

City Of Rolling Meadows Economic Development Committee Minutes

Tuesday, March 3, 2020

Members Present:

Glenn Adams
Dave McNaney
Paul Anderson
Laura Majikes
Mike Reppe

Absent:

Bill Giambrone
Phil Spiewak
John D'Astice
Vacant

Others Present:

Barry Krumstok, City Manager
Melissa Gallagher, Finance Director
Judy Brose, Deputy City Clerk
Lori Ciezak, Assistant to the City Manager
Martha Corner, Business Advocate
Deb Austerlade, Administrative Assistant
Linda Ballantine, Exec. Dir., Chamber of
Commerce
Rob Horne, Public Works Director
Dave Parulo, President of Meet Chicago NW

Call to Order

Having established a quorum, Chairman Adams called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Approval of Minutes

Chairman Adams requested a motion to approve the minutes of the February 4, 2020, meeting. A motion was made by Member Majikes, seconded by Member Anderson, and with no additional discussion the minutes were unanimously approved by the membership.

Meet Chicago Northwest-President Dave Parulo Update

Mr. Parulo began his update by providing copies of the Meet Chicago Northwest Quarterly Report and explaining what he called "The Economic Development Circle of Life," a premise upon which Meet Chicago Northwest bases much of their goals: Build a place where people want to visit, then you build a place where people want to live, then you build a place where people want to work, then you build a place where business has to be, and the cycle begins again.

Meet Chicago Northwest represents 101 Rolling Meadows businesses including restaurants and hotels with an inclusive business model that is community funded. In the Northwest Suburbs, tourism supports 21,000 jobs. Last year the 60+ hotels in our area alone made \$220.6 million in revenue. All in all, local visitors spent \$2.6 billion.

A look at Rolling Meadows' City Markets and Corn Fest indicates approximately 14,000 people were in attendance last year bringing \$564,000 to our city. A comparison of how hotels in our region performed this year versus last year to those in DuPage County, Lake County and Chicago indicates solid performance; however, there is some concern for how performance will be affected this year due to the coronavirus. The fact that the Rolling Meadows Holiday Inn is experiencing a major renovation, and services at Holiday Inn Express are limited also has some effect on performance.

Last year, marketing activity at Meet Chicago Northwest included the creation of dining guides for each community. These guides were provided in print format and shared digitally. Meet Chicago Northwest also creates content stories for social media sites: As the public looks to become more active outdoors, Busse Woods has become a large topic of discussion as it provides opportunities for many outdoor activities including walking and biking. Mr. Parulo said Meet Chicago Northwest will be updating their website this year, and they have started offering online travel information with Expedia making hotels that do not have meeting space the focus of "leisure" travelers.

The 7th Annual Restaurant Week is coming up and Meet Chicago Northwest has advertising campaigns with the Daily Herald and WGN. Mr. Krumstok provided copies of a flyer insert from the Journal-Topics. The Stadium located on Algonquin Road is the only Rolling Meadows restaurant that will be participating this year.

"Cork & Tap Tastings" is an event being piloted and will be held April 1 through 11. Partner networking events are also being planned. A Family Day was held on February 17 at the Chicago Auto Show, and on June 20, another Family Day will be held.

Finally, the Meet Chicago Northwest annual meeting will be held at Top Golf on Wednesday, May 6 from 4:30 to 7 p.m.

Ms. Ballantine asked if any major conventions have been or will be cancelled due to the coronavirus, and Mr. Parulo stated that while no major conventions have been cancelled to date, he is not sure what will ultimately happen.

Community Development Division of Public Works Update

Mr. Horne provided the Economic Development Committee members with the following update on the Community Development Division of Public Works:

History: Prior to 2017, the Community Development Department was stagnant and had lost its customer service focus. On May 22, 2019, after the previous Public Works Director retired, there was a need to refine the department posture and attitude, and that was when the Community Development Department officially became a Division of the Public Works Department.

Shortly after the restructuring, a business survey was performed. While only 15% of our businesses responded, 17% of those stated they were unsatisfied with their experience with the Community Development Department. Several respondents felt a lack of communication and general dissatisfaction with the department. As a direct response to the survey which indicated a need to improve communication with our businesses, the Community Development Director position was enhanced per the survey with the Business Advocate position. Additional staffing changes, job streamlining and cross training were also necessary.

Community Development's Purpose is to insure compliance with Codes adopted by the City Council. This is done through plan review, code enforcement, and licensing among other activities, and is done to:

- Protect public health, safety and welfare
- Protect residents from zoning mismatch and "nuisance" complaints
- Maintain the City's low ISO rating which results in lower insurance premiums. *Currently, Rolling Meadows' ISO rating is 3.*
- Preserve property values/assessed values
- Provide a more diverse and well-planned commercial tax base which leads to lower taxes for residents

Goals are accomplished by:

- Improving communications with applicants
- Performing timely and consistent plan reviews and inspections
- Providing clear application forms, processes and fees
- Being consistent in licensing renewals and property maintenance enforcement

Currently, management is in the process of reviewing and update the City's zoning and planning documents, and once those updates are completed, they will be implement into the process of improving the department.

