

**CITY OF ROCK ISLAND
CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION
July 11, 2022 - 5:00 p.m.**

**City Council Chambers, City Hall, 3rd Floor
1528 Third Avenue, Rock Island, IL**

7/11/2022 - Minutes

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Thoms called the meeting to order at 5:02 p.m. and welcomed everyone.

THIS MEETING WILL BE CONDUCTED BY AUDIO AND VIDEO CONFERENCE WITHOUT A PHYSICALLY PRESENT QUORUM OF THE ROCK ISLAND CITY COUNCIL DUE TO THE DISASTER DECLARATION ISSUED BY GOVERNOR PRITZKER.

ROLL CALL

Mayor Thoms asked City Clerk Samantha Gange to call the roll.

Present: Alderpersons Judith Gilbert, Dylan Parker, Mark Poulos, Bill Healy, and Mayor Mike Thoms.

Alderman Moses Robinson joined the meeting at 5:07 p.m.

Absent: Alderpersons Randy Hurt and Jenni Swanson.

Staff: City Manager Todd Thompson, City Attorney Dave Morrison, City Clerk Samantha Gange, and other City staff.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mayor Thoms asked if anyone in the public wished to speak. No one volunteered in person or via remote connection.

PRESENTATION FROM MILES BRAINARD, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ON THE 2022 ANNUAL ACTION PLAN FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT (CDBG).

Miles Brainard, Community & Economic Development Director addressed Council and provided a PowerPoint presentation on the 2022 Annual Action Plan (AAP) for CDBG funds. He noted that moving forward the department will be working on better educating the public and Council on the use of these funds. The purpose of CDBG funds is to improve housing and expand economic opportunities for low to moderate income people. This program is overseen by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Rock Island is considered an entitlement community, which allows the City to automatically receive funds from the federal

government. However, in order to continue being considered an entitlement community, there are certain HUD regulations and reporting requirements that must be followed.

CDBG projects must meet one of three national objectives, which include: providing a benefit to low and moderate income households, elimination of slums and blight in neighborhoods, and funds for an urgent need such as a natural disaster.

Mr. Brainard discussed the planning and reporting cycle that staff undertake for CDBG funds. The community engagement and data analysis part of the cycle include reviewing, collecting, and monitoring the City's housing stock on a rolling basis. Every five years the department provides a consolidated plan, which outlines the general ways the City plans to use the funds through the five-year period. This part of the cycle also includes public engagement and more rigorous data analysis as well as lays out the overall goals for the period. Additionally, the department also submits an annual action plan to HUD that details specifically how the City plans to use the funds in that given year. He noted that at times the annual action plan may require amendments.

Another component of the planning and reporting cycle includes a consolidated annual performance and evaluation report or CAPER at the end of each year. During the entire planning and reporting cycle, monitoring occurs and at any given point an audit can be triggered by HUD.

Next Mr. Brainard discussed where the City is at in the cycle. The department recently submitted the 2021 CAPER and received comments back at the end of May, with responses to the comments due by mid-July. He noted that the department went through the monitoring process in early June and are waiting on official comments from HUD.

The department received CDBG award allocations for 2022 at the end of May, which triggered the 60-day planning process for the annual action plan. He noted the reason why these funds are not allocated until later in the year is because Congress allocates the funds later and later each year.

For the 2022 AAP, the department successfully requested an extension of the 60-day period requirement due to several factors including staff transition. The due date for the plan is now August 9, 2022. The draft plan was prepared in mid-June and legal notices went out thereafter, and the 30-day public comment period on the draft began at the end of June. The draft plan is available for the public to view online and paper copies are available at the Martin Luther King (MLK) Center, City Hall, and the Library through July 24, 2022. Additionally, the department has conducted three public meetings for residents and stakeholders to provide input.

