

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

In accordance with the Statutes of the State of Illinois and Ordinances of the City of Highland Park, a Special Meeting of the Business and Economic Development Commission of the City of Highland Park will be held at the hour of 8:00 a.m. on Friday, March 17, 2017 at City Hall, 1707 St. Johns Avenue, Highland Park, Illinois, in the Pre-Session Conference Room during which meeting it is anticipated that there will be a discussion of the following:

City of Highland Park  
Business and Economic Development Commission  
Friday, March 17, 2017  
City Hall  
1707 St. Johns Avenue  
Pre-Session Conference Room  
8:00 a.m.

AGENDA

- I. Call to Order
- II. Roll Call
- III. Mayor
- IV. Chair Report
- V. Approval of the January 24, 2017 Regular Meeting Minutes
- VI. Business Development Strategic Plan
- VII. HP150 - Highland Park Sesquicentennial Celebration Planning
- VIII. Other Business
- IX. Business from the Public
- X. Adjournment

**MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING OF THE BUSINESS AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF HIGHLAND PARK, COUNTY OF LAKE, STATE OF ILLINOIS, HELD ON TUESDAY, JANUARY 24, 2017, PRE-SESSION CONFERENCE ROOM, CITY HALL, 1707 ST. JOHNS AVENUE**

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Chair Miller called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m.

**II. ROLL CALL**

PRESENT: Chair Miller, Vice Chair Cox, Commissioners Amdur, Hart, Lichtman and Oberman  
Business Development Manager Hersch declared that a quorum was present.

ABSENT: Commissioner Dytrych

STAFF PRESENT: Assistant to the City Manager Garard, Business Development Manager Hersch, Business Development Assistant Rosen

COUNCIL PRESENT: Councilman Knobel

ALSO PRESENT: Highland Park Chamber of Commerce President Ginny Glasner, Student Commissioners Miller and Laurie

**III. INTRODUCTION OF THE NEW STUDENT COMISSIONERS**

New BEDC Student Commissioners Ezra Miller and Aiden Laurie introduced themselves to the BEDC.

Chair Miller welcomed the new student Commissioners to the BEDC and gave a brief overview of the goals and work of the BEDC. He encouraged the Student Commissioners to participate in the meeting to the extent that they feel comfortable with.

Vice Chair Cox inquired if Student Commissioner Miller is related to Chair Miller.

Chair Miller confirmed that they are not related.

Vice Chair Cox stressed to the Student Commissioners that their school work should be prioritized first over their participation in the BEDC.

**IV. APPROVAL OF THE DECEMBER 9, 2016 SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES**

Chair Miller asked if there were any questions or clarification regarding the December 9, 2016 Special Meeting Minutes.

Commissioner Lichtman asked if any progress had been made on changing the wording In the Vacant Storefront Guidelines from ‘vacant’ to “unoccupied.”

Manager Hersch explained that the POSO is being reviewed and the process will include reviewing the code and guidelines language to determine if changes should be made regarding the screening guidelines for the B5-POSO.

Chair Miller asked for a motion to approve the meeting minutes of the BEDC Special Meeting held on Friday, December 9, 2016.

Commissioner Amdur moved to approve the December 9<sup>th</sup>, 2016 minutes.

Commissioner Lichtman seconded the motion.

On the voice vote, Chair Miller declared that the motion passed unanimously.

## **V. PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF THE CITY'S WEBSITE DESIGN**

Manager Hersch reminded the BEDC that in 2016 members of the BEDC had reviewed the City's website and viewed the websites of other communities in order to give staff feedback regarding appearance and ease of use. In February of 2016 the City's website was reskinned to incorporate the look of the new brand. Assistant to the City Manager Garard is now heading up the complete redesign of the City's website.

Assistant to the City Manager Garard explained that the content management system the City had been using was extremely outdated. The redesign of the website is intended to incorporate the new brand initiatives, modernize the look and feel of the website as well as make the site more functional and update the modules that are currently on the site.