In the short period of time changes have been made, successes include:

- New leadership
- Improved morale and attitude
- Improved communication, teamwork and accountability
- Inspector training and development
- The hiring of two new inspectors
- The hiring of third party consultants
- Improved protocol for permit and plan review process

As a result of the changes, no complaints about inspectors have been received since January 2019, reviews and inspections are more predictable, and staff is empowered with decision making. Improvements to the planning and zoning process are being made, building code and fee structure amendments are being made, a zoning ordinance update is underway, and conditional permits and conditional certificates of occupancy are now allowable. Staff feels supported, the community recognizes staff as a resource, and there is increased opportunity for public engagement and outreach.

In 2020, the following challenges will be undertaken:

- A retirement/staffing changes
- Zoning ordinance updates
- Fee revisions
- Building code updates
- ERP implementation (including permitting, licensing, code enforcement software)

New Business List-Feedback Received from Contacts Made

Member Reppe was able to make telephone contact with Sabroso Burrito, one of the businesses on the December 2019 New Business list, and due to a language barrier, conversation was limited.

Member McNaney was also able to contact New Med Immediate Care, who stated they are very happy with the service they received from the Rolling Meadows Fire Marshal, Scott Mohr.

He left messages for the other businesses on the list, but has not received return calls. He will attempt to pay a personal visit to the businesses on the list.

Based on his experience as a member of the Economic Development Committee, Member McNaney feels most people in our community, businesses and residents alike, do not know that the Committee exists. Subsequently, a request was made to have a table at this year's Business and Community Showcase for Economic Development Committee members to man.

New Business List Distribution

Member McNaney and Chairman Adams volunteered to contact businesses on the February 2020 New Business List.

2019 Rolling Meadows Business Closures-Overview

Ms. Corner provided the following report on Rolling Meadows business closures:

Approximately 36 businesses closed based on information obtained from business license non-renewals, and among the reasons cited are:

- Relocation
- Retirement
- Lease terms not favorable
- Small business start-ups failing
- Property taxes in Cook County and the Illinois tax environment
- Bankruptcies
- More competitive labor rates elsewhere
- Taken over by another firm

Among the largest businesses that have closed, are in the process of closing soon or moving soon are:

- Fuji Hunt Chemicals
- U.S. Waterproofing
- Gabutto Burger
- Meadows Club
- Komatsu

In the City's efforts to prevent closures, we maintain an open communications policy and work to provide support where possible. Often, however, the business closure is a business decision based on variables beyond the City's control.

Business & Community Showcase Discussion

Ms. Corner stated that the number of registrations received to date exceeds that of last year. Twenty-five tables have been reserved so far, and many of the attendees will be offering job opportunities. In addition to business attendees, the City's Finance and Public Works Departments will have tables. There will also be a table for the Economic Development Committee as mentioned earlier. Member McNaney volunteered to man the table, and additional manning of the table will be discussed at the next Economic Development Committee meeting.

Business Advocate Update

Ms. Corner provided the following update on her activities. Due to time constraints, her report was abbreviated:

Sabroso Restaurant is now open in the former Pepe's location. They will offer outdoor seating in the warmer months.

New Med Immediate Care and Busse's Flowers are now open and operational.

The most recent edition of the Business Messenger is currently being printed. Final draft copies were distributed to the members.

The Amish Farmer will go before the Next Level Northwest Pitch Panel as they attempt to become the next business to go through the coaching process.

Video Gaming

Due to time constraints, Video Gaming was not discussed at this meeting. This subject will be placed on the April agenda.

Goals 2020 Discussion

Due to time constraints, goals were not discussed at this meeting. This subject will also be placed on the April agenda.

Items of Interest in the City

- A total of 18 businesses attended Saturday's (February 29) Taste the Town event; seventeen of those were Rolling Meadows businesses.
- The St. Pat's Day Dinner will be held on Saturday, March 14 from 6 to 10 pm at the Park District Community Center. Tickets are available at City Hall, the Park District Community Center or online.
- Busse's Flowers will hold a grand opening at their new location (3445 Kirchoff Road) on Saturday, March 21 from 4 to 8 pm.

- Census 2020 information was provided.

Chamber of Commerce Update

Ms. Ballantine provided a flyer for the 15th Annual Taking Care of Business Luncheon. This event will be held on Wednesday, March 11 at Meridian Banquets beginning at 11:30. Mayor Gallo is the keynote speaker and will provide an economic update.

Issues Not on the Agenda

None.

Public Comment

None.

Adjournment

Chairman Adams requested a motion to adjourn the meeting which was made by Member Majikes, seconded by Member McNaney, and unanimously approved by the membership.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:28 p.m.

The next regularly scheduled meeting of the Economic Development Committee will take place April 7, 2020.

Respectfully submitted by Deb Austerlade.

Minutes approved on: July 7, 2020

Glenn Adams
Chairman, Economic Development Committee, Glenn Adams