



**COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
MINUTES
January 20, 2026**

Mayor Sanoica called the Committee of the Whole meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Physically Present: McHale, Budmats, O'Brien, Vinezeano, Boucher, Reyez, Koehler

Absent: 0

With 7 present and 0 absent. Mayor Sanoica declared that a quorum was present.

Staff Members Present: City Manager Rob Sabo, Deputy City Clerk Judy Brose, Finance Director Molly Talkington, Police Chief Tony Peluso, Fire Chief Pete Sutter, Director Public Works Aaron Grosskopf, Chief Information Officer Waseem Khan, Deputy Director Community Development Jordan Ellena and City Attorney Melissa Wolf

1) Discussion of Economic Development Committee and Economic Development Programs

City Manager, Rob Sabo provided background information related the City's Economic Development Committee (EDC) and sought direction from City Council regarding the potential elimination of the EDC.

One of the City's core priorities is ensuring economic vitality for the community. To reinforce the City's tax base, staff focuses on ensuring businesses are attracted to, invest in, and remain in the City. This focus is essential to building a strong community, as it ensures residents have access to economic growth opportunities through the availability of jobs. Furthermore, the existence of employers offsets the tax burdens of residents by providing a diverse revenue base to pay for public services and infrastructure. The City approaches economic development through a multidisciplinary team approach bringing together staff members who have different roles and backgrounds to focus on pursuing business development leads, working with developers interested in renovating, building out, or redeveloping sites for new business ventures, working with various County, State and Federal economic development entities, and participating actively in the Chamber of Commerce and other local business networking meetings.

Economic development has evolved tremendously over the years. Prior to the advent of technology, in-person networking events were a paramount opportunity for businesses to showcase their offerings, build connections with other businesses, and identify opportunities for expansion and collaboration. While these traditional methods remain valuable, today's economic development landscape relies heavily on data-driven analysis, targeted outreach, real-time communication, and coordinated partnerships across multiple levels of government and the private sector. As a result, successful economic development efforts increasingly require consistent, responsive, and professionally staffed engagement. The City's staff Economic Development Team consists of the City Manager, Assistant City Manager/Community Development Director, Planner/Management Analyst, and the Assistant to the City Manager and supported by other City employees as necessary. Collectively, each of these

roles works together to ensure swift follow up on leads, effective recruitment of new businesses, coordination with the broker community, and an expeditious experience with zoning and permitting needs.

In addition, the City has become a more active participant and partner with the Rolling Meadows Chamber of Commerce. The City Manager is a Chamber Board member and attends meetings regularly and City staff attend Chamber events and activities. The role of the Chamber of Commerce is to support its business members and to provide advocacy on business related matters. The City has an excellent working relationship with the Chamber and utilizes them as a resource to obtain input on economic development initiatives and to amplify business related messaging and information.

In recognition of the evolution in how the City conducts business development, the City has gradually transitioned its economic development activities to a staff-led model that emphasizes proactive business outreach, close coordination with the Chamber of Commerce, and direct collaboration with regional, state, and federal economic development partners. City staff are engaged in ongoing business retention and attraction efforts, site selection and redevelopment discussions, incentive coordination, and participation in business networking and marketing initiatives. This approach allows for timely decision-making, continuity, and alignment with broader City goals and policies. With the onboarding of the new Assistant to the City Manager position, staff will focus on ensuring we have up to date information online and have a strong communications approach to reach our business community to ensure they remain informed of all City happenings and matters of importance to the business community.

The team continues to focus on objectives and goals outlined within the City's Business Development Strategic Plan and meets regularly to remain on the same page on the status of various leads, retention discussions, and statuses of projects. Under the staff-led economic development model, accountability and transparency are maintained through periodic reporting to the City Council on economic development matters, public consideration of incentive requests, and engagement in the business community through the Chamber of Commerce and other networking.

One of the tools the City has utilized for economic development historically has been the Economic Development Committee ("EDC"). The EDC's duties according to the City Code, which date back to 1967, are as follows ([Sec. 78-99 of the City Code](#)):

"The economic development committee shall, upon its own choosing or direction by the city council, perform the following duties:

1. Develop services and programs to attract new and to expand existing business activities.
2. Develop services and programs to assist in the retention of existing business facilities.
3. Develop special assistance programs for the business community to create a favorable climate for the successful operation of city business facilities.
4. Foster cooperation among the community resources and organizations in order to engender a coordinated and multifaceted approach to economic development.
5. Promote communication with the community at large concerning the city's economic development needs at the committee's goals and programs.
6. Submit an annual report to the city council detailing activities and accomplishments of the prior year and goals and objectives for the coming year."

