

Economic Development Committee



Chairperson Councilman Vincent Loffredo
Members Councilman Anthony Gennaro
Councilman Edward McKeon
Councilman Phillip Pessina
Councilwoman Jeanette Blackwell

Staff Bobbye Knoll Peterson, Acting Director of ECD
Brian Gartner, ECD Staff

SPECIAL MEETING Minutes

DATE: Tuesday April 25th 2023

TIME: 7:00 p.m.

Meeting was held online via WebEx and in person, Room 208, Municipal Building.

In attendance: Councilman Vincent Loffredo, Councilman Anthony Gennaro, Councilman Edward McKeon, Councilwoman Jeanette Blackwell

Staff in Attendance: Mayor Benjamin Florsheim, Brian Gartner, ECD Staff

Public In attendance: Trevor Davis, Sara Mendillo (Middlesex Chamber of Commerce)

1. **Call to Order:** Chairman V. Loffredo called the meeting to order @ 7:00pm.
2. **Approval of Minutes**
 1. Minutes of the March 14th 2023 Regular Meeting – Moved by Councilman McKeon, seconded by Councilwoman Blackwell, and passed unanimously.
3. **Public Session:** Chairman Loffredo opens the public session. No members of the public wish to be heard so the public session is closed.
4. **New Business**
 1. **Update on staffing in the ECD office.**
 1. Mayor Florsheim informed the committee of the following.

Director of ECD – 18 applications were received. Twelve of the applicants were forwarded by HR to the Mayor’s office for interviews. From there it was narrowed down to three candidates who received second interviews.

An offer of employment was extended to the preferred candidate, and was accepted on April 25th 2023. The candidate currently works in Economic Development, and has experience in getting Federal and State dollars for projects. The Mayor is hopeful to forward the candidates name to the Common Council for approval at their June meeting.

Community Development Specialist – Hilda Santiago continues to serve in a temporary role.

Economic Development Specialist – Negotiations with UEPSU are ongoing.

Chairman Loffredo inquired to the Mayor about the opportunity for the preferred candidate to meet with the members of the Common Council.
5. **Old Business**
 1. **21st Century Bond**
 1. No changes have been made in the last month, no additional expenditures.

2. **Arcade Redevelopment**

1. Mayor Florsheim informs the committee of the following.

The city is very close to being able to announce news.

The project is moving forward without the “Attention to Detail” parcel.

The asking price for the property is not one the city can agree to - the difference between the city’s assessed value of the property and the asking price is too large.

An agreement has been executed with the preferred developer.

The OGC viewed the agreement as one of the most fair during his tenure.

Next the agreement will move to the Common Council for ratification.

Soil testing is to commence soon to see how much load the site can handle. The parking component will be constructed first, and the residential component second.

3. **Riverfront Master Plan**

1. Mayor Florsheim spoke about their trip to visit Highland Park w/ the Garden Club & City staff.
2. Mayor Florsheim spoke about the 2nd annual Earth Day event on the Riverfront.
3. Howard Weissberg, Deputy Director of Public Works is planning on attending the May 9th meeting to discuss the City’s proposal for Route 9, and the proposed parking on Harbor Drive once the on-ramp to Route 9 is closed.

The ramp from Harbor Drive to Route 9 is to remain open during the construction.

4. **80 Harbor Drive**

1. Progress continues to be made. Delays in production and supplies have pushed back the potential opening to fall.
2. The committee recognizes Trevor Davis who raises the following questions in regards to the main sign at Harbor Park.
 - a. Owner of the sign?
 - b. Will the sign still have the proper “line of sight” after the Route 17 project is completed and the on ramp from Harbor Drive is closed?

5. **R. M. Keating**

1. Several tenants have been served with 30 day notices. Several tenants have become current.

A company who initially expressed interest in vacating all of their spaces (three) wants to now retain one.

6. **Grant Earmarks**

Met all requirements of the Community Challenge Grant, and now we are awaiting funding.

7. **Dripps Road**

1. The department received correspondence from the OGC in regards to N. Stamler’s letter of March 14th 2023. The correspondence has been provided to the EDC.

The committee decided to table the issue until next month, and the letter is entered into the record. No action is taken at this time.

2. Councilwoman Blackwell inquires about how many homes have been foreclosed on due to nonpayment of taxes. Staff will look into this, and report to the committee at the next meeting.

8. **Adjournment:** Moved by Councilwoman Blackwell, seconded by Councilman McKeon, and passed unanimously.