

City of Dunkirk

Meeting Minutes

Economic Development Committee

September 25, 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
Councilwoman Stacy Szukala, Guest
City Clerk Lacy Lawrence
Gib Snyder, Observer

Call to Order: 11:02 am

Motion was made by Councilwoman Szukala and second by Councilman Gonzales to enter into executive session at 11:02 a.m. to discuss personnel issues regarding the ACO, specifically allegations of conduct and aspects of his contract. Session ended with a motion by Councilwoman Szukala and seconded by Councilman Rivera at 11:14 a.m., and the meeting was resumed.

Approval of Last Meeting Minutes: Meeting minutes were approved for June, July and August 2012 meetings.

Issues Discussed:

Proposed US Fish and Wildlife Services Facility: Steve Neratko, Director of Planning and Development, discussed the proposed project that will partner US Fish and Wildlife Service, SUNY Fredonia and the City of Dunkirk: The grant application will be approximately \$8-10 million (SUNY will make the application). At this time, discussions have centered on funds being allocated for a research facility/field station and a research vessel (estimated between 60-80 feet long). This project moving forward depends on whether SUNY can obtain the grant – it's estimated that the vessel will cost \$4-5 million dollars alone. The size of the field station is not known at this time, but it's been discussed that it will probably be 2-3 stories with dry/wet labs, a conference area and visitor center – this would all be constructed under Phase I. Phase II will incorporate a much larger building to house Fish and Wildlife Services permanently. It is anticipated that several people involved in this project will relocate to Dunkirk. The most probable location for this facility will be the city-owned site between the Clarion Hotel and

Tim Hortons – this particular location being chosen due to its proximity to Lake Erie. It is anticipated that the design will include additional uses such as an amphitheater, conference space, IMAX theater, and a fishery area where the “soft-species” could be located (US Fish and Wildlife currently brings in fish from Vermont). At first there will be a few jobs, with the potential for many more (perhaps 30-40). It was reiterated that this will not incur costs for the City. SUNY has expressed their hope that the agreement (with the City) will be modeled after the SUNY Incubator. It was pointed out that it will be tax-exempt and that more discussions will be needed regarding this. Steve says that they are also interested in property northeast of the treatment plant – it would provide a conservation area as well as an urban wildlife refuge right on the lake. There exists the possibility of also tying into a bike path. Steve informed the group that US Fish and Wildlife partners with private industry as well; they regularly hold festivals throughout the year and are interested in bringing their traveling festivals here as well – they estimate it could bring 4,000-5,000 outside visitors for each of these events. Their festivals normally include wildlife such as birds and butterflies, and they generally tie-in an educational aspect as well. It was questioned whether they may provide assistance with Amtrak creating a stop in Dunkirk and Steve said they would probably be very interested since they also have employees that live in Buffalo and it would help with their commute. We will be doing a resolution by next Tuesday’s meeting stating a commitment from the City to work with SUNY and US Fish and Wildlife. It was questioned whether they would also be interested in the DLDC property next to Demitri’s but Steve said that this proposed location better suits their needs. The field station will be used by them, the DEC and the college. The grant is due October 14th, and being a SUNY grant the timeline is generally much quicker than a state grant. If they get the grant, development could begin as early as next Spring. This project has been in the works for 10 years with the Inner Harbor in Buffalo and then fell apart, which brought them to Dunkirk.

Recap of the festival season: Tim said that funds are in the black at the end of the season. Last few weeks of beer sales were slow, with weather perhaps being the blame. Overall, it was a successful year. It was requested that a printout be presented for final totals. Discussion ensued regarding the creation of a festivals committee. Councilwoman Szukala requested to be on the committee. It was suggested that the City host a Halloween parade, and perhaps a pairing of wine and cheese would be a good festival for the Fall. It was discussed that the Festival Committee still be under DLDC administration. It was also discussed that events should be consolidated so that duplication can be avoided between city-sponsored events versus DLDC events versus festivals held by the local community. Finally, it was discussed that festivals take place throughout the year, since there are year-round seasons that can be celebrated.

Boardwalk: There is currently an opening and applications are available. It was discussed that there will be a press release and more advertising, including notice on the city website. Steve told us that quite a few people have responded to date. Applications are due October 9th. Currently, folks who have inquired want to stay open year-round, and perhaps 12 hours each day (we were informed that this was a coffee shop).

Update on CDBG: – 2012 reallocation has been completed and submitted to HUD – Steve informed the group that HUD has given their approval. We are still waiting to receive funds. HUD complimented the City and said we actually did more than necessary with regards to the submitted paperwork and public hearings. The 5-Year Plan planning process is still underway, with a hearing scheduled for October 4, 6pm at Hose Four fire station. This will be the last input

meeting. Once the draft document is completed there will be three or four more meetings for public comment. The due date of the 5-Year Plan is April 1, 2013. We are permitted to submit the plan 45 days prior to this date. Along with this plan is the 2013 Action Plan process, and will be handled in the the same fashion as the 5-Year Plan. Steve informed the group that the kick-off meeting with Harry Sickerman (contractor hired for CDBG issues) went really well, and that their initial meeting was almost four hours long. Steve believes he will be a great asset to the City, and seems extremely knowledgeable, having many years of experience. Harry expressed confidence that all reports will meet their submission deadline, and he also informed Steve that the (flat-fee) amount the City is paying him should provide services through 2013.

Tree program: It was discussed that through the efforts of resident Skeeter Tower coupled with SUNY Fredonia, trees have been planted on the 600 block on Main Street. Steve told the group that an Arbor Day grant has been submitted and that there is the potential to hold an Arbor Day event in 2013. Steve informed the group that there are three or four grant possibilities for tree projects, which his department plans on applying.

Potential Projects: It was discussed that Dunkirk has an opportunity to team with NY State Film Commission for filming future movies in the City. Further discussion centered on the logistics of compiling information. Other considerations concerned marketing, both on the NY State Film Commission website, in addition to doing direct marketing to film studios. It was pointed out that neighboring towns can be included in our marketing efforts, and that a “film commission” (or something along those lines) be created to gather the information for marketing. It was pointed out that collecting this information could be coupled with gathering information overall for a Dunkirk marketing campaign.

Steve talked about the meeting with Jason Dilworth (a Graphics Art Professor at SUNY) and his students, who are looking to do a branding/marketing campaign for the City of Dunkirk. They met with the Development office and discussed various components to focus on. The students discussed their research as to what other communities have done, as far as what works and what doesn't. They plan on reaching out to local businesses, in addition to bridging SUNY and the City. They stressed that more festivals be held in the city, with a focus of marketing to neighboring towns and SUNY. In addition, beautification projects discussed included the pros and cons of having murals painted throughout the city.

The CSX station tour was mentioned and that it is still as yet to be scheduled.

Next Meeting

Tuesday, October 23, 2012 in the conference Room

Adjournment

Motion to adjourn was made at 12:05 pm by Councilman Gozalez, seconded by Councilman Rivera.