Mr. Brainard discussed the 2022 AAP budget which includes: \$1,082,234 (an increase from last year); \$616,956 from program income (loan payments or sale proceeds); and \$389,379 (funds carried over from previous years) all totaling \$2,088,569. The budget breakdown includes: \$522,109 for the housing rehabilitation program (emergency and non-emergency housing, targeted area repair and rehabilitation and homestead housing); \$199,000 for housing rehabilitation service delivery (staff salaries and benefits and professional development); and \$134,682 for demolition of 4-5 houses as well as 5% for part of inspections salary and benefits; \$162,335 for public service including MLK Center salaries and afterschool and summer program expenses; \$323,219 for public infrastructure (MLK Building Repairs, Hauberg Carriage House improvements, and Denkmann Park improvements); \$533,116 for job creation (includes program income from CIRLF loan payments and used to provide 4-5 businesses loans to create approximately 20-25 jobs); and \$213,767 for program administration (costs to run the program, lead grant services, paper publications, software, office supplies, and legal services).

Mr. Brainard remarked the department has had several staff transitions and as a result a

reorganization is underway. The newly created Community Development Division will be responsible for CDBG funded activities moving forward. He introduced Nichole Mata, newly named Community Development Manager, who will be overseeing the division. He noted that staff training and building team capacity are a priority for the department in order to have a team of experts.

He discussed the current limitations with HUD including Congress approving budgets later and later each year, which have a trickle down effect. Also, HUD is experiencing staffing shortages, the document templates that must be submitted are oddly formatted, and HUD often changes regulations and requirements without clear notices to communities.

Mr. Brainard concluded his presentation and asked if Council members had any questions.

Aldersperson Gilbert asked how many persons or households in the City meet the HUD definition of low to moderate income. Ms. Mata addressed Council and noted they did not have the information on hand, but could get the information and report back. Aldersperson Gilbert noted the poverty rate for the City as of the 2020 Census is around 21 percent. She thanked the department for everything they've done with the action plan.

PRESENTATION FROM NICOLINA PAPPAS ON REDUCING PLASTIC WASTE

Nicolina Pappas and Camden Palmer addressed Council about reducing single-use plastic in Rock Island by proposing Council pass two ordinances: one to tax all disposable checkout bags at seven cents each and the other to ban plastic straws.

Ms. Pappas provided an overview of her company, Nicolina's Turtle Co. founded in 2019 when she was 8-years-old. The company is run by a group of 6th graders whose goal is to reduce single-use plastics and to provide conservation education to kids. The company sews and sells straw pouches with metal straws to raise funds for conservation efforts. Some of their conservation outreach efforts include: paying for classroom outreach for at-risk schools, a camp scholarship at Niabi Zoo, and river cleanups through Living Lands & Waters. Mr. Palmer discussed other efforts including convincing their school to go straw free and picking up garbage throughout the City.

Mr. Palmer and Ms. Pappas provided background information and statistics on the harm of plastics to the environment. They remarked a study revealed that 75% of the litter in the Quad Cities is plastic and provided pictures of the litter that they have seen firsthand.

Ms. Pappas noted the harm of plastic bags specifically and said the number of plastic bags used by the average American in a year is 365. Several other middle school students were present in Council chambers and brought 365 plastic bags into Council Chambers for a visual effect.

Next, Ms. Pappas and Mr. Palmer provided Council with the details of the proposed plastic straw ban. They noted plastic straws are merely a convenience to people and are the most common types of litter in the Quad Cities and cannot be recycled. Banning plastic straws does not mean banning all straws, just plastic straws as there are many alternative types of straws. They noted that although there might be a slight increase in the cost of non-plastic straws, businesses could provide straws only on request. Several businesses in the area and across the country have successfully implemented the ban of plastic straws.

The second ordinance they proposed was a seven cent tax on plastic bags in an effort to reduce the use of all disposable bags. Mr. Palmer explained the proposed tax pertains to plastic bags

at grocery stores and other retailers provided to customers for the purpose of transporting food or merchandise and does not include reusable bags. They noted during a recent Rock Island cleanup, they found plastic bags in every storm drain they checked. Many studies have shown that a small tax on a disposable bag greatly reduces the use of all disposable bags. Many other countries, states, and cities have already successfully implemented the bag tax. For example, Chicago, Evanston, Oak Park and others have already passed disposable bag taxes in the state.

The tax is not meant to be a revenue-generator for the City as the hope is that less tax will be collected as people change their habits. The City would retain 5 cents of the 7 cent tax, and it would be used for costs related to administering the tax, including purchasing re-usable bags as needed. The retailer will keep the remaining two cents of the tax to help cover any expenses they might incur related to the ordinance, but there are no requirements as to how the retailer uses their portion.

