

COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

April 10, 2024 – 6:30 pm

Chairman Dan Carncross called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm. City Administrator Leone called roll to establish a quorum. Committee members present: Chairman Dan Carncross, Alderman Jay Schulz, Alderwoman Lori Lancaster and Alderwoman Rosa Luna. Also present were City Administrator Lou Leone and Community Development Director Donovan Day.

Public Comment

Chairman Carncross opened the floor to public comment for any item not on the agenda. There were none.

Building Code Updates

Director Day related that City Staff is seeking the Community Development Committee's consideration to update the existing adopted International Code Council (ICC) codes that regulate building construction and property maintenance. A recent ISO audit shows the City's insurance rating at 4; updating the codes to the 2021 cycle is key to keeping our current rating which affects insurance rates for residents and business owners. The ICC publishes regulations for building construction and property maintenance and updates the codes every three years. In 2015, Harvard adopted the 2012 edition for the majority of the codes. In order to maintain best building practices, it is encouraged to update the codes at least every two code cycles (every 6 years).

The City has a contract with HLR for additional services to assist the Community Development Dept. and partner with them for field training. Dan Streit with HLR gave a presentation to highlight some of the code updates.

The following is a list of the current adopted codes and the code version staff is proposing:

Code Name	Current Edition	Proposed Edition
International Building Code	2012	2021
International Residential Code	2012	2021
International Mechanical Code	2012	2021
International Property Maintenance Code	2012	2021
International Energy Conservation Code	Latest Edition	Latest Edition
International Fuel Gas Code	2012	2021
National Electric Code	2011	2020
State of Illinois Plumbing Code	Latest Edition	Latest Edition
International Fire Code	2012	2021
Illinois Accessibility Code	Latest Edition	Latest Edition
NFPA 13 Fire Sprinkler Code	2013	In Fire Code Already
NFPA 72 Fire Alarm Code	2013	In Fire Code Already
NFPA 101 Life Safety Code	2006	Mandated by State
Existing Building Code	Not Adopted	2021
Pool & Spa Code	Not Adopted	2021

Director Day reviewed additional considerations as outlined in his memo which proposes a monotony regulation and a spot survey.

A motion was made by Alderman Schulz, seconded by Alderwoman Lancaster to approve the building code updates as presented and send to the City Council for review. All ayes. Motion carried.

Discussion/Action: Broadband Presentation by Surf Internet Regarding Internet Status

- Scott Franko, Jennifer Alvarez and Audrey Miller with Surf Internet gave a presentation relative to broadband internet and bringing fiber to the community. Surf Internet has been in business for over 24 years and already has a network in place in Illinois, Indiana and Michigan. They are looking to deploy more of their resources to expand the network and align with communities such as Harvard, Marengo and Woodstock.
- Mayor Kelly interjected with context and background that the City had recognized during Covid that there's a need for fiber in our community to provide a better learning experience for students and to attract and obtain technical business. Fiber is needed as an infrastructure for our community to connect those businesses with the world. Funds were earmarked from ARPA funds to start the process and commission a RFP from internet

companies that could bring broadband to the City. There are several different models available to create broadband. At that time, the larger players were not interested in becoming a supplier to smaller, rural communities, so the City was considering a municipal owned network to bridge that gap. Since then, Surf Internet approached the City; they have a much different model for the Committee's consideration to determine which model works best for our community.

- The Surf Internet team presented their solution to bring fiber to Harvard which would be a Surf-funded project; with their model, they would provide the infrastructure, own the network and become an ISP. Surf Internet currently covers most of Whiteside County and is looking to expand. The process starts with design, the permitting phase, technology to enable the program, restoration and install. They would begin in the summer; each phase is about 100-200 homes which takes 6 weeks to light up each phase.
- Mayor Kelly said the big difference from Surf Internet's proposal is that it's not City owned; Surf Internet bears the cost of construction, users can sign up and not commit to a contract length, and its upgradable in terms of the band width available. It accomplishes what the City Council was looking for prior to putting out the RFP, but it resolves the issues the City would have had as a municipal owned internet. The project is privately-funded and there is no cost to the City, unless there are rural areas outside of town the City would like to have access to.
- Surf Internet offers package pricing with an average cost of \$85-\$105, comparable to what cable internet is.
- Surf Internet only builds in the easement, so they don't build up to every home; they only build up to the home if they become a customer. There is a specific website oriented for construction complaints and restoration issues.

No action is needed at this time.

Discussion Teska Associates Proposed TIF

Director Day reviewed his memo for the proposed TIF that encompasses the former City Hall/Police Station and other properties in and near the downtown area. Since Illinois law requires a TIF to be a minimum of 1.5 acres and the subject property is .6 acres, staff is proposing to expand the area to include properties that are in need of revitalization and/or could be beneficial for future expansion of the downtown area. The proposed area is depicted on the map in the agenda packet. The City has received a proposal from Teska for services relating to the evaluation/creation of a TIF District. The cost would be \$30,000 (or \$35,000 if a housing study is required) which would be reimbursable after the TIF is created. The process will take approximately 4-6 months. The City's portion of the project would be to hold the public hearings with the Joint Review Board, send certified mailings to everyone within the TIF District, hire a surveyor to create the TIF District Boundaries and legal description. City Administrator Leone indicated if the TIF were to move forward, it would go back to the Joint Review Board for their input.

