

MINUTES - ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY BOARD

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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, September 3, 2020, at 2:02 p.m. Present were: Dennis Landfried, Acting Chair, presiding, Regular Board Members, Jerome Miller, John L. Kakatsch, Roy Kennix, and Sharon Schulman. Also present were: Steven Belden, Community Development Director; Barbara Carr, Business and Economic Development Administrator; Grant Alley, City Attorney; Gwen Carlisle, MMC, City Clerk; and Jennifer Myers, Recording Specialist. Absent: Ori Lee Ford, Ken Pariser, and Nannette Maxson.

CALL TO ORDER

Acting Chair Landfried called the meeting to order at 2:02 p.m.

OATH OF OFFICE

City Clerk Gwen Carlisle administered the Oath of Office to new Regular Board Member Sharon Schulman.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO FLAG AND ROLL CALL

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

PUBLIC COMMENT – None

PRESENTATIONS

1. Bob Megazzini, Luminary Hotel, General Manager

Postponed to the October 1, 2020 Meeting.

2. Introduction of Barbara Carr, Business and Economic Development Administrator, City of Fort Myers

Steven Belden, Community Development Director introduced Barbara Carr, Business and Economic Development Administrator.

Ms. Carr thanked the board members for volunteering their time. She stated that the Board is a great asset and she is open to discussing with the Board what they would like to see happen. Ms. Carr noted that she has been visiting small business owners with the intention of setting up systematic business retention and expansion visits. She asked the Board to let her know if they know anyone she should visit and noted that her office is located in the Community Development Office.

REGULAR ITEMS

3. Approve Minutes of the August 6, 2020 Economic Development Advisory Board Meeting

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MOTION: Board Member Kakatsch moved to approve the Minutes of the August 6, 2020 Economic Development Advisory Board meeting; seconded by Board Member Miller; motion carried unanimously.

4. Discussion on Board presentation to Council

Board Member Miller presented a draft list of items to update Council and noted that the presentation to Council is two-fold wherein it will update them on what the Board is working on generally and what the Board is taking a deep dive into such as the DBE Ordinance. He mentioned the main items on the draft list to update council are; (1) the Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) recommendations, (2) corridor planning with the Florida International University (FIU) study, (3) MLK portal area, (4) Downtown and recreation recommendations, and (5) the Economic Development Office website.

Acting Chair Landfried stated that communicating with Council is significant to find out what is important to them as well as for them to know what is important to the Board. He suggested having this item on the Agenda for next month to finalize the list and pick a Council meeting for the presentation. Board Member Miller recommended making the presentation to Council at their second meeting in October or the first meeting in November. He noted that the decision for him to give the presentation was prior to having an Economic Development liaison and asked if it is now more appropriate for Barbara Carr to make the presentation. Mr. Belden noted that the Board presentation to Council should come from board members. City Attorney Alley noted that a staff member could make the presentation if the Board defines the content to be presented. Board Member Kennix felt that the presentation should be from the board members and suggested adding to the list Development Funding. Development funding would involve the utilization of a range of mechanisms for equity/venture/capital/loans for affordable housing and new development. He suggested advising the Council on the Board's stewardship as well. Acting Chair Landfried asked if Ms. Carr will be interacting with Council on the Agenda. Mr. Belden stated that it will evolve with the position.

REPORTS

5. Community Development Department Director's Reports

a) Monthly Development Activity Report

Mr. Belden stated that the permit activity in August was \$102 million wherein a lot of it was due to some big multi-family projects. He noted that all wards were very active and the Winkler Boulevard and Colonial Boulevard corridor area is showing great activity. Mr. Belden mentioned that overall multi-family and non-residential construction is strong in the City, however, not all aspects of development are back to pre-COVID times such as in entertainment, restaurants, and hotels. Acting Chair Landfried asked how this year's permit activity compares to last year. Mr. Belden stated that it is higher than last year in terms of permit dollar values, number of permits, and inspections. He explained the trend for permit activity in March was over \$40 million, April was under \$20 million, May had an up-tick, June was stronger, and July was over \$100 million. Board Member Kakatsch noted that the bottom one-third of the population, especially in the restaurant businesses and service businesses, are struggling to pay their rent even with the Lee County rental assistance program. Mr. Belden mentioned that there are segments of the economy and the City that are

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significantly struggling and that the City has an emergency utility and rental assistance in partnership with Lee County assistance. He recommended that the FIU strategy be a top priority for the Board and that it stays actively involved in that study as it addresses commercial and residential community corridors that need support.

