



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
Public Safety Building—Training Room, 825 41st Ave NE
Monday, November 07, 2022
5:00 PM

MINUTES

The meeting was called to order at 5:00 pm by Chair Szurek.

CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

Commissioners Present: Connie Buesgens, Gerry Herringer, KT Jacobs, Amáda Márquez Simula, John Murzyn Jr., Nick Novitsky, Marlaine Szurek

Staff Present: Kelli Bourgeois, City Manager; Aaron Chirpich, Community Development Director; Ben Sandell, Communications Coordinator; Mitchell Forney, Community Development Coordinator; Alicia Howe, Administrative Assistant

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

CONSENT AGENDA

1. Approve the minutes of the special EDA Meeting of September 26, 2022
2. Approve financial reports and payment of bills of September 2022 – Resolution No. 2022-21

Herringer asked about the payment to Short Elliot Hendrickson regarding cell tower design and asked why it was a reoccurring payment.

Chirpich stated this is the final payment for engineering and design; the contractor was waiting to send the final invoice as the City was waiting on AT&T to remove the temporary tower.

Herringer asked what the total project cost was for the cell tower. Chirpich stated that it was 1.2 million dollars.

Motion by Jacobs, seconded by Novitsky, to approve the Consent Agenda as presented. All ayes of present. MOTION PASSED.

RESOLUTION NO. 2022-21

A RESOLUTION OF THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY OF COLUMBIA HEIGHTS, MINNESOTA, APPROVING THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE MONTH OF SEPTEMBER 2022 AND THE PAYMENT OF THE BILLS FOR THE MONTH OF SEPTEMBER 2022.

WHEREAS, the Columbia Heights Economic Development Authority (the “EDA”) is required by Minnesota Statutes Section 469.096, Subd. 9, to prepare a detailed financial statement which shows all

receipts and disbursements, their nature, the money on hand, the purposes to which the money on hand is to be applied, the EDA's credits and assets and its outstanding liabilities; and

WHEREAS, said Statute also requires the EDA to examine the statement and treasurer's vouchers or bills and if correct, to approve them by resolution and enter the resolution in its records; and

WHEREAS, the financial statements for the month of September 2022 have been reviewed by the EDA Commission; and

WHEREAS, the EDA has examined the financial statements and finds them to be acceptable as to both form and accuracy; and

WHEREAS, the EDA Commission has other means to verify the intent of Section 469.096, Subd. 9, including but not limited to Comprehensive Annual Financial Reports, Annual City approved Budgets, Audits and similar documentation; and

WHEREAS, financials statements are held by the City's Finance Department in a method outlined by the State of Minnesota's Records Retention Schedule,

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the Board of Commissioners of the Columbia Heights Economic Development Authority that it has examined the referenced financial statements including the check history, and they are found to be correct, as to form and content; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED the financial statements are acknowledged and received and the check history as presented in writing is approved for payment out of proper funds; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED this resolution is made a part of the permanent records of the Columbia Heights Economic Development Authority.

ORDER OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

Passed this 7th day of November, 2022

Offered by: Jacobs

Seconded by: Novitsky

Roll Call: All ayes of present.

Marlaine Szurek, President

Attest:

Alicia Howe, Secretary

BUSINESS ITEMS

3. Façade Improvement Grant Report EDA, 11-7-22

Forney reported that for the third year in a row the Façade Improvement Grant program is being offered on a first come first serve basis. The program was announced on social media, email, and word of mouth from commissioners and Staff. Two applications were presented to the commission.

Accessory City LLC: Accessory City is located at 556 40th Avenue NE. The proposed project is to furnish and install a store front window on the first floor of the building. The owner has submitted two bids, and the lowest bid sets the project cost at \$6,235 which would allow the owner to access a grant amount of \$3,118.

