



Rochester City Council

Community Development Committee

DRAFT

MEETING MINUTES

Elaine Lauterborn, Chairperson
Alan Reed-Erickson , Vice-Chair
Brian LaBranche
Steve Hervey
David Hynes

Meeting Date:	September 26, 2013	
Members Present:	Councilor Lauterborn Councilor Hervey Councilor LaBranche Councilor Hynes	Members Absent: Councilor Reed-Erickson
Guests/Staff:	Councilor Gray Elena Engle- Community Development Specialist Mary Ellen Humphrey- Economic Development Specialist Denis Ottino- First City Promotional Services Mary Jo Monusky- Business Property Owner- Downtown	

Councilor Lauterborn called the meeting to order at 7:00PM. **Motion was made by Councilor Hervey to approve the August 26, 2013 minutes and was seconded by Councilor LaBranche, minutes were approved unanimously.**

DISCUSSION – Downtown Master Plan Goal Review	<p>Mary Ellen Humphrey from Economic Development discussed the goals of the Downtown Master Plan:</p> <p><u>Identified deficiencies:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ A need to attract specialty stores, restaurants and services to create a desirable downtown destination. The Downtown has recently lost some major contributors of Arts & Culture (Artstream and Jenny Wren). ➤ There are a number of prominent under used and under maintained properties in the downtown, creating visual detriments and a lost tax revenues from lower assessments. ➤ Traffic calming is still an issue- Strafford Regional Planning Commission is assisting with a Traffic Modeling demonstration that should help people visualize potentially better traffic flow patterns. Dennis Ottino made the comment that <i>when traffic is one-way through a downtown area, it creates a "vacuum" and encourages people to drive right through without stopping and if you want people to utilize the downtown, there should be a consideration to move away from the one-way traffic pattern.</i> ➤ The downtown area needs market rate tenants and lots of pedestrians who are residents and workers, and will frequent downtown establishments for needs, services and entertainment.
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Suggestions:

- **Explore implementing a BID rather than a TIF district.** A BID (Business Improvement District) provides that an extra property tax assessment is used specifically for business improvements in that area. The downside is that it increases the property taxes downtown which may be a disincentive to potential investors, but the upside is that it also provides dedicated downtown improvement funds. A Plan for improvements needs to be developed and an advisory board established. A TIF is not feasible because you are limited in use to infrastructure to support corresponding projects. There are no large projects in the downtown that fit the TIF model.
- **Complete a professional city-wide branding process.**
- **Way-finding that includes mobile APs.**
- **Establish a substantial Farmer's Market in the downtown area.** It should be connected to the Seacoast Farmers Market network and part of Shop Local efforts. Farmers Markets attract people and provide interesting walking activities for locals and visitors, bringing shoppers to our downtown area.
- **Crosswalk improvements**, including retiming. An effort is underway to retime the crosswalk signals so that traffic flow is less impeded and pedestrian crossing better facilitated. Along with this, there needs to be **connections between the downtown and the Rails to Trails**, providing encouragement to foot-traffic and entertainment activities.
- **Enhance public parking**, making it more obvious where people can park, and convenient. Signs will go a long way to accomplishing this.
- **Create a Downtown Business Incubator** for the specific purpose of bringing potential downtown businesses to the stage where they have a greater chance for success.
- **Encourage better communications between the downtown and the rest of the city.** How can we network other areas of the city? Can we include more businesses in downtown activities? Can we cross promote each other?
- **Zoning and Ordinance issues:**
- **Form Based Zoning** for the downtown would provide the greatest opportunity to reuse existing building stock. It takes most uses off the table and allows for activities that might otherwise not fit in a narrow chart of allowed uses.
- **Revamp the sign ordinance** making it easier understand and avoiding the need for variances where possible.

Other Concerns:

Downtown Business Property Owner, Mary Jo Monusky was present and discussed how the visual police presence is not as noticeable as it was several years ago in the downtown area and there is a feeling that a stronger visual presence would alleviate some concerns business owners may have about safety and potential crime in the area and provide them, as well as their patrons with an increased sense of security. There was also some discussion on the desire for landlords to fix dilapidated rental

	<p>properties and begin attracting market rate tenants.</p> <p>Additional written updates to the plan were provided by Mike Provost who was unable to attend the meeting. In the interest of time, Councilor Lauterborn asked the Committee to review the notes prior to the next Council meeting.</p> <p>Councilor Lauterborn made a recommendation that the City Council review these updates discussed tonight and that they are attached to the Downtown Master Plan.</p>
DISCUSSION – World Wildlife- Earth Hour City Challenge	No Committee Action Taken
DISCUSSION – Housing Authority- Use of Roberge Center	<p>A request was made by the City Manager to discuss the recent decision by the Housing Authority to stop allowing use of the Roberge Center to non-profits. Mary Ellen Humphrey spoke with Stacey Price at the Housing Authority and there seems to be some confusion as to precise reason for the decision. Ms. Price relayed to Ms. Humphrey that the Housing Authority was considering using the space for storage.</p> <p>Motion made by Councilor LaBranche to have a letter written requesting the Housing Authority rescind the decision to use the Roberge Center for storage and allow it to be open for use as it was previously. Motion was seconded by Councilor Hynes and approved unanimously.</p> <p>Councilor Lauterborn requested the Ms. Humphrey speak with Mike Provost from the Rochester Main Street Program and encourage him to write a letter as well.</p>
DISCUSSION- Update on CDBG Projects	<p>Elena Engle discussed an update on the two CDBG projects supported by the Committee at the last meeting:</p> <p><u>Community Center Gym Heater:</u> Project will go before the City Council on October 1st for vote after Public Hearing. Councilor LaBranche noted some concerns came from the PW Committee about this project, specifically what the issues are with the heater and how urgent the need may be. It was discussed that there may also be some questions by the Council about using the funds from the Restroom Project and whether or not that project is still going to move forward with CDBG funds. Councilor Lauterborn also recommended that for future planning that Ms. Engle may want to use the CIP as a guide for explore future projects and using that as a basis to work with the Community Development Committee to prioritize these projects.</p> <p><u>Gonic School Playground:</u> Ms. Engle met with Mr. Pappas from the PTA and Norway Plains and made the determination that the PTA would have enough funding from in-kind and fundraising to be able to complete Phase II of the project to improve the drainage and landscaping and would be requesting CDBG funds for Phase III to purchase the remaining playground equipment. Norway Plains was unable to complete the final assessment and PTA was</p>

	unable to obtain estimates on the equipment in time for the October 1 st meeting. Ms. Engle will provide information to the Council to notify them that the Gonic School is interested in funding and will present a formal plan in the coming months.
NEXT MEETING TOPICS	October 24th, 2013

Motion to adjourn made by Councilor LaBranche and seconded by Councilor Hervey. The meeting was adjourned at 9:12 pm.

Next Meeting – October 24, 2013 in Council Chambers. This meeting is currently planned to occur- Councilor Lauterbom will notify the Committee one week prior to confirm.

- Topics TBD