Board Member Kennix mentioned that it is fundamental to address the needs of working class and lower income neighborhoods when it comes to affordability and economic inequality. He agreed that the Board should stay closely related to the FIU group study and asked that the Board receive periodic status reports. Board Member Kennix questioned what strategies the FIU Group is following to create channels that will provide access to information between the community and the academicians. He mentioned questions have been brought up on how the homeless can be built into program development so their voices can be heard. Board Member Kennix heard a question asked that if rent payments are being deferred, what is available to the small business landlords who use their rental units as income and suggested that the City advocate for both renters and landlords. Board Member Miller asked if the Board should make a recommendation to Council in regards to COVID-19 economic recovery. Mr. Belden noted that FIU group is creating stakeholder surveys and finding other ways to undertake engagement with the community to get feedback. Acting Chair Landfried mentioned that people are moving here from larger cities due to COVID-19. Mr. Belden stated that the latest population estimates for the City is 92,500 according to the Bureau of Economic and Business Research (BEBR). Board Member Miller stated that there is a lot of activity in the Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) areas. He noted that the Holiday Inn on US 41 is having a better month of July this year than last year.

b) Whether the City contributes funding to the Lee County Visitor and Convention Bureau for marketing

Mr. Belden reported that the City does not provide funding to the Lee County Visitor and Convention Bureau. Board Member Miller suggested that the City piggyback on the Counties efforts as the City is a destination to market as well. Ms. Carr mentioned that it is important to have those conversations so that everyone is moving in the same direction and encouraged Board Member suggestions. Acting Chair Landfried noted that the Board is open to her suggestions as well. Ms. Carr stated that the FIU business survey will be going out and asked that the Board assist in getting the word out in the community so that the surveys get filled out and returned. Acting Chair Landfried noted that it is importance for the Board to review the surveys as well. Board Member Miller felt that the City should promote itself better to other businesses for example by adding a section to the website that shows City owned properties available for redevelopment. Mr. Belden asked for the Board to recommend names of individuals or businesses that can be contacted to become a member of the FIU study stakeholder groups. Board Member Kennix asked for a timeline for the study. Mr. Belden noted that the goal is to have it completed by November or end of the year. Board Member Kakatsch mentioned that the Fort Myers Beach Council recently approved \$2.5 million for new landscaping with sailboat aesthetics and suggested that it might be time to update the downtown area.

Acting Chair Landfried asked if the Board could tour the Luminary Hotel after they open. Board Member Miller felt that a tour would be better than a presentation at the meeting. He mentioned that a tour would give the Board some perspective on the downtown progress. Board Member Miller noted that the Board could tour and help them get off the ground as they did suspend booking of conventions until next year because of COVID. Mr. Belden

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suggested touring the Caloosa Sound Convention Center as well as the hotel. Acting Chair Landfried suggested scheduling the tour prior to a meeting and then return to City Hall for the regularly scheduled meeting. Clerk Carlisle asked if Board would like to schedule the tour before the October 1, 2020 meeting such as at 12:45 p.m. and it was agreed. Board Member Miller suggested touring the Amphitheater as well as the hotel and Caloosa Sound Convention Center. Board Member Kennix stated that he would like to see what the hotel's economic impact will be to the people in the community and the size and characteristics of their workforce. Mr. Belden stated that they had anticipated hiring over 200 workers however, because of the coronavirus they will initially hire approximately half of those workers. Mr. Belden suggested that the draft list of items to update Council should be prioritized. Acting Chair Landfried asked that the economic impact data be provided prior to the tour. Mr. Belden stated that he will reach out to the Hotel and ask for that information. Board Member Miller stated that the CRA office will have TIF information such as construction numbers and jobs. He noted that the hotel will have trickledown economic impact to the restaurants, shops, and surrounding hotels with convention business.

City Attorney Alley reported that the Sunshine Law prohibits two or more Board Members communicating on matters that may foreseeably come before the Board without a meeting being publically noticed and minutes taken. He stated that to comply with the Sunshine Law, there are two options to the Board for the tour in that it can be a public right to attend or it can be a private tour with nonvoting attendees as witnesses that there is no discussion amongst the Board during the tour and followed with a meeting that is publically noticed to have open discussion on the matter. Board Member Miller asked if the Board Members can ask the tour guide questions. City Attorney Alley recommended having the tour guide come back to the regular meeting to answer questions. Board Member Miller recommended that the Board does not talk to each other during the tour and the tour guide comes back to City Hall for the meeting for questions and answers.

