

Community & Economic Development Committee

Minutes of the Meeting on
July 13, 2021

**Village of Homer Glen
14240 W. 151st Street, Homer Glen, IL 60491
Community Meeting Room**

1. Call to Order.

The meeting was called to order at 7:19 p.m. by Mayor George Yukich.

2. Roll Call.

Members present at 7:19 p.m. were Eileen Crement, Dan Kenney, Chris Plouzek, Co-Chair Rose Reynders and Mayor George Yukich. A quorum was established.

Members Absent: Co-Chair Beth Rodgers, Dan Fleming and Mike Prodehl.

Also Present: Economic Development Director Janie Patch and Intern Taylor Udarbe.

3. Approval of Amendments to the Agenda.

There were no amendments to the agenda.

4. Welcome New Co-Chairs.

Trustee Rose Reynders was welcomed to the Committee as a new Co-Chair.

5. CED Committee Meeting Time – Discussion.

Committee members in attendance are able to switch the monthly meeting date to the second Monday at 7:00 p.m. This proposed scheduling adjustment will be requested to the Village Board for approval if all other Committee members are able to accommodate this change.

6. Minutes.

Eileen Crement asked for the details on the COVID loan program related to the minutes from the February 9, 2021, meeting. Director Patch indicated that \$130,000 of the \$150,000 budget was approved as 0% interest loans to 13 businesses. The loan recipients are in the process of paying the Village back. This loan program was very successful in serving as a bridge until other levels of governmental assistance became available.

Chris Plouzek made a motion to approve the CED Committee minutes of February 9, 2021, seconded by Eileen Crement. Voice vote taken, all in favor, none opposed. *Motion Carried.*

7. Old Business.

There was no Old Business.

8. New Business.

a) Review of Proposed Commercial Building Improvement Grant Program.

Intern Udarbe presented the proposed reimbursement grant program to facilitate desired building improvements based on comparative research of similar assistance programs available in peer and neighboring communities. Improved commercial buildings will help the Village retain and attract new businesses resulting in benefits for the entire community.

The comparative research found that some communities have programs that focus specifically on facades, signage, interiors, exteriors, or life-safety while others fund a wider range of improvements. The proposed program for Homer Glen identifies a range of eligible improvements intended to remain with the property including improvements to facades, freestanding signage, life-safety features, accessibility upgrades and utilities (heating, air conditioning, electrical or plumbing). Applicants must install at least \$2,000 of material improvements.

Comparative research found that other communities typically award building improvement grants covering 50% of approved costs. The average maximum grant award is \$17,500 among the non-TIF communities researched. Staff recommends a program for Homer Glen offering grant reimbursements of up to 50% of approved costs with a maximum grant award of \$20,000.

There is currently a \$40,000 placeholder in the FY22 budget to support this program.

The Village Board established programs in 2012 that address façade improvements and non-conforming sign replacements through the Business Incentive Loan Programs. These 0% loan programs failed to attract applicants even with extensive Village staff marketing. More recently, a number of businesses inquired about the Village's COVID Loan Program but did not apply as it was not a grant program.

Dan Kenney asked for a clarification of improvements that are non-compliant with Village Code. Director Patch indicated that improvements to correct Code violations are not eligible. Replacement of a legal non-conforming freestanding sign is eligible for grant assistance under the proposed program.

Co-Chair Reynders asked if this program would require a yearly budget. Director Patch responded in the affirmative.

Dan Kenney commented that the maximum grant award of \$20,000 could limit the number of projects possible this fiscal year to only two. Intern Udarbe noted this would be possible if both projects were approved for the maximum grant amount. It would also be possible to assist several smaller projects.

Eileen Crement asked how multiple applications received around the same time would be processed. Director Patch indicated that applications would be reviewed on a first-come first-served basis.

Co-Chair Reynders inquired about how the grant program would be marketed. Director Patch indicated that the website, eblast, social media and postal letters will all be used to get the word out to commercial property owners and business owners.

Mayor Yukich commented that the \$40,000 budget is not enough to support the program. Director Patch noted that a higher budget amount could be approved by the Village Board through the annual budget process next year. Eileen Crement asked if unused funds would rollover to a new budget year resulting in a higher

budget amount being available. Mayor Yukich remarked that it would be best to first see how the \$40,000 budget works this year.

Eileen Crement inquired how new applications would be dealt with if current year funding is earmarked and the next year's budget is not yet approved. Director Patch indicated that no new applications can be accepted until budget funds for the new fiscal year are approved. Grant approvals would be awarded based on funds availability.

Dan Kenney commented that it's a great program proposal and the budget amount should be increased next year.

Chris Plouzek suggested adjusting the maximum grant award to \$10,000 to be in a position to assist more businesses. Director Patch noted that \$20,000 is recommended by staff as a maximum grant award based on the comparative research of other communities and for the potential to attract more impactful projects.

Co-Chair Reynders agreed with adjusting the maximum grant award to \$10,000 and noted that business owners will invest first to improve the function of their business rather than in façade renovations. Co-Chair Reynders commented that the Village should help businesses directly. Director Patch clarified eligible improvements in the proposed program do not include business equipment/furniture/fixtures. Mayor Yukich indicated that we should see how the proposed program performs.

The CED Committee reached consensus to adjust the maximum grant award amount to \$10,000 and recommend approval of the proposed reimbursement grant program with this revision. The CED Committee further recommends that the budget supporting this grant program be increased in the next fiscal year to help more businesses.

9. Director's Report.

a) Commercial Activity Update.

Director Patch participated in ICSC RECON Digital, held virtually in May in lieu of the annual Las Vegas retail convention. Homer Glen was represented through a digital exhibitor booth. Director Patch reported making contact with mixed use developers as a strategy for this virtual convention to showcase the 159th Street corridor development opportunities.

Director Patch covered the following development project updates: M/I Homes has sold 63% of the units at The Square at Goodings Grove; Pets Supplies Plus is well under construction; and, Culver's has their building permit and targets opening in mid-November.

Commercial activity updates include: Game On Bar & Grill inside the Megaplex and Edge Music Academy are now open. The Phoenix Kitchen & Cocktails is experiencing the same hiring issues as elsewhere and will open once the proper employee team is in place. I Fix It is also preparing to open at Homer Town Square.

New leases signed include: Apogee Fitness; Captain Cook Fish Chicken & Grill; Illinois Bone & Joint Institute; and, Malaak Supermarket.

b) Will County CED Economic Update Highlights.

Director Patch shared highlights from a recent economic update briefing provided by the Will County Center for Economic Development for context.

10. Public Comment.

There was no public comment.

11. Adjournment.

Motion by Co-Chair Reynders, seconded by Chris Plouzek to adjourn. *Motion carried.*
The meeting was adjourned at 8:05 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted:



Janie Patch
Economic Development Director