The initial bid for the project brought in 15 responses, four companies were invited to make presentations. Revize was unanimously selected by committee.

Councilman Knobel explained that when the City originally selected Civic Plus, the current website design company, they were essentially the only game in town. She explained that while the company started off being very flexible and responsive to the City's needs, over time they have become increasingly less flexible and responsive.

Vice Chair Cox asked if any local companies had been considered.

Assistant to the City Manager Garard confirmed that a local company had been considered.

Assistant to the City Manager Garard highlighted a new feature called a public service request tracker. This feature allows residents to report a problem such as a street light outage or pothole from your phone. It also allows the resident to track the progress and status of the incident they report.

Assistant to the City Manager Garard explained that Revize was given a list of desired website features which was based on feedback from BEDC and staff.

Assistant to the City Manager Garard displayed an image of what the new homepage would look like and asked the BEDC for feedback. She explained that the text in the image will change to more accurately reflect the brand standards.

Assistant to the City Manager Garard further explained that the categories that were chosen are based on our current website traffic analytics. The categories on the left bar of the page would be: Resident, Business, Development, Government and Environment.

Commissioner Hart pointed out that many residents use the website solely to pay bills and suggested that bill payment be prominently displayed and easily found.

Assistant to the City Manager Garard explained that the blue circles along the bottom of the page would include Bill Pay, Agenda Center, Notifications, and Business Directory.

Commissioner Lichtman asked what Agenda Center would include.

Assistant to the City Manager Garard explained that Agenda Center is where all the agendas and minutes for City Meetings are housed on the website.

Councilman Knobel suggested that alternative language be used to describe Agenda Center as the term Agenda is an internal word and that it would not be clear to residents. She suggested “City Meeting Packets and Video” as a possibility.

Commissioner Oberman asked if staff will be able to make changes to the website.

Assistant to the City Manager Garard explained that staff would have the ability to make changes.

Commissioner Amdur commented that some of the elements of the page didn’t seem to incorporate the City’s branding.

Assistant to the City Manager Garard explained that the fonts would be changed as well as some of the language to reflect the brand.

Manager Hersch added that the use of multiple brand colors on the website had not worked well visually and that the green, blue and gray were being focused on as far a color scheme.

Councilman Knobel asked Assist to the City Manager Assistant to the City Manager Garard to confirm that the icons and menu options had been chosen based on current usage and traffic on the website.

Assistant to the City Manager Garard confirmed that the icons and menu options had been chosen based on the website analytics.

Commissioner Lichtman recommended that the blue circles with the icons always appear on the landing page “above the fold.”

Commissioner Lichtman asked if the menu items on the left bar of the website will fall as you scroll down the page. He also asked if those items will expand when you hover over them.

Assistant to the City Manager Garard confirmed that the Menu items will fall so that they always remain visible even when scrolling. She added that each menu item will reveal a list of topics covered in that section when you hover over them.

Commissioner Lichtman asked if there are plans to replace the large photo with sliding images instead of a static image.

Assistant to the City Manager Garard explained that there would be the capability to have multiple images instead of a static image.

Hersch added that there would also be the capability to add video images on the main screen.

Commissioner Lichtman suggested that multiple sliding images that individuals could click on verses one static image might be a better use of space as well as show the depth of the site.

Chair Miller asked if the current plan included a static image or sliding images.

Assistant to the City Manager Garard stated that her recommendation would be for the single static image.

Student Commissioner Miller suggested that images could change to reflect the word changing, for example, Dine would match with a restaurant photo etc.

Student Commissioner Miller also pointed out that videos behind text can cause visual complications such as words blocking an individual's face.

Commissioner Amdur asked if the new website would have translation capabilities.

Assistant to the City Manager Garard confirmed that the same translation capabilities that the current site has would be available in the new site.

Commissioner Hart asked if a single image for the homepage had been decided on or if it would change.

Commissioners Lichtman and Oberman and Chair Miller expressed their preference for the image on the main page to be sliding image as opposed to a static image.

