



CITY OF EAST PROVIDENCE
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

Minutes of October 21, 2021

Held in Conference Room A, City Hall

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Chairwoman Botelho at 7:05 pm. Those identified as present were Chairwoman Botelho, Mr. Leonardo, Mr. Radway, Mr. Brun, Mr. Corria, and Mr. Moran (staff).

a. Approval of open session minutes of June 17, 2021

b. Approval of Minutes of September 16, 2021

Mr. Leonardo noted that the September meeting was a live meeting held in City Hall and was not a Zoom meeting. Mr. Moran said that he would amend the minutes to reflect this.

On a Motion by Mr. Corria and seconded by Mr. Radway, the Commission unanimously voted to approve the June 17, 2021 open session meeting minutes and the September 16, 2021 minutes with the noted modification.

II. New Business

A. Loan Request of Incred-A-Bowl Food Corporation - To be deliberated in Executive session by vote of the Economic Development Commission

On a Motion by Mr. Leonardo and Seconded by Mr. Brun, the Commission unanimously voted to enter into executive session.

Reconvening in Open Session

The Commission reconvened in open session and Mr. Moran noted the decision of the Commission to deny the request of Incred-a-Bowl Food Corporation based on a lack of identified funding sources and application equity for a highly leveraged project and a lack of loan security associated with the loan request and the resulting denial of a loan request from another non-profit

lending source. It was noted that the loan application was also difficult to follow based on what was submitted.

III. Old Business

A. Economic Development Commission Powers and Duties Discussion

Chairwoman Botelho indicated that Commission member Jonathan Killian had provided several revisions that were incorporated into the document and are included in the latest draft. She asked about an update to the discussion for updating the re-design of the City's business website. Mr. Moran indicated that Mr. Leonardo and he were going to be discussing the update with representatives from Civic Plus and that the Department would report back to the Commission at a future meeting. Mr. Leonardo said that the current page does not allow changes to the front "page" of the website and that he would also like to work on creating a business GIS to highlight available properties and provide a map reference to projects that are underway in the City. These changes will make it more simple and convenient to get information from the City's business website.

Chairwoman Botelho said that she thought the Commission should focus on specific areas that through redevelopment would be beneficial to economic development such as Watchemoket, Phillipsdale and other areas that can be focused on for revitalization. Mr., Moran said that a Commission meeting where members mark a map of critical development areas could be identified for action by the Commission.

Chairwoman Botelho asked if someone from Horsley Witten would be presenting again to the Commission. Mr. Moran said that he believed that Ms. Moravec could potentially return to present their current draft an ideas to the Commission. He said if the Commission was interested he would contact Ms. Moravec to see if she could present to the group on the Comprehensive Plan at this time.

The Commission discussed the City's draft Comprehensive Plan including a discussion on improving bicycle facilities in the City. Mr. Corria said that he felt we have a good bicycle network but that there is a great deal more than can be done to improve.

There was discussion regarding the recruitment of new members to the Commission. Mr. Brun said that he had a person that he contacted who is interested in serving and that he has contacted the Mayor's office for an appointment. He said that he has experience in banking and finance and thought that he would be a good addition to the Commission.

It was agreed that the powers and duties page created by Chairwoman Botelho and updated by Mr. Killian could be provided to the new members so that they are aware of the work that the Commission does. Existing members could also take advantage of this document. Mr. Moran also

noted that former member Melissa Linhares was also a part of the process with her efforts on doing the Commission evaluation last year.

IV. Staff Report

A. Discussion on active and recently approved projects in the City and other economic development relevant activities underway

Mr. Moran and Mr. Leonardo discussed the EDA grants that are coming in the next several months including the tourism related grant and a grant called the economic adjustment assistance grant that can be used to fund a variety of actions that support economic development. Mr. Leonardo discussed the tourism grant and the types of improvements that may be eligible for funding including acquiring buildings, doing infrastructure improvements, etc. The tourism grant is due in January while the economic adjustment assistance grant is due in March.

Mr. Corria suggested that the Department look into General Service Administration (GSA) grants from the federal government, as well. He said he would forward information on these grants to Planning.

Economic adjustment assistance grants can be used for physical improvements, technical assistance and loan funds can even be used for revolving loan programs. The Beta Watchemoket Study has many ideas that can be utilized in a grant application.

Mr. Leonardo also discussed the site readiness grant through Commerce Rhode Island that could be used to establish an incubator in the City that might include acquiring a building to establish a location of the incubator. This application will be due in December. The Build Back Better grants through EDA are also available but these are more regional in their makeup and the City does not envision applying for an application to this grant program.

Mr. Moran discussed the City's cooperative effort with the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council (BVTC) as a result of the legislature approving the City's allocation of its tourism funding. The City will be working with BVTC and Laura McNamara who is working as a liaison between the City and the BVTC to promote tourism. Betty Galligan from Newberry Marketing will also be a partner in this effort. Ms. Gallegan has met with the BVTC and the City will be gearing up with a variety of ideas to implement in 2022. Branding and special events will certainly be a part of the discussion. Laura McNamara can also update the Commission on this effort at perhaps our next meeting.

Mr. Moran discussed the Watchemoket Square Day Zoom webinar that Bill Fazioli and Mr. Moran will be conducting to discuss the activities that are occurring in the Watchemoket Square area. The East Providence Area Chamber will be hosting this Zoom webinar event. This webinar event will be happening sometime in early November.

The Commission discussed the Exxon Mobil property. MG Commercial is their realtor. At this time, there have been no specifics on the types of uses that will be completed on the property. There is the potential to develop commercial uses to the property west of Wampanoag Trail. Land to the east of the Trail is too wet to be developed so it is not likely that development will occur in that area. There is also land located near Tripps Lane that has good potential for development. The redevelopment of any portion of this land will likely take some time and any additional information can be relayed to the commission at a future meeting.

Mr. Brun asked about the Ivy Place development on Taunton Avenue and the new residential development being proposed at James Street and Waterman Avenue. Mr. Moran said that the developer of Ivy Place, a non-profit, will need additional funding to proceed with the project and at this time they are seeking additional funding. Mr. Moran indicated that the Waterman Avenue project has received all of its approvals and will be proceeding to construction in early 2022.

The Commission discussed the status on the Carpionato property on Newport Avenue. Mr. Moran said that Carpionato has officially stated that they intend to improve the property but as of this date they have only received a Master Plan approval. So it is likely that their redevelopment of this property will take some time.

Mr. Moran provided an update on the status of the Newport Center project. AR Development has commenced work on the multi-family development and should have the units ready for occupancy by late 2022.

Chairwoman Botelho asked about the allocation of ARPA funds for the Commission's use to fund the loan program. Mr. Moran said that the Planning Department has indicated to the Mayor's Office that up to \$500,000 should be allocated to the loan program and \$250,000 should be allocated to a façade improvement program. At this time no decision has been made on allocating these funds to these uses.

IV. Adjournment

On a Motion by Mr. Leonardo and seconded Mr. Brun, the Commission unanimously voted to adjourn the meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 8:20 pm
Respectfully submitted,

James Moran

Recording Secretary