

MINUTES - ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY BOARD

July 2, 2020

1 | Page

The Economic Development Advisory Board of the City of Fort Myers, Florida, met in regular session at Oscar M. Corbin, Jr. City Hall, 2200 Second Street, its regular meeting place in the City of Fort Myers, Florida, on Thursday, July 2, 2020, at 2:09 p.m. Present were: Orié Lee Ford, Chair, presiding, Dennis Landfried, Vice Chair, Regular Board Members, Jerome Miller, and Roy Kennix, Alternate Board Member Nannette Maxson. Also present were: Steven Belden, Community Development Director; Grant Alley, City Attorney; Gwen Carlisle, MMC, City Clerk; and Jennifer Myers, Recording Specialist. Absent: John L. Kakatsch and Ken Pariser.

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Ford called the meeting to order at 2:09 p.m.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO FLAG AND ROLL CALL

Chair Ford led the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag and roll call was taken by Recording Specialist Myers.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Liston Bochette, III, resident, stated that it is good to keep planning and economics in balance so the Planning Board and the Economic Development Advisory Board should work together but stay independent of each other. He mentioned that the best place to find out where the City is headed is by listening to different City Board meetings. Mr. Bochette noted that the Board's volunteer positions are extremely important and thanked every Board Member for serving. He stated that when he was previously on the City Council, making decisions was easier knowing that the items coming forward were well thought out.

PRESENTATIONS – None

REGULAR ITEMS

1. Approve Minutes of the March 5, 2020 Economic Development Advisory Board Meeting

MOTION: Vice Chair Landfried moved to approve the Minutes of the March 5, 2020 Economic Development Advisory Board meeting; seconded by Board Member Maxson; motion carried unanimously.

REPORTS

2. Community Development Department Director's Reports

- a) Monthly Development Activity Report

Steven Belden, Director of Community Development, welcomed everyone back and noted that when COVID-19 hit, projects already under construction continued, however, projects that were in the pipeline getting ready to start construction shut down significantly. He mentioned that historically, permit values were averaging \$40 million each month with a few \$100 million months, then COVID-19 hit and permit values went down in April to around \$20 million, May was around \$30 million, June went up to around \$71 million and although a lot

MINUTES - ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY BOARD

July 2, 2020

2 | Page

of it was contributed to a big project, Silver Hills Development, there was still a great increase in June over the previous months. Mr. Belden reported that single family permit applications have bounced back as they were close to completely stopping for a couple of months. He felt that the economy is coming back, notwithstanding the latest spike in COVID-19, and that moving forward it will continue to improve locally and nationwide. Chair Ford noted hearing that the housing market will continue to rise in Southwest Florida as people are leaving the larger cities to move where it is less congested. Board Member Miller felt that the housing market is very robust and active. He noted the progress on the City Walk project, the Luminary Hotel and Convention Center, and an announcement of a food hall concept at McCollum Hall. Vice Chair Landfried mentioned the FineMark Bank building is progressing and projects within the City appear to be moving along as well. Board Member Maxson inquired when the Holiday Inn Hotel project will begin. Mr. Belden stated that the Holiday Inn project is in permitting, however, he does not have a specific start date. Chair Ford asked about the status of the Buc-ee's project. Mr. Belden noted that Buc-ee's is in the permitting process at this time. Chair Ford inquired about what kind of impact the pandemic has had on City's finances. Mr. Belden stated that this fiscal year budget has not been negatively impacted by the pandemic and, in fact, the City's taxable value increased by 9.75%, which equates to over a \$5 million increase in total value. He noted that an increase like this has never happened before, it is the highest increase in the County and felt it is attributed to new construction and value increases. Mr. Belden stated that the increase will help in the next fiscal year where the impacts of COVID-19 will potentially be more realized.

b) Business and Economic Development Administrator position

Mr. Belden reported that the Business and Economic Development Administrator position was advertised, there was a very good pool of applications received, eight were selected, two withdrew, and six applicants were interviewed. Mr. Belden noted that two applicants have been recommended and forwarded to the City Manager for follow-up interviews. He mentioned that it is a tough position to fill as economic development has many different aspects for one person to know, therefore, they are looking for somebody that fits the City's mission the best.

c) Economic Development website

Mr. Belden reported that the City will soon sign an agreement with an outside firm, Localintel, to create an economic development website with interactive modules to assist in finding good information about doing business in the City. Mr. Belden noted that this firm has created economic development websites all over the Country. Board Member Miller felt this firm does great work and this Board can provide them with information. Mr. Belden stated that he will forward to Localintel any information this Board wants to provide.

Mr. Belden reported that the Florida International University (FIU) Economic Development Study was delayed by the pandemic and the City extended their contract until the end of the year. Board Member Miller asked if the study was targeting Palm Beach Boulevard. Mr. Belden stated that FIU will be studying the corridors of Martin Luther King, Jr. (MLK) Boulevard, Palm Beach Boulevard, Cleveland Avenue, and Colonial Boulevard. He mentioned recently receiving FIU's first Competitive Assessment Report, wherein he will have a meeting with them next week to discuss the Report. He stated that next month FIU will make a presentation to Council for their input, and then FIU can make a presentation to Economic Development Advisory Board. Mr. Belden noted that FIU is continuing with community engagement with

