

## **Elmhurst Economic Development Commission**

### **Meeting Minutes**

**November 14, 2008 – 7:30 a.m.**

**City Hall – Conference Room 2**

**Present:** Dan Hiffman, Scott LaMorte, Diane McGinnis, Don Meyers, Richard Reichert, Kurt Warnke, John Quigley (Ex-Officio Member) - President, Elmhurst Chamber of Commerce, Tom Paravola (Ex-Officio Member) - Executive Director, Elmhurst City Centre

**Absent:** Betsy Hanisch, Dan Leahy, Mark Sabatino

**Staff:** Martha Corner

Vice Chairman Don Meyers called the meeting to order at 7:35 a.m. A motion was made by Commissioner Reichert and seconded by Commissioner LaMorte to approve the minutes of the EDC September 26, 2008 meeting. All Commissioners voted in favor.

### **Retail Recruitment Task Force**

Martha Corner provided an update on the recently formed Retail Recruitment Task Force for the City of Elmhurst. The Task Force is comprised of the following members:

- Frank Catalano, Jr. - Elmhurst City Centre Board Member
- Dan Hiffman - NAI Hiffman - Elmhurst Economic Development Commission (EDC) Member
- Kurt Warnke - Jones Lang LaSalle - EDC Member
- Tom Paravola - Elmhurst City Centre Executive Director
- Cathy Maloney, City of Elmhurst Retail Recruitment Consultant
- John Said - City Staff
- Martha Corner - City Staff

Martha Corner said one of the main functions of the Task Force is to provide professional advice and direction to the City of Elmhurst Retail Recruitment Consultant.

As a result of the first Task Force meeting on November 5, 2008, Task Force recommendations include updating the consultant contract to reflect current best practices in retail real estate and to include more qualitative measures of performance as compared to quantitative measures. Other recommendations of the Task Force include refining the marketing and communications strategy between the City, Elmhurst City Centre and the Chamber of Commerce, and focusing on electronic marketing (e.g. internet, targeted e-mails).

## **Elmhurst Economic Edge Articles**

Martha Corner provided a copy of the most recent *Elmhurst Economic Edge* article that was published during October free of charge in *The Elmhurst Independent*. The column, provided by the City of Elmhurst's Department of Planning, Zoning and Economic Development, is one in a series of articles designed to apprise citizens and business owners alike of how the City is working to strengthen and improve the tax base and financial well-being of the community through economic development.

After reviewing the October article, which covered the City's Retail Grant Program, there was EDC discussion on the types of recent applicants and the Retail Grant Program guidelines. Recent grant applicants have been proposing a mix of retail and service components. There was discussion on the possible need to update the Retail Grant Program guidelines with an emphasis on requiring a majority of grant applicant business revenues coming from retail sales. Based on the discussion, the EDC agreed to review the Retail Grant Program in detail at its next meeting.

## **EDC Member Updates**

Diane McGinnis said that Elmhurst Memorial Hospital construction is on schedule. She also mentioned that Leo Fronza, President and Chief Executive Officer of Elmhurst Memorial Health Care, has been appointed to the Board of Choose DuPage. Choose DuPage is the DuPage County economic development organization.

Kurt Warnke stated that relative to recent retail grant applications, the City of Elmhurst should be thankful for the retailer interest in Downtown Elmhurst. He added that unlike corporate retail entities, independent retailers may be somewhat more insulated from current adverse economic conditions.

Scott LaMorte mentioned the recent success of the Elmhurst College football team. He said this may contribute to increasing visitors to Elmhurst College for various related events and the probable positive effect on dining and shopping activity in Elmhurst.

Dan Hiffman noted that attendance at the International Council of Shopping Centers (ICSC) 2008 Midwest Dealmaking event in Chicago was down from prior years. Also, a lower percentage of retailers attended the event. Retail financing is very difficult at this time. He said it is a good problem for the City of Elmhurst to need a Retail Grant Program review.

John Quigley updated the EDC on recent business developments. Most notable is that Foodmix, a marketing and advertising firm, has purchased and will be occupying the former Masonic Temple building on South York Street.

Richard Reichert noted that there has been a recent slow down of telephone calls to Community Bank by concerned customers. He noted that some recent actions by the federal government appear to be effective.

Tom Paravola said many Downtown businesses are apprehensive about the upcoming holiday shopping season.

Don Meyers said his sign business has been steady, although there has been some effect of many businesses limiting their marketing budgets. Health care signage has been in steady demand.

### **Miscellaneous Topics**

EDC members discussed the possibility of going to a bimonthly meeting schedule. Martha Corner noted the need for the EDC to meet on a monthly basis to continue to contribute effectively to local economic development efforts. Don Meyers said the January 2009 EDC agenda item should involve setting the 2009 EDC meeting schedule.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:45 a.m.

The next meeting of the EDC is scheduled for January 23, 2009 at 7:30 a.m.

Submitted by Martha Corner, AICP, Economic Development Manager