Columbia Heights VFW Post 230: The VFW is located at 4446 Central Avenue NE, and the proposed project includes removal of their existing pylon sign, installing new footings, and installing a new 8-inch Schedule 40 pole with an 8' by 8' internally lit LED sign. The project is estimated to cost \$20,370, which would qualify the VFW for the full grant amount of \$5,000. The VFW received two quotes for what was supposed to be a reader board sign. After learning that it was not possible, they shifted to the sign that is now being proposed. Unfortunately, they have had difficulty getting a second quote on the new sign. It is important to note that the VFW had received a façade grant in 2020. The 2020 grant assisted with the remodeling of the east and northeast side of the building. In 2020, the VFW received the full grant amount of \$5,000. This is the first time that a business has received the full grant in the past and re-applied to the grant program. Staff would like to further discuss how the EDA would like to handle these situations.

Questions/Comments from Members:

Jacobs asked what the black box to the left of where the proposed window for Accessory City was in the applicant's photo. Chirpich stated he believed it was an advertising board.

Jacobs stated she was concerned about how the EDA was going to handle approval of businesses who already received a grant, and said it was setting a precedent if the commission would move forward. She also said there was a non-conforming clause for the VFW property and so if they add lighting to the new sign, then it steps outside of the parameters for the grandfathering of the sign.

Chirpich provided background on the history of the lighting of the sign but stated it's more a zoning issue rather than something that should be considered for the grant process itself, but said it was fair to discuss the impact.

Szurek said she thought if the pylon sign was replaced it needed to be changed to a monument sign. Chirpich stated that they would not need to, but if the property sat vacant for more than six months, then the use was no longer permitted, then they would need to comply with the current regulations.

Jacobs asked if this type of sign would be permitted elsewhere on Central Avenue that has the same zoning. Chirpich stated it would be allowed but under different conditions, the setback would be the biggest issue.

Jacobs further stated she believes that the pylon signs are not the type of signs the City wants on Central Avenue to bring back a “community feel”.

Szurek stated that when she was on the Planning Commission they were trying to change requirements to promote monument signs over pylon signs. Chirpich said he was aware of zoning changes related specifically to electronic reader board signs in the City’s history, but pylon signs are still allowed on Central Avenue so long as they do not include electronic reader boards.

Chirpich made note of the “rights” for this specific application from the VFW, first, regarding the replacement for the sign, and zoning, land use, and property rights, and secondly, allowing a second application.

Jacobs expressed concerns about them applying again.

Márquez Simula said that she didn’t think it was an issue for them to apply again as it’s an investment in their property in the City, which will help the appearance within the City. She further stated that if there is a new business then they should be chosen over a previous applicant if there are any limits on funds for that year.

Buesgens stated that the applicant may not have funds to do multiple projects at the same time so they are prioritizing their projects and that each case should be treated individually.

Chirpich said that in the facade program, it currently does not state a limit on the number of times that a business can apply.

Novitsky agreed about considering a second application and if a new business was applying versus a previous applicant.

Further discussion ensued regarding pylon signs within the City and the condition of many current signs.

Herringer said he believed a new VFW sign would be a good improvement.

Herringer asked if the new sign is going to be attached to the building. Murzyn Jr. explained the current condition of the sign and said that it is causing damage on the building because the sign pole was hit by a vehicle years ago and now the sign frame is leaning against the building. He stated that the new sign would be freestanding and not touching the building.

Chirpich stated that the question of whether improvements need to be attached to the building could be clarified in the application requirements for the future, but he believed that the proposed sign meets the intent of the program because the sign is permanent.

Motion by Buesgens, seconded by Novitsky, to waive the reading of Resolutions 2022-22 and 2022-23, there being ample copies available to the public. All ayes of present. MOTION PASSED.

Motion by Buesgens, seconded by Jacobs, to adopt Resolution 2022-22, a resolution approving the form and substance of the façade improvement grant agreement, and approving authority staff and officials to take all actions necessary to enter the authority into façade improvement grant agreements with the building owner of 556 40th Ave NE, Columbia Heights, MN 55421. All ayes of present. MOTION PASSED.

Motion by Buesgens, seconded by Jacobs, to adopt Resolution 2022-23, a resolution approving the form and substance of the façade improvement grant agreement, and approving authority staff and officials to take all actions necessary to enter the authority into façade improvement grant agreements with Columbia Heights VFW Post 230. A roll call vote was taken. 6 Ayes, 1 Abstention (Murzyn Jr. abstained). MOTION PASSED.