In 2025, the EDC had met only twice. One meeting was a special meeting with the purpose of reviewing a Class 6b property tax incentive and the other meeting was a regular meeting at which there was discussion of a staff-initiated program to attract office tenants to the City's office properties and consideration of a City restaurant incentive request. In 2024, the EDC had met 4 times with 3 of the meetings including reports and updates on the City's new business list and the Business Development Manager's update along with a discussion of EDC goals.

One of the meetings included a City retail incentive request review. Given that the EDC is a public body under the Open Meetings Act, staffing EDC meetings includes preparing and posting agendas, agenda packet materials, and minutes along with attendance. Functionally, the majority of output from the EDC over the past couple years has been recommendations on Cook County tax incentive applications and local business incentive applications.

The EDC has also struggled to maintain commissioners, recruit new commissioners, and to meet quorum requirements. For example, there are two vacancies on the commission which have remained unfilled over the past year and there have been no requests for consideration for the vacant positions. The functions of managing and operating a committee take staff time to administer which could be time used for active business development activities. Business owners are incredibly busy in today's business atmosphere and it is difficult for them to actively participate in multiple different trade groups and local groups along with the Chamber. Understanding that business owner and representative time is limited, the City has begun working more closely with the Chamber as a resource for businesses within the community and utilizing their connections with the business community to remain actively engaged in discussions with businesses about various City matters. Beyond the Chamber, the City's Economic Development Team will conduct business retention meetings throughout the year with various businesses to remain engaged and to understand their needs and identify what the City can do to support their success.

With respect to Cook County tax incentive applications and local business incentive applications, the City Council is the body which is responsible for the approval of such applications. In most communities, such applications are presented directly to the City Council for consideration. In the absence of the EDC, such applications will be preliminarily reviewed by the City's staff Economic Development Team and ultimately presented to the City Council for further review and consideration.

Many municipalities in the area with a similarly diverse business community do not have standing economic development committees and instead utilize staff-led models supplemented by targeted stakeholder engagement. This approach allows for greater flexibility, faster response times, and more effective use of staff and business community resources while maintaining strong partnerships with chambers of commerce and regional economic development organizations. For example, communities with a similar business mix to Rolling Meadows that do not have a standing economic development committee include Barrington, Buffalo Grove, Deerfield, Des Plaines, Glenview, Itasca, Lake Zurich, Northbrook, Palatine, Roselle and Wheeling.

Mayor Sanoica took a straw vote for all those in favor of dissolving the City's Economic Development Committee. 7 in favor and 0 opposed.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

There were no signatories on the sign-in sheet for this topic.

CLOSED SESSION:

Personnel – 5 ILCS 120/2 (c) (1) of the Illinois Open Meetings Act - To consider the appointment, employment, compensation, discipline, performance, or dismissal of a specific employee of the public body.

Review Closed Session Minutes – 5 ILCS 120/2 (c) (21) of the Illinois Open Meetings Act - Semi-annual review of the minutes as mandated by Section 2.06.

Mayor Sanoica asked for a motion to go into closed session under section 2(c)(1) of the Open Meetings Act regarding Personnel and under section 2(c)(21) of the Open Meetings Act regarding Review of Closed Session Minutes. Alderperson Koehler made the motion and was seconded by Alderperson O'Brien.

ROLL CALL:

AYES: McHale, Budmats, O'Brien, Vinezeano, Boucher, Reyez, Koehler
NAYS: 0
ABSENT: 0

With 7 in favor and 0 opposed. City Council entered into Closed Session.

The audience and press were advised that they do not anticipate taking any action upon returning to open session.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, by unanimous consent the Committee of the Whole meeting was adjourned at 7:24 p.m.

Respectfully submitted: Judy Brose, Deputy City Clerk

January 20, 2026 Committee of the Whole Minutes Approved by Council on February 10, 2026.

Judy Brose

Judy Brose, Deputy City Clerk