

MINUTES

Community and Economic Development Commission Village of La Grange

January 10, 2019

I. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL:

A meeting of the Community and Economic Development Commission was held on January 10, 2019 in the auditorium of the Village Hall at 53 South La Grange Road, La Grange, IL and was convened at 7:08 p.m. by Chairman Russ Riberto.

Present: Commissioners Augustine, Buttron, Carlson, Cassidy, Dillon, Hall, Janevski, Matteucci, Palmer, Sher, and Chairman Riberto.

Absent: Commissioners Stiles, Washington, and Wimbush.

Also Present: Trustee Michael Kotynek, Community Development Director Charity Jones and LGBA Executive Director Nancy Cummings.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

On motion by Commissioner Palmer, seconded by Commissioner Carlson, the minutes of the November 15 2018, 2018 Community and Economic Development Commission meeting were approved.

III. NEW BUSINESS:

Valet Program Report & Discussion

Director Jones gave a brief overview of the quotes received the Village's current valet provider based on the CEDC's direction at the November 2018 meeting to explore options for program modifications. Director Jones provided the most recent valet program utilization and customer destination data and reported on additional marketing efforts in the month of December.

Chairman Riberto gave a brief summary of the CEDC's past discussion regarding the valet program and the general conclusion that changes may be needed based on lack of increase in utilization and overall program cost.

Commissioner Cassidy asked if the Village reduced spending on the valet program what other purposes could the economic development funds be dedicated to. Commissioner Hall suggested that lighted signs would be helpful to direct people to available Village parking lots. Commissioner Palmer added that since Lot 2 generally has capacity a lighted sign within the lot, identifying it as public parking, would help. Commissioner Janevski

suggested the Commission could dedicate time at a future meeting for a separate conversation on how to highlight our available parking better.

The Commission reviewed the primary destinations for valet users and noted that some businesses receive more benefit from the service than others. Commissioner Dillon asked if the availability of the valet has any direct relationship to overall sales at benefitting businesses; she noted that if the program was no longer available, you may be able to see if there is an observable difference.

Commissioner Sher reported that she looked at the websites of seven downtown restaurants who benefit from the valet program and could find no mention of the valet service on their websites.

Commissioner Carlson noted that she leans toward offering a seasonal valet program, with two valet stations instead of the current three.

Commissioner Dillon commented that the CEDC has been tweaking the program over the last three years, but nothing is changing. At some point it's not the best use of the Village's dollars. Commissioner Sher wondered if the most benefitted restaurants may be willing to contribute to the cost of the service. Chairman Riberto noted that based on the current utilization rates, having a service that customers have to pay for wouldn't work financially.

Commissioner Buttron suggested improved signage at La Grange Road and Harris Ave. would help with parking and be less expensive than the valet program. Commissioner Hall noted that signage directing drivers along that route would naturally lead them to available spaces in Lot 2, Lot 11, and along Burlington Ave.

Commissioner Carlson noted she's never had trouble finding parking. Commissioner Palmer questioned the available parking in the garage. Commissioner Augustine noted that the data from 2018 parking inventories showed the garage typically has capacity. Chairman Riberto noted that the inventories reflected an average 25% capacity in Lot 2 as well.

Commissioner Palmer commented that the parking in the Village lots is confusing and people aren't sure where they can park. Commissioner Dillon suggested the CEDC could focus on improving the experience in the lots.

Commissioner Carlson suggested the CEDC look at keeping the valet as a seasonal operation. Commissioner Matteucci said he appreciates the program as a seasonal operation. Commissioner Janevski commented that he returns to the data; even with a seasonal service only a limited number of businesses are benefitting in a significant way. To him, the data makes it hard to justify the program.

Commissioner Palmer suggested the CEDC keep an open mind to the value of having the valet as a holiday promotion. Commissioner Janevski noted that the business community does not seem to have many people advocating for the service; at the August meeting, only representatives from Tate's and Steak + Vine came. Commissioner Carlson noted that if

the Village funds a seasonal valet program, it should be with the understanding that the businesses need to promote it. Commissioner Augustine commented that, in fairness, the station locations have moved a lot in the last year. She suggested the CEDC focus on signage and parking management, with a seasonal valet program. Chairman Riberto noted that if the program is reduced or eliminated, that may evoke more comment from the business community. Commissioner Dillon noted that even if some businesses express strong support for the program, it won't change the numbers. Commissioner Cassidy agreed, adding that no one likes a service to be taken away.

The Commission discussed the appropriate timeframe for a seasonal valet service. Commissioner Hall suggested end of November through end of March. She noted that when something isn't offered all the time, sometimes it's perceived as more special or valuable.

Commissioner Augustine reiterated the need to commit to a path and stick with it. Commissioner Janevski expressed support for a seasonal program; it gives the CEDC the summer to regroup, and to ask the business community to participate in making the seasonal operation a success.

Commissioner Cassidy added that the CEDC needs to address the perceptions related to parking. Commissioner Matteucci noted that signs are a one-time expense versus the ongoing operational expense of valet. Commissioner Janevski commented that signs will help with the perception issue and that the branding will also play a key role in shaping the perceptions of downtown. Commissioner DiDomenico asked if the CEDC can earmark savings from reducing valet costs toward countering perceptions about parking in downtown. Chairman Riberto responded that the CEDC can make a recommendation to the Village Board as to how to use the funds.

Commissioner Palmer noted that when currently vacant properties are redeveloped, the parking conditions may change. Commissioner Buttrton thought a seasonal service could help the Village gauge whether future changed conditions impact valet use.

Chairman Riberto summarized the discussion. Discussion ensued regarding when to end the current valet service. Commissioner Janevski made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Dillon to recommend the following to the Village Board:

1. Discontinue the current valet service by the end of March 2019;
2. Allocate \$15,000 toward a seasonal (up to 16 week) valet service in the winter of FY 19/20;
3. Allocate \$20,000 toward parking initiatives; and
4. Allocate the remaining funds in the economic development account toward other initiatives to be determined.

Ayes: Commissioners Augustine, Buttrton, Carlson, Cassidy, Dillon, Hall, Janevski, Matteucci, Sher, and Chairman Riberto

Nays: None

Abstain: Commissioner Palmer

V. ADJOURNMENT:

There being nothing further to come before the Community and Economic Development Commission, a motion was made by Commissioner Janevski and seconded by Commissioner Palmer that the meeting be adjourned at 8:35 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted:

Charity Jones
Community Development Director