Chair Miller added that he was in favor of Student Commissioner Miller's idea of the image changing along with the word above it.

Councilman Knobel expressed an interest in the image sliding to promote events such as The Art Festival and Taste of Highland Park.

Commissioner Amdur asked if the new site will be mobile responsive, adding that most people view the internet from their mobile device.

Assistant to the City Manager Garard confirmed that the site will be mobile responsive.

Manager Hersch added that the need for a mobile responsive site was one of the factors in the decision to redesign the website.

Commissioner Amdur questioned if the homepage is using too much space for an image and not enough space that is giving access to information.

Assistant to the City Manager Garard explained that all of the most important information is still accessible from the homepage. She added that because people are used to scrolling through pages websites are moving in that direction. In addition she explained that residents were having trouble finding information on the current site because there is so much information on the landing page. The new site is meant to be simpler and easier to navigate.

Student Commissioner Miller asked what size photos would needed for use on the website and if a company is used for photos.

Assistant to the City Manager Garard explained that photos need to be higher quality than iPhone photos and that while we have used professional photographers in the past, most of our photos come from city staff and residents.

Vice Chair Cox and Commissioner Lichtman recommended that the blue circles remain visible as you scroll down the page.

Councilman Knobel added that the search button should also remain visible as you scroll down the page.

Vice Chair Cox suggested the word Illinois should be on the homepage.

Manager Hersch confirmed that the word Illinois would be listed next to Highland Park.

Vice Chair Cox recommended that the site be tested at the library for feedback on ease of use and navigation.

Commissioner Lichtman asked if Revize has plans to use focus groups to test the site and receive feedback.

Assistant to the City Manager Garard stated that focus groups were not part of the plan from Revize but that because of the amount of flexibility Revize affords, it would not be difficult to make changes based on feedback.

Student Commissioner Miller asked if the City owns the domain name for the current website.

Assistant to the City Manager Garard confirmed that City does own the domain name.

Chair Miller asked if other entities would be using the same design for their websites.

Councilman Knobel explained that the City had reached out to the sister governments to gauge their interest level in redesigning their sites but due to different needs among the entities there was not interest in doing so.

Vice Chair Cox if residents login information will migrate to the new site.

Assistant to the City Manager Garard confirmed that logins will migrate.

Manager Hersch asked Assistant to the City Manager Garard to confirm that the third party vendors the City uses for bill payments will also be redesigned to match the new site.

Assistant to the City Manager Garard confirmed the third party vendor sites will also be redesigned.

Commissioner Oberman asked about the timeline for rolling out the new site.

Assistant to the City Manager Garard explained that the city plans to roll out the new site in March.

Councilman Knobel stated that the new design of the website needs to be seen by the City Council before it is rolled out.

Commissioner Lichtman asked about the location of the Request Tracker on the homepage and suggested that the residents will need to be educated on how to use this feature.

Assistant to the City Manager Garard explained that the Request Tracker will be one of the blue circles on the landing page.

Chamber President Glasner and Councilman Knobel suggested that the Request Tracker use the words "non-emergency" in the title so that it is descriptive of what it is.

Councilman Knobel discussed the possibility of introducing a 311 non-emergency number for the City which would go on the website. She went on to question whether the new site would be voice-call capable as people are using their computers more and more for making phone calls.

Commissioner Amdur asked if there were plans to incorporate videos anywhere on the site.

Assistant to the City Manager Garard explained that there had been discussion about having department videos but there was a concern that video content would slow down the site primarily for use on phones.

Councilman Knobel pointed out that when creating videos it is important to make sure the content is engaging and applicable or no one will watch.

Commissioner Amdur suggested a short video message from the Mayor might be well received.

Assistant to the City Manager Garard noted that the annual fee will go towards a redesign in four years.

Commissioner Hart asked how the launch of the new site will be communicated to residents.

Assistant to the City Manager Garard explained that the City will use all of the regular communication channels including email and social media.

