

MINUTES

Community and Economic Development Commission
Village of La Grange

November 04, 2021

I. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL:

A meeting of the Community and Economic Development Commission was held on November 04, 2021 in the auditorium of the Village Hall at 53 South La Grange Road, La Grange, IL and was convened at 7:03 p.m. by Chairman Russ Riberto.

Present: Commissioners Buttron, Carlson, Cassidy, Dillon, Hall, Hanson, Hayes, Janowski, McGee, and Chairman Riberto.

Absent: Commissioners Janevski, McQuiston, Palmer, and Sher.

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

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

On motion by Commissioner Buttron, seconded by Commissioner Carlson, the minutes of the February 4, 2021 Community and Economic Development Commission meeting were approved.

III. NEW BUSINESS:

Community & Economic Development Activity Report

Director Jones gave a presentation of sales tax trends through the first half of 2021. She summarized that municipal sales tax continues to trend significantly higher as a result of the Leveling the Playing Field Act that changed how the state collects sales tax on online purchases. This change in reporting has made it impossible for local municipalities to differentiate the online activity from activity resulting from sales at local brick and mortar businesses. Director Jones noted that a professional event in October, she and other municipal leaders took the opportunity to share the importance of this data with representatives from the Illinois Department of Revenue. The Department of Revenue is expected to provide additional explanation to local municipalities the coming week so staff can again use this data to monitor local economic activity.

Director Jones then reported on permit activity through the end of September 2021. Permit

applications continued the higher than average trend, which began in mid-2020. Permits issued for January through September 2021 are roughly 22% higher than La Grange's 5 year average for those months.

Director Jones then announced new businesses and businesses that have planned openings in the near future. She also provided an update on the conversion of the La Grange Theater to new ownership and first run status. The plan includes Classic Cinemas entering into a long term lease for the theater and investing significantly to bring the theater to first-run status with a full suite of modern customer amenities. Under the arrangement the Village will release the theater property owners from the current \$1M mortgage on the property and establish a 50 cent per ticket entertainment tax. Based on Classic Cinema's projections, the tax will generate approximately \$90k annually. Under the arrangement, 50% of the tax will be rebated to Classic Cinemas and the other 50% (roughly \$45k) will be retained by the Village for economic development purposes. The tax will remain in effect so long as the theater remains. Director Jones reported that, following the Village Board's recent approval of the terms of this agreement, Village staff is now working with Classic Cinemas and the theater building owners to prepare the appropriate legal documents to execute the plan.

Walgreens Alcove – Public Art Concepts

Director Jones summarized that although the CEDC lacked a quorum in August and therefore did not vote on any agenda items, the group had an informal discussion about options to replace the current historic image display in the Walgreens alcove at 2 N. La Grange Road. The consensus opinion was that the display should be brand forward, with interactive elements to encourage "selfies." Director Jones then presented a conceptual rendering and noted that the design is on the right path additional interactive elements and more color. She noted that a temporary display will go up in this location later this month to promote holiday shopping and that the new "selfie spot" display is scheduled for installation after the holidays.

Update on Gateway / Wayfinding Signs & Streetscape Project

Director Jones reported that phase one of the streetscape project had been bid and a contractor was selected. Due to some grant related requirements, finalization of the contract was somewhat delayed and now weather and manufacturing timelines for the necessary brick pavers has resulted in an early spring start date for the project.

Director Jones noted that the design for the gateway signs has been finalized and Public Works staff is evaluating solar versus hard wired electrical lighting options. Construction drawing for the wayfinding signs need to be prepared and then the construction work for both sets of signs will be bid as one project.

Commissioner Buttron inquired about solar lighting on the wayfinding signs. Director Jones noted that several of the wayfinding sign elements are currently lit and if additional lighting is determined to be needed, it would likely be most cost effective and least intrusive to pedestrians to pull electricity from an existing pole in the downtown.

Commissioner McGee arrived at 7:50 p.m.

IV. Chairman Comments

Chairman Riberto thanked Director Jones for her presentation. Commissioner Dillon announced that this would be her last meeting as a CEDC Commissioner and thanked everyone for the opportunity to participate over the years.

The Commission then proceeded to have general discussion. Commissioner Carlson asked about flooding status; Director Jones provided a brief update and directed the Commission to the area of the Village website that is maintained with the most current information.

Commissioner Dillon noted that quarry blasts seem to be worse recently, or at least more noticeable. Commissioner Cassidy asked what entity regulates the quarries. Director Jones noted that although the Village does not have authority to regulate the quarries, Village Manager Peterson is in regular communication with residents and the quarries to address operational issues.

Commissioner McGee asked if the Village requires businesses to sign an anti-discrimination pledge or has other anti-discrimination requirements as part of the business license process. Director Jones stated that the Village did not. Commissioner Hanson noted that certain federal and state laws prohibit discrimination, so local requirements may be redundant but some sort of pledge to hold ourselves to a higher standard may be more appropriate than a legal requirement. Commissioner McGee noted that his company has an anti-discrimination statement for itself and felt it is an important communication tool. Commissioner Carlson suggested that maybe the business association would incorporate something like this into their goals or mission statement. Commissioner Hall noted that social media serves as one way to address issues when they arise. Commissioner McGee observed that people want to feel they have a voice and are heard. Trustee Augustine suggested this may be an opportunity for further coordination and collaboration between the business community and the CommUNITY Diversity Group. Chairman Riberto thanked everyone for the honest and thoughtful discussion.

V. ADJOURNMENT:

There being nothing further to come before the Community and Economic Development Commission, a motion was made by Commissioner Dillon, and seconded by Commissioner Hanson that the meeting be adjourned at 8:16 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted:

Charity Jones
Community Development Director