City of Columbus
Economic Development Authority

DATE: August 22, 2024

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NAME	ADDRESS

City of Columbus
Regular Economic Development Authority (EDA) Meeting
Alternative Meeting Format
MN Statute, Section 13D.021
08.22.2024

The 08.22.24 meeting of the City of Columbus Economic Development Authority was called to order at 6:30 p.m. by President Jesse Preiner at City Hall. Present were Commissioners, Karen Fleming, Ron Hanegraaf, and Janet Hegland, and City Administrator Jack Davis.

Also in attendance: None.

1. Call to Order Regular Meeting – 6:30 p.m.
2. Pledge of Allegiance
3. Approval of Agenda

Motion by Hegland to approve the agenda as written. Seconded by Fleming Roll call vote: Fleming – aye; Hanegraaf – aye; Hegland – aye; and Preiner – aye. Motion carries.

4. Approval of the 5/16/2024 EDA Meeting Minutes

Motion by Hegland to table the May 16, 2024 EDA Meeting Minutes approval for edits. Seconded by Wagamon. Roll call vote: Fleming – aye; Hanegraaf – aye; Hegland – aye; and Preiner – aye. Motion carries.

5. Columbus EDA Agenda Items

Item 1 – Business Activity Report

City Administrator Jack Davis states that a Public Hearing was held before the Planning Commission last night for a Truck Wash facility on South Hornsby Street, kitty-corner to Loves. He stated that they would be substantial water user, but the city had the capacity to serve their needs without compromission service to existing users. Davis stated that the new office for North Pine Aggregate is still in progress, and that the City has no update on the proposed Holiday rebuild project. Davis states that the Veterinary Neurology hospital is still working on getting their building permits and are close to starting construction. Davis states that construction has started or completed construction on 6 family homes and a total of 218 building permits have been issued so far this year. He stated that there have been four inquires on the City owned properties in the Freeway District, and that the Hy-Vee site property is currently for sale.

Hegland asks for an update on LCI Landscapes' progress. Davis states that they have pulled one of their required permits and are making some progress, but that they are moving very slowly.

Item 2 – BR&E Program Update

Davis begins by stating that there was discussion regarding the City's Business Retention Expansion Program ("BR&E") at the May 26, 2024 EDA Meeting. The previous study identifies issues with the City's communication with business. As a result, EDA members Judy Huntosh, Karen Fleming, and Mayor Jesse Preiner and City Administrator Jack Davis met to develop a survey form to interview local businesses. Davis asks the commissioners to review the drafted survey form and to develop a business visitation program for the interviews.

Hegland suggests a few clarifications on the form language, such as adding a 'doing business as' line and a section for a website URL and social media handles. She goes on to suggest that the interviewer conduct preliminary research on each business prior to meeting with them, so that they can tailor the questions to each business. She states that the opening question of the form, 'please tell us about your primary product and services', should already be answered before meeting. Fleming responds by stating that they may not have time to do research on each business, and that the opening question is to form a relationship with the business. She says that the interview can organically grow from there. Hegland states that the interviewer should at least have some background knowledge of the business, and that that the business will appreciate the specific questions. Fleming asks Hegland what the opening question should be instead, and Hegland states that it would depend on the business. Hegland goes on say that the City has a lot of businesses that only sell to other businesses rather than the public, and that they have different needs than other types of businesses.

Preiner states that he does not want the businesses to feel like they are being grilled for answers or integrated. He states that businesses do not want someone from the City showing up and asking a lot of questions. Hanegraaf agrees with Preiner. Fleming states that the business does not have to answer any of the questions, but some are important for the City to know. Hegland says that learning about all the businesses could help the City make suggestions or offer assistance. She explains that it could facilitate connections between the businesses. Hegland suggests reaching out to Nannette from the Chamber of Commerce for insight. Fleming states that they just need to get started, and that they can improve the process as they go. Fleming also states that a lot of the information can be filled out ahead of time to keep the interview short and easy. She goes on to say that some of the most important information is just getting updated and accurate contact information.

Hanegraaf stated that there is not much assistance the City can offer, and Preiner agrees. Hegland suggests using the information to create promotional material for the website or newsletter, as long as it is an equal opportunity for all businesses interested. Flemming suggests hosting seminars on taxes or technology and inviting businesses as a form of assistance. Preiner states that a seminar on taxes would be helpful. Davis states that it's important to let the businesses know that the City is available as a facilitator and can help them get the resources they need or at least point them in the right direction.

Hegland suggests bringing up the survey form and interview process at the next ColumBiz event in October, in order to gauge the interest of businesses and the commission agrees. Fleming asks Hegland to send her suggestions.

Item 3 – Other

Nothing at this time.

Item 4 – Next Meeting Date

Davis states that the next scheduled meeting will be November 21, 2024. The Commission schedules a special meeting on September 11, 2024 at 5:00 p.m. to discuss the 2025 preliminary budget.

6. Adjournment

Motion by Hegland to adjourn. Seconded by Fleming. Roll call vote: Fleming – aye; Hanegraaf – aye; Hegland – aye; and Preiner – aye. Motion carries. Meeting adjourned at 8:43 p.m.

Respectively submitted:

Eleanor Hahn, Recording Secretary