## **VI. DISCUSSION CONCERNING UPDATES TO THE 2017 – 2019 BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT WORK PLAN**

Manager Hersch reviewed the recommended changes to the plan from staff and from the BEDC.

- Reduce BEDC quarterly visits to businesses from 20 to 10. Commissioners are encouraged to do more per their schedule. The total visits for 2016 was 35.

Vice Chair Cox suggested the goal remain at 20 so that the fall off doesn't continue to decline.

Manager Hersch suggested that the focus be on new businesses which tend to total approximately 50 per year.

- Discontinue mail in surveys to businesses due to lack of interest
- Invite businesses to the Mayor's Council For Business Development meetings
- Explore web development grants for small businesses
- Coordinate annual business licensing with other departments to make the annual process more convenient for businesses

Vice Chair Cox raised the possibility of changing the fees or the timing of the collection of fees so that new businesses wouldn't have to be paying the City when they are first trying to open, thus encouraging businesses to open in Highland Park over other communities.

Manager Hersch explained that delaying collection of fees becomes difficult if the payment is not made at the beginning of the process.

Councilman Knobel suggested it might be beneficial to have someone from the Finance Department attend a future BEDC meeting to discuss fees.

Vice Chair Cox expressed his desire for the exploration of fees and the timing of collection be included in the work plan.

- Alter Business Summit to create a more engaging event with tangible takeaways. Include a customer service component and solicit feedback from attendees.

Commissioner Hart inquired as to when the BEDC had decided to make the Summit an annual event.

Chair Miller explained that the BEDC voted on a work plan that included the Business Summit.

Councilman Knobel added that the Business Summit is approved by the Council and that the Council is very much in favor of the Business Summit being produced annually.

Manager Hersch asked Commissioner Oberman to clarify one of her suggestions for the work plan.

Commissioner Oberman explained that she feels business owners need further education on what the different entities (City, Chamber and Alliance) can do for them and what the City does to promote businesses.

Manager Hersch explained that the City maintains an online business directory with links to business websites, creates and distributes a City Guide and a Dining Guide as well as a bi-weekly newsletter, they also have a Facebook Page on which they share new business and event information and they list all new businesses in the Highlander.

Councilman Knobel explained that much of the City's role is in infrastructure. For example, making sure the sidewalks are in good condition, that the snow is shoveled, providing lighting and taking care of the trees etc.

Councilman Knobel added that there has been an effort over the past several years to educate business owners about what that City can do for them verses the other entities.

Commissioner Oberman explained that business owners such as her herself want to know how to get more traffic in their stores.

Councilman Knobel also stated that the City changed the zoning to allow for development of residential buildings which will increase foot traffic in the CBD. She went to explain that the modification of the POSO (Pedestrian Oriented Shopping Overlay) has been moved up as a priority.

Commissioner Amdur suggested that social media assistance be part of the work plan and potentially a focus of the Business Summit.

Manager Hersch explained that the City is offering a variety of social media support options for businesses through SCORE.

Councilman Knobel explained that the BEDC Facebook page is being merged with the City's main Facebook Page will allow for much greater reach to residents regarding business news.

President Glasner commented that the City's partnership with SCORE regarding social media assistance to businesses is very helpful.

Manager Hersch added that opening the Mayor's Council for Business Development meeting to all businesses will allow the City to more effectively communicate with the business community.

Councilman Knobel added that the new format of the meetings will be a good opportunity to create a better dialogue with the business community.

Vice Chair Cox stated that all meetings need to be continually assessed for their value and changed accordingly.

President Glasner added that the Chamber has changed and evolved its resources in order to adapt to changing needs of businesses.

- Discourage property owners from leasing to non-sales tax producing businesses such as salons.

Manager Hersch explained that the City cannot control who property owners lease to as long as they are a permitted use within the Zoning Code. She went on to explain that salons are considered retail oriented service businesses because they draw customers who might then visit other businesses. She added that when the POSO is reviewed permitted uses will be considered.

