

**MINUTES OF THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
AND VILLAGE BOARD
August 16, 2023**

The meeting of the Libertyville Economic Development Commission and Village Board was called to order at 7:30 a.m. at the Libertyville Village Hall Board Room, 118 West Cook Avenue, Libertyville, Illinois.

Members Present: Chairman John Cortesi, and Commissioners, Dmitry Dukhan, Brian Grano, Andrew Herrmann, Thomas Kreuser, Dan Marks, and Edward Werdell.

Members Absent: Commissioner Steve Martin.

Board members present: Mayor Donna Johnson, and Trustees Hickey, Krummick, and Connell.

Staff Present: Kelly Amidei, Village Administrator and Heather Rowe, Economic Development Manager.

Others Present: Mark Anderson and Jennifer Johnson of Main Street Libertyville.

Minutes: The minutes of the June 2023 meetings were approved [Werdell-Motion/Marks-Second].

Business Support Program Discussion and Recommendation

Chairman Cortesi noted that the Village Board asked the Commission to provide feedback on a proposed grant program, a draft of which is outlined in the memo in the meeting packet. At his request, Ms. Rowe reviewed the proposed program which includes two segments for which a total of \$100,000 is budgeted in the current fiscal year:

1. Business Resiliency Grant: aimed at strengthening existing small businesses through a rolling application period with eligible matching funding up to \$5000 per business and a suggested total \$25,000 budget. Sample eligible projects include marketing programs, equipment purchasing, sales floor upgrades, online sales platforms, etc.
2. Façade & Property Enhancement Grant: designed to encourage renovation to dated or deteriorated street-facing facades or sites of commercial buildings in the C-2 or C-3 districts with matching grant eligibility up to \$25,000 and a total program budget of \$75,000. Sample projects could include façade, landscaping pavement and other improvements. A limited application period is suggested.

The Commission offered the following questions and comments:

- The Commission inquired as to the impetus of the program and how the \$100,000 budget allocation was determined. Ms. Rowe and Trustees Hickey and Connell provided background, noting that funding for a business support/development effort was suggested during the budgeting process and it was the Board's request that Staff present a draft program. They mentioned that \$100,000 was intended as a way to start the program and funding sufficiency will be evaluated moving forward. Similar programs in Mundelein and other communities were referenced.
- Concern was expressed on whether the Façade & Property Enhancement funding was sufficient to make a difference and to encourage desired corridor improvements. They wondered whether it would be better to focus on a few larger projects rather than spreading the funding.
- Similarly, questions were asked about whether a \$5000 Resiliency grant could make a difference to a business and whether it was the Village's place to fund these items. Some commissioners noted that it would go a long way for some of the smaller retailers. Staff mentioned that in program review with Main Street, they indicated it would be beneficial to downtown businesses trying to update to align with newer establishments, thereby keeping the Village's businesses competitive.
- Questions were asked about how project need would be evaluated if there was competition for funds between applicants.
- The Commission indicated they would not want to create too much administration for either the businesses or Staff.

Minutes of the August 16, 2023, Economic Development Commission Meeting
Page 2 of 2

- There was discussion about how many businesses may be eligible, how many would apply, and for what types of projects. They questioned if there would be negative impact if insufficient funding was available to support Resiliency Program interest levels.
- Some discussion also was held around whether only sales tax producing businesses, those with certain employment levels, or certain business categories should be considered for the Resiliency Program.
- It was noted that façade and signage grants/loans were previously effective in encouraging investment in the downtown.
- Some Commissioners and Trustees noted the program could be a good start to deploy funds and get some visible corridor improvements underway, and noted the program could be modified with time and experience.
- A discussion ensued on whether both grants should be undertaken this fiscal year or just the Façade & Property Grant with the Resiliency program phased in the future.
- A survey was suggested to gain feedback on business interest in the program and to learn about ways businesses might be interested in applying the funds. There were some questions about survey responsiveness and effectiveness.

After additional discussion the Commission decided they were not prepared to make a program recommendation. The Commission did recommend that Staff consider releasing a survey in advance of next meeting, and that further discussion continue in September.

Business Excellence Program Nomination Status

The Chairman noted that nominations have closed, and he referred to Ms. Rowe for further update. Ms. Rowe noted there were 52 nominations received after the two-month open nomination period, and she described the promotional efforts in advance of and during the nomination period. She requested volunteers to assist in refining the recommendation of those nominees to be recognized. Final determination of those to be recognized will occur at the September meeting.

Other Communications and Discussions

The Chairman requested an update on development activity. Ms. Rowe provided a brief update on the Graham and Theater sites, as well as the recent Committee of the Whole related to downtown residential density.

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:50 AM. [Werdell-motion/Kreuser-second]

Respectfully submitted,

Heather J. Rowe, AICP, MLAI
Economic Development Manager