



AGENDA

Economic Development Commission Meeting

March 4, 2022

8:30 a.m.

LOCATION

DeKalb County Economic Development Corporation (DCEDC)

2179 Sycamore Road, Unit #102

DeKalb, Illinois 60115

- A. Roll Call
- B. Approval of the Agenda
- C. Approval of Minutes
 - 1. November 5, 2021
- D. Public Participation
- E. Old Business – None
- F. New Business
 - 1. Alternative Focus for the Economic Development Commission?
- G. Reports
 - 1. City Manager Report
 - 2. DeKalb Chamber of Commerce Report
 - 3. DeKalb County Economic Development Corporation Report
- H. Next Meeting: May 6, 2022
- I. Adjournment

**MINUTES
CITY OF DEKALB
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
NOVEMBER 5, 2021**

The Economic Development Commission (EDC) of the City of DeKalb, Illinois, held a Regular meeting on November 5, 2021, at the DeKalb County Economic Development Corporation (DCEDC) office, 2179 Sycamore Road, Unit 102, DeKalb, Illinois 60115.

Chair Jeff Richardson called the meeting to order at 8:32 a.m.

A. ROLL CALL

Executive Assistant Ruth Scott called the roll and the following EDC members were present: Vernese Edghill-Walden, Grant Goltz, Jeff Richardson, Mark Sawyer, Brian Scholle, and Sam Walt. Also in attendance were Ex-Officio member Paul Borek, City Manager Bill Nicklas, and Mayor Cohen Barnes. Ex-Officio member Matt Duffy and Council Liaison Carolyn Morris were absent.

B. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

MOTION: Mr. Walt moved to approve the agenda; seconded by Mr. Sawyer.

VOTE: Motion carried by a voice vote of the majority of members present.

C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. September 3, 2021

MOTION: Mr. Sawyer moved to approve the minutes; seconded by Mr. Walt.

VOTE: Motion carried by a voice vote of the majority of members present.

D. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was none.

E. REPORTS

1. City Manager Report

City Manager Nicklas reported that the City purchased the Hunter Hillcrest shopping center parcel on October 18, 2021. The City is now working with commercial and residential tenants for relocation. So far two commercial tenants have been relocated – a hair salon and American Dream Tax.

Continuing, City Manager Nicklas reported that a fire in the second story portion of the building on November 5, 2021, caused considerable smoke damage and shut the building down for 24 hours. Power has since been restored to the first level and commercial businesses are reopening. The tenant spaces are all uninhabitable and plans to get them relocated have been accelerated.

City Manager Nicklas stated that moving expenses – first and last month rent and security deposit – will be reimbursed to tenants providing proof of relocation (a signed lease, receipts, etc.).

City Manager Nicklas added that Northern Fresh Market will be the biggest relocation obstacle due to the large pieces of equipment in the unit. Further, the business was the most compromised because of the fire and water leakage issues.

Ms. Edghill-Walden asked about transportation for the clients who frequented the hair salon, which moved to 10th Street. City Manager Nicklas replied that the new location is on a bus route, noting that many of the owner's clients lived in the area she moved to.

There was lengthy discussion regarding the relocation of Northern Fresh Market, initiated by Ms. Edghill-Walden and her concern that there will be no market left in the area for residents to obtain healthy fresh foods. She noted that she isn't questioning the City's commitment and effort, but she's concerned for the residents in the area.

City Manager Nicklas stated that the use of a mobile truck from DeKalb Community Gardens is a possibility in the short-term.

Mayor Barnes stated that while we can't force a grocery store to locate within the area, incentives could be provided to assist if there was an interested party.

Discussion further ensued regarding transportation availability and Hunter's lack of responsibility regarding the condition of the building. The City is trying to be a responsible landlord and attempting to make temporary repairs as needed, specifically on the roof.

Mayor Barnes stated he recently attended a breakfast that included many pastors from DeKalb where there was discussion regarding the fresh food options situation. They are all working together to figure out a resolution.

City Manager Nicklas continued his report, which included that Project Barb still hasn't been named, the ongoing search for a new Fire Chief, and that he and Mr. Borek are working on interests and leads together, which includes the open area from the west of First Street and Lincoln Highway down to Pearl Street.

There was brief discussion regarding truck route issues.

Mayor Barnes brought up the Lincoln Highway reconfiguration, which should get started in the Spring of 2022. City Manager Nicklas added that the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) has had some issues with the plan, which caused the project to stall but the project will happen.

Mayor Barnes stated there's a developer interested in purchasing some of the Hunter properties. Discussion ensued regarding the developer and Hunter's standing fines, which would not be transferred to the new owner.

There was also discussion regarding the demolition of the Hunter Hillcrest building. There will be decisions to be made regarding what should be located on the property and the community will be invited to provide input.

Mayor Barnes stated the City is starting to get a reputation for being business friendly and offered his thanks to City Manager Nicklas for helping turn that around.

Ms. Edghill-Walden asked if it would be possible to do a Belonging presentation at an upcoming EDC meeting. Those in attendance thought it was an excellent idea. Executive Assistant Scott will send a link to the video to all EDC members.

2. DeKalb Chamber of Commerce Report

Mr. Duffy was absent from this meeting.

3. DeKalb County Economic Development Corporation Report

Mr. Borek reported that the demand on real estate and interest in DeKalb County and the city of DeKalb is unprecedented, noting it is in response to the Facebook and Ferrara projects. He then mentioned the DeKalb County Enterprise Zone and what it includes, stating a lot of great activity has taken place within the enterprise zone.

Brief discussion ensued regarding the idea of a truck repair center within DeKalb.

Mr. Borek continued and spoke of the shortage of workers throughout the country. A DCEDC sponsored webinar was held recently to discuss current trends, retention, recruiting, and on-the-job training programs.

Mayor Barnes mentioned one of his employees was recruited from a program that helps rehabilitate those attempting to reenter the workforce, and noted he'd like to see DCEDC come on board with something like that.

Discussion ensued.

Mr. Borek also reported that he's been approached by church groups regarding an Afghan resettlement program in the area.

Mr. Borek further reported on the Opportunity Unbound program that promotes DeKalb County as a place to work and live, noting that early next year a county wide campaign will be introduced for ideas on what's needed to keep moving forward.

Brief discussion ensued regarding a presentation on the Opportunity Unbound program at an upcoming EDC meeting.

F. OLD BUSINESS

1. Business Retention Program – Start or Stop

This topic will be discussed at the January 7, 2022, meeting.

Ms. Edghill-Walden left the meeting at 9:42 a.m.

G. NEW BUSINESS

1. Alternative Focus for the Economic Development Commission

There was brief discussion regarding refocus of the EDC. Mayor Barnes stated he'd like to see this group gather feedback from developers after a project is complete to find out what processes caused the most frustration.

Mr. Borek left the meeting at 9:45 a.m.

The viability of the EDC was questioned and those members still in attendance agreed that each would come to the next meeting with ideas about moving the EDC forward.

H. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the EDC will be on January 7, 2022.

I. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: Mr. Sawyer moved to adjourn the meeting; seconded by Mr. Scholle.

VOTE: Motion carried by a voice vote of the majority of members present and the meeting adjourned at 9:49 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Ruth A. Scott, Executive Assistant