RESOLUTION NO. 2022-22

A RESOLUTION OF THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY OF COLUMBIA HEIGHTS, MINNESOTA, APPROVING THE FORM AND SUBSTANCE OF THE FAÇADE IMPROVEMENT GRANT AGREEMENTS, AND APPROVING AUTHORITY STAFF AND OFFICIALS TO TAKE ALL ACTIONS NECESSARY TO ENTER THE AUTHORITY INTO THE FAÇADE IMPROVEMENT GRANT AGREEMENTS WITH THE OWNER OF 556 40TH AVE NE, COLUMBIA HEIGHTS, MN 55421.

WHEREAS, the City of Columbia Heights (the “City”) and the Columbia Heights Economic Development Authority (the “Authority”) have collaborated to create a certain Façade Improvement Grant Program (the “Program”); and

WHEREAS, pursuant to guidelines established for the Program, the Authority is to award and administer a series of grants to eligible commercial property owners and/or tenants for the purposes of revitalizing existing store fronts, increasing business vitality and economic performance, and decreasing criminal activity along Central Avenue Northeast, in the City’s Central Business district, pursuant to a Façade Improvement Grant Agreement with various property owners and/or tenants; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to the Program, the City is to coordinate a surveillance camera monitoring program by placing surveillance cameras on some of the storefronts that are part of the Program for the purposes of improving public safety in and around the Central Business District, thus requiring a license agreement in addition to the grant agreements (the “Grant Agreements”); and

WHEREAS, the Authority has thoroughly reviewed copies of the proposed forms of the Grant Agreements.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that, after appropriate examination and due consideration, the Authority 1. approves the form and substance of the Grant Agreements, and approves the Authority entering into the Grant Agreements with the owner of 556 40th Ave NE. 2. that the City Manager, as the Executive Director of the Authority, is hereby authorized, empowered and directed for and on behalf of the Authority to enter into the various Grant Agreements. 3. that the City Manager, as the Executive Director of the Authority, is hereby authorized and directed to execute and take such action as he/she deems necessary and appropriate to carry out the purpose of the foregoing resolution.

ORDER OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

Passed this 7th day of November, 2022

Offered by: Buesgens
Seconded by: Jacobs
Roll Call: All ayes of present.

Marlaine Szurek, President

Attest:

Alicia Howe, Secretary

RESOLUTION NO. 2022-23

A RESOLUTION OF THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY OF COLUMBIA HEIGHTS, MINNESOTA, APPROVING THE FORM AND SUBSTANCE OF THE FAÇADE IMPROVEMENT GRANT AGREEMENTS, AND APPROVING AUTHORITY STAFF AND OFFICIALS TO TAKE ALL ACTIONS NECESSARY TO ENTER THE AUTHORITY INTO FAÇADE IMPROVEMENT GRANT AGREEMENTS WITH VFW POST 230.

WHEREAS, the City of Columbia Heights (the “City”) and the Columbia Heights Economic Development Authority (the “Authority”) have collaborated to create a certain Façade Improvement Grant Program (the “Program”); and

WHEREAS, pursuant to guidelines established for the Program, the Authority is to award and administer a series of grants to eligible commercial property owners and/or tenants for the purposes of revitalizing existing store fronts, increasing business vitality and economic performance, and decreasing criminal activity along Central Avenue Northeast, in the City’s Central Business district, pursuant to a Façade Improvement Grant Agreement with various property owners and/or tenants; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to the Program, the City is to coordinate a surveillance camera monitoring program by placing surveillance cameras on some of the storefronts that are part of the Program for the purposes of improving public safety in and around the Central Business District, thus requiring a license agreement in addition to the grant agreements

(the “Grant Agreements”); and WHEREAS, the Authority has thoroughly reviewed copies of the proposed forms of the Grant Agreements.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that, after appropriate examination and due consideration, the Authority 1. approves the form and substance of the Grant Agreements, and approves the Authority entering into the Grant Agreements with VFW Post 230. 2. that the City Manager, as the Executive Director of the Authority, is hereby authorized, empowered and directed for and on behalf of the Authority to enter into the various Grant Agreements. 3. that the City Manager, as the Executive Director of the Authority, is hereby authorized and directed to execute and take such action as he/she deems necessary and appropriate to carry out the purpose of the foregoing resolution.