Aldermen Schulz expressed his opinion that the focus should be more on the downtown areas that need revitalization in the TIF and questioned going all the way out on Diggins St. to keep it functional so it isn't too big and cumbersome. Alderwoman Luna concurred and noted there are a lot of empty buildings in the downtown. There was additional discussion as to areas to include in the proposed TIF District. Director Day reviewed eligible uses of TIF funds. Mayor Kelly recommended that staff create a couple different maps to present various options to the City Council.

After discussion, a motion was made by Alderman Carncross, seconded by Alderwoman Luna to move the proposed TIF to the City Council for consideration at the May meeting, with direction for staff to bring different maps to present various options. All ayes. Motion carried.

RFP Broadband Feasibility Study – Review Proposals

City Administrator Leone requested that the item be tabled until the next meeting. He will put together the information on the proposals and forward to the Committee.

Chairman Carncross requested a side by side comparison to include Surf Internet which is an alternative to consider.

Revolving Loan Fund Policy

Staff is seeking the Committee's consideration to revise the City's Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) program. Mayor Kelly indicated that there currently isn't a written policy. He gave a history of the RLF which was initially created under the HEDC. The HEDC and the City had seed money that created the overall fund which has been going on since its inception. The original concept was to allow businesses on Ayer St. to borrow up to \$50,000 from this fund at 0% interest rate for a loan term not to exceed 5 years to renovate the façade of their building. Currently, the RLF has approximately \$153,000 in outstanding loans distributed among five property owners, one of which is about to be paid off, leaving a remaining fund balance of approximately \$70,000 available for lending. Staff proposes applying interest to loans at 50% of the current market rate, with a minimum interest rate set at 1-3.5%, depending on the nature

of the project. For instance, public-facing improvements such as façade enhancements and interior upgrades would qualify for a lower interest rate compared to infrastructure projects like roof replacements or HVAC improvements.

Director Day is working with Attorney Clifton on a written policy to be presented to the Committee. Chairman Carncross recommended that the RLF be expanded to include any business within the City. Alderman Schulz concurred and suggested that the business would not be home based but have a physical presence.

Business Registration Program

Alderman Schulz noted that Scott Logan sent some concerns that he asked the Committee to address. He left the meeting at 8:10 pm.

Director Day reviewed his memo seeking the Committee's consideration to require businesses to register with the City at no cost unless a business doesn't register within a certain time frame. The program would mirror Woodstock's program and would allow for communication with businesses in the community. Donovan related that the City possesses the necessary software infrastructure with Community Core to accommodate business registration. Business registration creates the foundation for monthly/quarterly newsletters and in the future might provide information for a business directory on the City's website.

- Donovan reviewed an email received from Scott Logan who indicated he didn't have any inherent problems with the program as presented, perhaps many advantages to the City. The initial proposal would make this free for the business; Scott's concern was that a future administration doesn't add an initial or annual fee. City Administrator Leone confirmed that you can't restrict what a future administration/City Council does.
- At Alderwoman Luna's inquiry, Donovan indicated everything would be translated into Spanish.
- Pertinent info that would be required to register: contact info, business name, anniversary of business, alarm system company, security alarm info, number of employees, email and website info, phone numbers, type of business. A mail in option would be available; after submission, staff would enter the businesses data.
- There was discussion of imposing a fee if a business did not register.
- Director Day noted the registration would also allow for a zoning review before a business opens up to ensure its allowable within the zoning district that it is located in.
- Mayor Kelly envisions as the department grows there will be additional economic development initiatives that could be communicated to these businesses such as the upcoming small business seminar. The database helps the City create better partnerships with the business community.
- Scott also inquired if the program would apply to local organizations that do not have a physical presence, such as the Harvard Parks Foundation which has a PO Box, but not a physical address. Donovan felt registration should be allowed on a voluntary basis to get information and that the newsletter should be open to residents and businesses alike. Only businesses that have a brick and mortar stores would be required to sign up. Scott also inquired about privacy; Donovan thought personal contact info would more likely be redacted if FOIA' d. City Administrator Leone will further research to find out what information can be redacted.

A motion was made by Alderwoman Lancaster, seconded by Alderwoman Luna to send the program to the City Council for consideration. All ayes. Motion carried. Donovan indicated the program will go the City Attorney for review before going to the City Council.

New Business

- Mayor Kelly and City Administrator Leone mentioned that the City is partnering/cost sharing with Richmond and their Chamber of Commerce to put on a workshop in August/September with the John Shellard Group to help small businesses and entrepreneurs become a destination and attract more business.
- Beginning in June, there will be a third staff member who is bilingual/biliterate.
- At Alderman Carncross' inquiry, City Administrator Leone said the soccer tournament is progressing.

A motion was made by Alderman Carncross, seconded by Alderwoman Lancaster to adjourn the meeting. All ayes. Motion carried.

Meeting adjourned at 8:36 pm.

Submitted by:
Chairman Dan Carncross