). Harry has been in contact with HUD weekly to keep them apprised of the situation. They are still in the process of gathering information from past recipients for reporting purposes. It was suggested that any letters sent to businesses should be sent certified and come from the City Attorney.

**CDBG Funding Disbursing 2012 Funds and 5-year plan:** Funds disbursed to date include last year's funds and in-house funds. Tim promised a current report of all activity being provided to Council by the end of November. The application process is still ongoing. COI was chosen as a sub recipient and a proper contract is being put together by Harry and Steve, with approval by Ron Szot and final approval by the Council. It was requested that when Tim gives us the reports he will include all copies of the business plans submitted. There have been four public meetings

for the 1-year plan to date, and applications are due by December 14<sup>th</sup>. Both 1-year and 5-year plans must be received by HUD by February 15<sup>th</sup>. The 5-year plan has had all initial public hearings (planning meetings) – there will still be a couple of more internal meetings with Travis for compiling the draft, then another public hearing to introduce the draft and comments, then a final public meeting to present the final plan. One of Harry’s associates has worked for HUD for 40 years (and was even Harry’s first boss), further assuring Council that Harry and his associates possess the experience needed to address the HUD portfolio.

Ron talked about the framework of the 5-year plan and 1-year action plan. There’s a tiered series of public input sessions, plans approved by HUD, and then Council Authority for each step. Council will have the opportunity to set policy over time.

Tim talked about designating some demolition and façade work as “slum and blight” – although this title has a negative connotation, it would allow the city to use funds without the usual constraints of the program. We would be able to select a target area (an area in major need of assistance) and use a significantly larger amount of funding if we choose this route. First step would involve a study to decide which areas would be best to focus on. Councilwoman Szukala voiced concern that some residents may not feel that the process of selection is fair if all four Wards aren’t receiving funds. Councilman Michalski also inquired why we wouldn’t want to spread the funds throughout the city. Steve explained that the “low/mod income area” is census-tract based, and the entire City has recently been designated by HUD as such. If we were to choose to go with the “slum and blight” program, we would be free to choose the target area based on what we believe would be the best use of the funds. Steve further explained that by targeting an area (such as the major business district) significant work done there would have an impact on the entire city, and that we shouldn’t overlook that a thriving downtown benefits everyone. He pointed out that in comparison to many other communities, we currently use a fairly large portion (one third) of our funds on housing, so the community has not been overlooked in that regard. It was further discussed where the funds should be directed, and Steve mentioned that the area should be picked based on being an area that can really be impacted – houses and buildings in disrepair and an obvious lack of overall investment. Part of the HUD regulations address particular areas of concern can be those affected by Urban Renewal, and that there is even more leeway for these particular parcels. Steve feels that by focusing on one large area it would make a much bigger impact than on smaller areas. The first place to start will be creating a survey or observation study. Steve was asked to present more information regarding this program at the next meeting.

**Boardwalk Update:** The newest tenant, Brown Bean, is in the process of moving in, despite a few issues with the County Health Department. They are hopeful to be open before December 1<sup>st</sup>. The Boardwalk is also interested in doing a Winter Festivals and may reach out to the Festivals Committee. It was inquired if any tenants are past due – one tenant is past due and the standard steps (according to the contract) are being taken by Steve and Ron.

**Festivals:** The Festivals Committee will be meeting December 6<sup>th</sup> at 4 pm in the conference room at the Stern’s Building. Andy informed the group he will not be able to attend. Their first order of business will be appointing board positions.

**Brownfield cleanup:** A handout was provided regarding the cleanup at the former Roblin Steel site, and AJ mentioned that the County IDA folks are currently working with developers for this site.

**Historic Registry:** A handout was provided regarding an editorial in the Buffalo News about rehabilitation tax credit availability. Further discussion concerned grant possibilities for our City should we consider registering eligible buildings. Nicole informed us that the next step would be to set up a local landmark law (which is already in place in the City Charter) or use the state's ordinance (which is much more in-depth than ours). Next would be to create a Historical Preservation Board (as outlined in Chapter 46 of the City Charter). This will be done through the Development office. Steve talked a little about the process of promoting the program throughout the community, with the newly established Board taking a look at buildings/districts and deciding which would be best to designate as an area, then proceed to market to the businesses and houses that would be involved in that area. Nicole also mentioned that there is grant funding available if we take the further step of establishing an historic preservation office. These funds could be used surveys and other expenses involved in the registry process.

**Grant and Development Opportunities:** We received an Arbor Day Quick-Start Grant of \$1000. We're planning to use the funds in Spring 2013, which would coincide with Arbor Day. Development office is still waiting to hear back on the status of other submitted grant applications. Steve pointed out that since we are now at the end of the year we need to start focusing on next year's grant opportunities. Bill Rivera talked about The Point and its potential expansion. One grant opportunity revolves around cleaning the beach such as the walkways and rubble for visual benefit as well as safety. Potential projects could include modifying the playground area to accommodate smaller children. Building additional buildings is also a possibility with grant funding. The main grant will need to focus on recreational uses and is due July 2013, so planning must begin soon.

**New business:** The City website is currently being worked on by Tim and Ashley. Tim offered that there is a lot of room to add new pages and to let him know of any ideas to add to the site (it was mentioned that video of council meetings could also be posted). It was questioned whether DPW is currently posting schedules on the website and Tim said that to his knowledge only the recycling schedule. It was requested that Tim reach out to the department to get a copy of their schedules to post regularly.

### *Adjournment*

Motion to adjourn was made at 12:17 pm by Councilman Rivera, seconded by Councilman Gonzalez.