ORDER OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

Passed this 7th day of November, 2022

Offered by: Buesgens

Seconded by: Jacobs

Roll Call: 6 Ayes, 1 Abstention (*Murzyn Jr. abstained*). *MOTION PASSED.*

Marlaine Szurek, President

Attest:

Alicia Howe, Secretary

4. Outstanding Business of the Year Award Creation

Forney reported that on October 11, 2022, the Communications Department approached Community Development Staff wanting to expand on the City’s recognition of local citizens and businesses. Ultimately, the Communications Department wanted to start an Outstanding Business of the Year Award. Staff is coming forward with a recommendation for the award criteria.

Mission: The purpose of the Outstanding Business of the Year Award is to recognize local businesses for noteworthy accomplishments, long-standing contributions to the community, and significant community service efforts.

Process: The Outstanding Business of the Year Award will follow a similar process and timeline as the Outstanding Citizen Award. Nominations will be opened on January 1st of each year and will be accepted until the last Wednesday in March. The nominations will then be compiled and brought to the EDA meeting in April. The EDA will review the nominees and vote on the business that is to be recognized. Recognition and the presentation of a plaque will occur at the second City Council meeting in April. This also allows Staff the necessary time to recognize the business in the summer newsletter.

Criteria: Nominated businesses will have to meet the criteria laid out in the nomination form. Staff kept the base criteria vague so that a wide variety of businesses could apply.

Staff believes that outside businesses should be able to be nominated. Columbia Heights is a very tight knit community that has businesses located in Hilltop and surrounding towns which contribute time and money to the community. Nominated businesses can receive the award for: 1) being a long-standing business within the City of Columbia Heights, reaching a milestone year, 2) having a major business expansion, remodel, exterior renovation, landscaping improvements, or relocation to a new facility within the City, 3) a major contribution to the community, or 4) other major accomplishments or contributions worthy of recognition. Only for-profit businesses will be allowed to be nominated, and Councilmembers and Staff will not be allowed to nominate a business to keep the process impartial. If the EDA receives no viable applicants for a given year, the EDA can choose to not select a winner.

Prizes: Similar to the Outstanding Citizen of the Year Award, the Outstanding Business of the Year will be recognized at a Council meeting and will be given a plaque to memorize the achievement. They will also receive free marketing at City events, on the City website, in the summer edition of the newsletter (both electronic and paper), and on the reader board signs outside of city hall and the liquor stores. Communications Coordinator Rotler is also exploring the option of having the business in the jamboree parade. Staff believes this is a great way to recognize local businesses while building relationships with those who are nominated. Implementing this award would bring very little cost to the EDA but would be a great recognition opportunity for the community.

Questions/Comments from Members:

Buesgens asked if a landlord would be considered a business. Forney said that a limited liability corporation could be considered.

Buesgens asked if sustainability improvements could be added to the criteria. Forney said it would fall under the criteria, but it could be highlighted further.

Jacobs asked if the library would be posting advertisement too. Forney said they will work with the library or if they cannot reach an agreement, they will pull it from the application information.

Rotler made note of how the City would advertise about the new recognition opportunity. He stated that there would be announcements in the newsletter leading up to the nomination period, they would also do social media posts, and put it on the website; they would also announce it at events.

Jacobs asked if it could be incorporated in the newspaper because it is something new. Rotler said he would make note of that recommendation.

Motion by Novitsky, seconded by Murzyn Jr., to create the Outstanding Business of the Year Award and approve the nomination form as presented. All ayes of present. MOTION PASSED.

OTHER BUSINESS

Chirpich reminded the commission that November 15, 2022, was the Ratio Open House at 4:30 pm.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Jacobs, seconded by Márquez Simula, to adjourn the meeting at 5:46 pm. All ayes. MOTION PASSED.

Respectfully submitted,



Alicia Howe, Administrative Assistant