- Parking

Manager Hersch explained that the police will come to a future meeting to address parking.

- Business Development Roundtable

Manager explained that as a result of feedback from the development services roundtable there will be changes made that are intended to make it easier to do business in Highland Park. There are plans to host a follow-up meeting with the participants to assess if the changes have been effective.

- Broker Roundtable to discuss the state of real estate in Highland Park
- Review of the City's Fee Schedule
- Increased communication through use of the City's Facebook Page to increase reach and short videos to promote businesses

Chair Miller suggested videos featuring Beautification and Business Recognition award winners.

Manager Hersch asked members of the BEDC if they thought people would watch a video that was emailed to them. Most of the Commissioners agreed that people would not watch those videos.

Commissioner Amdur stated that her experiment has been the opposite and that she has found people do watch videos.

Manager Hersch stated that her preference would be music on the website with a drone video of the entire City.

Student Commissioner Miller pointed out that drone videos are very large files and can distort the image.

- Review of the POSO
- Briergate TIF Study

Vice Chair Cox raised ideas about changing the format of the Summit. **(See attached Document)**

Commissioner Amdur stated that she likes Vice Chair Cox's idea of facilitated break-out sessions.

Chair Miller commented that when the Summit included breakout sessions it was not entirely successful. He suggested BEDC might need to be trained by a facilitator on how to moderate a successful discussion.

Councilman Knobel added that much of the feedback was not positive about the breakout sessions when it was done at the past Summit.

Vice Chair Cox explained that he would like to breathe life into the Summit to make it a more interactive, productive, impactful event.

Councilman Knobel stated that the business summit is an extremely important event for the City. She added that if the BEDC is interested in changing the format, the members of the BEDC are going to have to make an increased time commitment towards that end.

Chair Miller concluded that a work group or special meeting may need to be planned in order to continue Summit planning. He added that the Summit needs to be relevant to the business community if they are going to take the time to attend and that garnering feedback from the attendees might be an effective way to increase the relevancy of the Summit.

Councilman Knobel added that SCORE may be a resource for the Summit.

**VII. WORK GROUP REPORTS**

None

**VIII. STUDENT COMMISSIONER REPORTS**

None

**IX. CHAMBER OF COMMERCE REPORT**

President Glasner explained that the Chamber is currently engaged in legislative activities including a letter to the Governor regarding changes to retail theft penalties that the State is considering as well as letters to State Legislators regarding the passage of the budget and its impact on workforce development.

President Glasner went on to describe programing changes focused on helping businesses increase their networks.

**X. OTHER BUSINESS**

Commissioner Amdur asked the student commissioners if their peers frequent the Downtown.

Student Commissioner Miller commented that his peers frequent some of the fast food restaurants.

Student Commissioner Laurie commented that he studies at Starbucks with his peers. He also mentioned that many of his peers are interested in summer jobs.

Councilman Knobel commented about the Shadow Program that the City has with the High School.

President Glasner asked about the status of the Highland Park Theater.

Councilman Knobel explained the Memorandum of Understanding with Scott Canel is complete and the next step is to approve the Letter of Intent after which the public process with Plan Design Commission will begin.

Commissioner Hart asked about the sale price of the theater,

Councilman Knobel explained that the sale price was listed in the original press release and is on the City's website.

Commissioner Amdur asked about the plans for the Charming Charlie space.

Manager Hersch explained that the property owner will install the appropriate screening as required by the City Code.

Commissioner Amdur asked if something temporary could open in that space.

Manager Hersch explained that the property owner has the ability to lease the space temporarily.

Commissioner Hart asked about the status of Renaissance Place.

Manager Hersch stated that the sale of Renaissance Place will be closing in February.

**XI. BUSINESS FROM THE PUBLIC**

None

**XII. ADJOURNMENT**

Chair Miller entertained a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Vice Chair Cox moved to adjourn the meeting.

Commissioner Hart seconded the motion.

Chair Miller adjourned the meeting at 7:57 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Melissa Rosen  
Business Development Assistant