Mr. Palmer discussed the exemptions to the tax, which include no tax on thin film bags used for fruit, bakery, deli, and meat items; prescription pharmacy medications; dry-cleaning and newspaper bags; multiple plastic bags sold in packages intended for garbage and other items; and bags that are designed specifically to be re-usable. Additionally, SNAP and WIC participants would be exempt from the tax.

Ms. Pappas described the implementation and educational campaigns that would need to take place prior to implementation which include coordinating with a bigger conservation event like plastic-free July. She indicated they have discussed the plastic bag ordinance with local businesses and organizations including Hy-Vee and Quad Cities Chamber of Commerce, who have indicated support.

They noted that the proposed tax on plastic bags is a tax of choice and that people do not need to pay for the plastic bags if they bring their own reusable bags. For those that are unable to afford the reusable bags, the City could partner with corporate sponsors to provide bags to those in need at no cost. Community Home Partners have agreed to purchase reusable bags for their residents if the ordinance is passed.

In closing Ms. Pappas and Mr. Palmer noted these two ordinances are simple and will make an impact on reducing the overall use of single-use plastics in Rock Island. They thanked City Council for allowing them to speak and asked if there were any questions.

Mayor Thoms asked Mike Bartels, Public Works Director if the City has experienced issues with plastic bags in sewer drains. Mr. Bartels indicated he did not have the information on hand and would get back to Council.

Joel Vanderbush, Curator of Conservation Education at Niabi Zoo and Chair for the Quad Cities Earth Coalition came to the podium to address Council. He thanked Mr. Pappas and Mr. Palmer's for their presentation and remarked they did an excellent job on the research.

Aldersperson Gilbert said the presentation was excellent and asked if they sell the metal straws and what the cost is. Ms. Pappas responded they sell the metal straw with the pouch for \$10.00 each and they can be purchased online, the Botanical Center, Niabi Zoo, and Nahant Marsh.

Aldersperson Healy asked if they had spoken with companies such as McDonald's that go through many straws. Ms. Pappas indicated they did speak to McDonald's about their future plans for becoming sustainable, but not specifically straws.

Aldersperson Robinson applauded the presentation and asked how they settled on the seven

cent bag tax. Ms. Pappas responded they researched what other cities have done and noticed the seven cent tax seemed to be the most successful.

Aldersperson Healy asked if there was concern with businesses having increased costs for supplies during a time of inflation. For example, he can purchase straws for his business at .0065 cents a straw currently and if he were to purchase paper straws as an alternative the cost is 5.4 cents per straw, which equates to about a thousand percent markup. Ms. Pappas said that wasn't a major concern as restaurants can choose to only provide straws if a customer specifically asks for one. Mr. Vanderbush added that plastic is very cheap compared to raw costs and that's why restaurants do it and there are current efforts being made to make non-plastic straws more affordable for businesses. However, it isn't so much about costs as it is about the environment.

Aldersperson Robinson remarked it appears the use of plastic bags has increased with self-checkouts. He noted bigger cities like Philadelphia, PA use paper bags only at their self-checkout. Mr. Vanderbush indicated that paper bags are not much better than plastic bags.

Matt Pappas came to the podium to address Council. He noted that Governor Pritzker has announced he would like to see the whole state adopt a bag tax and one of the bills proposed exempted cities who already implemented the tax. Mr. Vanderbush noted other stores like Aldi have been charging for plastic bags for years and have been very successful. There are many models to follow as the same retailers in Rock Island are already doing this in other cities.

Mayor Thoms thanked Mr. Palmer and Ms. Pappas for their presentation as well as all of the students and parents in the audience for attending and getting involved.

MOTION TO ADJOURN.

MOTION:

Aldersperson Gilbert moved to adjourn the meeting; Aldersperson Healy seconded.

VOTE:

Motion passed on a 5-0-2 vote. Aye: Gilbert, Parker, Poulos, Healy, Robinson. Nay: None. Absent: Hurt and Swanson. The meeting adjourned at 6:10 p.m.

_____**Samantha Gange**_____

Samantha Gange, City Clerk