MINUTES - ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY BOARD

July 2, 2020

3 | Page

Second Muse, and later in the year they will have a final full report with recommendations. Chair Ford asked if FIU could present their report to this Board prior to Council so that they can provide comments that can be presented to Council as well and Mr. Belden stated that can be arranged. Board Member Miller questioned if FIU is taking into account other completed studies such as the 2007-2008 Dover Kohl East Fort Myers Plans, MLK Overlay District Plan, and US 41 Plan. Mr. Belden indicated that FIU will look at those plans and collect household income data to provide a complete picture of how the residents and the commercial businesses in the corridors impact each other. Board Member Miller recalled that the City created standards for used car lots on Palm Beach Boulevard and that it is looking better. Mr. Belden stated that the Auto Ordinance is having some effect and it will continue to make improvements over time. Board Member Miller asked if a Checkers is planned on MLK Boulevard. Chair Ford noted that he was told that Checkers were constructing locations on MLK Boulevard and Cleveland Avenue. Mr. Belden mentioned that the site on Cleveland Avenue did not work out, however, the MLK Boulevard plans are in permitting and he will check the status.

BOARD MEMBER FOCUS AREAS, COMMENTS AND CONCERNS

3. Discussion on the effects of COVID-19

Vice Chair Landfried mentioned that the rebound shown on the Development Activity Report was positive. Board Member Miller stated that health concerns are still a fluid situation, recently there was an up-tick in cases and felt proud that the City restaurateurs and community is listening. Vice Chair Landfried noted concern for the non-profits as they are getting hit hard. Board Member Miller mentioned that over a billion dollars was vetoed from the Governor's budget because of COVID-19 and he was asked, along with other citizens, to write a letter to the Governor asking for funding for Billy's Creek water improvements and Centennial Park equipment, wherein the City did receive the funding. Board Member Maxson asked for an update on the Luminary Hotel. Mr. Belden stated that the Luminary Hotel is on track to open as planned. Board Member Maxson asked if the Board could tour the Luminary Hotel at this time as the tour was cancelled in April because of COVID-19. Clerk Carlisle stated that the Luminary Hotel will be contacted to see if they are allowing tours at this time. Chair Ford discussed mask wearing, commended the community for doing the right thing for everybody's safety, and that staying home pays off. Board Member Miller stated that things are moving very fast and it is helpful to watch the County Commission meetings for updates on COVID-19.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORTS

4. Chair's Report

Chair Ford suggested the Board pick up where it left off in March when it was discussing the Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) Program and making a presentation to Council regarding its current projects. Board Member Miller stated that there were a couple items the Board was going to vet and decide what to present to Council. Chair Ford noted the two biggest issues were affordable housing and the DBE Program, however, there were other items that the Board wanted to cover. Board Member Miller recalls discussing MLK near the police station and the Fowler Street realignment. He suggested that he give a report on the Downtown Master Plan for the Board to discuss at the next meeting. Vice Chair Landfried recalled the Board making a project list and wanting to have more communication with

MINUTES - ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY BOARD

July 2, 2020

4 | Page

Council to get an understanding of what issues they think are important. He mentioned that the Board needs to identify a couple of issues to dig into as opposed to trying to work on many different issues. Chair Ford understood that the Board's final agreement was not to take anything off the list but to focus on a few priorities. Vice Chair Landfried noted that the DBE Program and affordable housing were the top priorities. Board Member Miller recalled the Board discussing other community's incentive programs and felt that changing impact fees to be the same for tiny and large homes would incentivize the building of smaller scale houses. Chair Ford noted that affordable housing will require an in depth review as the City does not have a guide and that the Board decided to work on the DBE Program because it already has an Ordinance wherein the Board can review it and make recommendations. Board Member Miller stated that the Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) is reformulating the TIF program and suggested reaching out to them for an update. Chair Ford asked if the CRA and the City will need separate DBE program ordinances or administrative codes. City Attorney Alley stated that it depends on what exactly the program looks like and suggested inviting the CRA to a Board meeting to be included in the process. Chair Ford asked the Clerk to reach out to the CRA to invite them to attend the next meeting to discuss the DBE Program and coordinating efforts. City Attorney Alley asked that the record reflect Board Member Kennix arrived at the meeting.

MOTION: Vice Chair Landfried moved to approve inviting the CRA to a meeting to provide the Board with an update on their incentive programs; seconded by Board Member Maxson; motion carried unanimously.

Board Member Kennix mentioned reading about major corporations responding to COVID-19, Black Lives Matter, and racial inequities by providing funds to communities for affordable housing, education, and community development in the near future. Chair Ford noted that the major corporations are pooling their resources to invest millions of dollars into communities. Chair Ford questioned who will facilitate obtaining these funds to stimulate development in the Dunbar Community and the Martin Luther King Jr. Corridors. Board Member Miller asked who will decide where the funds will be spent. Board Member Kennix asked if the City has a person whose job it is to find money and could facilitate these funds. Clerk Carlisle and Mr. Belden noted that the City has a grant specialist. Chair Ford stated that the funding will most likely go to an independent group who will facilitate the funds and partner with the government wherein the City will need someone to focus on that project. Board Member Miller noted that it will be a public private partnership.

Clerk Carlisle announced receiving an email during the meeting from Antoine Williams, Assistant Director of the CRA, with an attached press release regarding the tax increment financing guidelines and that it will be provided to the Board by email after the meeting.

5. Next Meeting – August 6, 2020

ADJOURNMENT: Being that there was no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:11 p.m.