Board Member Kennix felt that the Board should review new development projects in the beginning to determine its impact on what it will do for the community not when the project is finished. Board Member Schulman stated that the Luminary Hotel will be pivotal in doing other things within the City therefore being familiar with what it offers can be incorporated into other projects.

BOARD MEMBER FOCUS AREAS, COMMENTS AND CONCERNS

6. Discussion regarding the Disadvantage Business Enterprise (DBE) Program

Board Member Miller provided a handout regarding small and disadvantaged business enterprise certification programs and asked if the Board should include in the Ordinance all of the certification programs for woman-owned businesses (WBE), minority-owned businesses (MBE), veteran-owned businesses (VBE), businesses owned by economically disadvantaged individuals (DBE), and businesses owned by LGBT individuals (LGBTBE). He summarized that the DBE Ordinance 3126 was sunsetted by the City, the Board is going to make recommendations for a new Ordinance, and that the CRA has already incorporated percentages as part of their program. Board Member Miller stated that Lee County's DBE Program is administered by the Small Business Development Center at Florida Gulf Coast University (FGCU) who came and spoke with the Board previously and he would suggest reaching out to them again to ask how they are shepherding this program. He mentioned that the Florida State Minority Supplier Development Council, Women's Business

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Development Council, and the Lee County Port Authority have DBE programs. Board Member Kennix suggested that the Board get a clearer affix of what exists now by inviting the Purchasing Department to a meeting to discuss the scope of their program management. He stated that to get certified now a person must apply to the State Office of Supplier Diversity. Acting Chair Landfried suggested tabling this discussion until next meeting when Chair Ford returns.

MOTION: Board Member Kennix moved to approve inviting the City Purchasing Department to a meeting and review the scope of the City's existing minority participation programs with respect to construction and development; seconded by Board Member Kakatsch; motion carried unanimously.

7. Discuss a plan for a welcoming threshold on the MLK vacant lot

Board Member Miller stated that the portal location is currently owned by Florida Department of Transportation (DOT) and therefore, phase one (1) of this project would be for the City to request ownership of the property. He noted that phase two (2) would be to determine the best use for the property such as adding signage, landscaping, or a park. Board Member Schulman asked what the economic benefit will be for the portal. Board Member Miller noted that portals are important for identity and it would transfer an ugly piece of property into a beautified welcoming threshold into the City. Acting Chair Landfried suggested adding this to the talking points for Council to ask for their feedback. Board Member Miller stated that he has presented this portal idea to Council over the years wherein they agreed it is a good idea, however, it is a matter of logistics to get it done. He noted that he has also had discussions with FDOT over the years wherein they stated that there is no use for the property and the City can make an official request to take ownership. Board Member Kakatsch mentioned that the Dunbar area is coming along nicely with new street lights, future sidewalks and curbing.

MOTION: Board Member Miller moved to make a presentation as part of communication with Council to request ownership of the lot from the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) for a portal welcome area; seconded by Board Member Miller; motion carried unanimously.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORTS

8. Chair's Report

Acting Chair Landfried summarized that on the next agenda there be an item to finalize the Board presentation to Council and choose a date, the Board identified that phase two (2) of the FIU Economic study is important and request they return to help the Board make recommendations from the study, the Board established having a tour of the Luminary Hotel prior to the meeting on October 1 with the idea that the Board will have a non-voting member to make sure that the Sunshine Law is followed and then come back and ask questions of Mr. Megazzini on economic development surrounding the Hotel. The Board also suggested inviting the Purchasing Department to a meeting regarding the DBE program, and that the DBE program be a discussion item at the next meeting. Board Member Miller asked for an update on the website progress. Mr. Belden stated that the City Manager was holding off on the website until the new position was filled, therefore, they will be meeting with the City Manager soon to get the website finalized.

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9. Next Meeting – October 1, 2020

ADJOURNMENT: *There being no further business, it was moved by Board Member Kennix; seconded by Board Member Kakatsch, and unanimously carried to adjourn the meeting at 3:34 p.m.*