

**CITY OF ROCK ISLAND  
CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION  
September 14, 2020 - 5:30 p.m.**

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

9/14/2020 - Minutes

**AS PART OF HIS EXECUTIVE ORDER IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19, #2020-07, SECTION 6, GOVERNOR PRITZKER ANNOUNCED IN PART THAT "DURING THE DURATION OF THE GUBERNATORIAL DISASTER PROCLAMATION, THE PROVISIONS OF THE OPEN MEETINGS ACT, 5 ILCS 120, REQUIRING OR RELATING TO IN-PERSON ATTENDANCE BY MEMBERS OF A PUBLIC BODY ARE SUSPENDED. SPECIFICALLY, (1) THE REQUIREMENT IN 5 ILCS 120/2.01 THAT 'MEMBERS OF A PUBLIC BODY MUST BE PHYSICALLY PRESENT' IS SUSPENDED; AND (2) THE CONDITIONS IN 5 ILCS 120/7 LIMITING WHEN REMOTE PARTICIPATION IS PERMITTED ARE SUSPENDED. PUBLIC BODIES ARE ENCOURAGED TO POSTPONE CONSIDERATION OF PUBLIC BUSINESS WHERE POSSIBLE."**

**DARI WORKPLAN DEVELOPMENT**

Vice President of Economic Development Services Liz Murray-Tallman for DARI came up to speak. She introduced herself and Program Manager Stacey McIntosh. She said the other partner is Economic Development Manager Tarah Sipes with the City. She said she was looking for input from the City on several items. She said in March the City approved a public-private partnership with DARI for economic development. She said Ms. McIntosh has been working close with Tarah, and after March 1st the focus was the COVID-19 response.

Ms. McIntosh introduced herself and the Forward application. She said it is an all-inclusive resource online for businesses. She said businesses can set up a login and apply for resources within the website. She said based on their profile, businesses can see what they do and do not qualify for in terms of grants and other programs. She said 91 businesses have logged in since the site opened. She said there are 400 completed resources available to the businesses. She said in the past month 325 new email addresses and contacts were added and 40 new businesses. Ms. McIntosh discussed the Business Interruption Grant and the the local recipients. She said there was great response to this program.

Ms. McIntosh introduced Ms. Sipes. Ms. Sipes discussed the COVID emergency response grant in which the City partnered with DARI. She said the City contributed to this through emergency CDBG funds, with 41 businesses funded through the City and 28 through DARI. She said there are 70 pending applications from businesses that did not complete them. She said in addition to this grant, she worked on negotiating the service agreement with DARI and working with Ms. McIntosh.

Ms. Murray-Tallman discussed the purpose of the City's partnership with DARI. She discussed the shared space on 2nd Avenue in the downtown area as a one-stop location. She said they are zeroing in on collaborative processes right now. She said since she began on August 3rd there have been 20 named economic development projects. She named eight areas of the workplan program, the first being business resources. She said the FORWARD program is a great opportunity as they are attempting to get information to businesses. She said it is helpful to assess what businesses need as a result, as well as data collection.

She introduced the second part of the program, business development. She said there would be business visits to enhance relationships and identify growth opportunities. She said most of economic development occurs by assisting existing businesses to grow. She said there will likely be more discussions about retention than usual due to the post-COVID world. She said part of this will be to develop a stabilization plan or help businesses out with what it is they need to continue their success. She said they will do a sophisticated in person visit and determine what they can do to help.

She said the next area is engaging corridors of commerce for development. She said DARI will facilitate conversations with local business organizations and determine opportunities in key corridors and outside of those geographical areas. She said they will research the business improvement district process in Illinois and create a sustainability plan for at-risk businesses.

She said the next area of the program is product development. She said this is a core function of every community, including the enhancement and promotion of the availability of quality buildings and sites. She said they need to do more to get those areas out to the world, including the service agreement with vacant property registration. She said real estate management and development opportunities, which were Council goals, would be part of this program area.

She said housing is another area in the workplan. She said their job is to promote those programs and opportunities to grow the residential base. Per the Council goals, developing a residential programs guide and new residential housing will be a focus. She said sharing information regarding homebuyer or homeowner assistance programs is a goal, as well as utilizing the Live Work Rock Island program, which she said no one else has.

She said financial assistance is another program area. She said the purpose is to facilitate the business assistance programs to help expand and grow in the City. She said the Council goal was to develop a comprehensive business guide that outlines all programs available to Rock Island businesses, as well as a resource guide on how to start a business in Rock Island. She said that has already started through the FORWARD application. She said this includes educational programming and resource events and training.

She said marketing and communication is the next program area. She said they will attempt to increase awareness and promotion of Rock Island assets through a comprehensive marketing plan that positions the City as a great place to live and do business. She said the plan is to implement Rock Island Forward through social media, videos, community marketing, and promotion. She said content will be created for the website, and for newsletters, press releases, and marketing collaterals.

She said partnerships is the next program area. She said successful partnerships rely on regular collaboration amongst DARI members, City Council, Staff, and local business development organizations. She said DARI really wants to have dialogue with City Council to update them on activities. She said a goal is to meet with real estate brokers to develop an ongoing relationship to develop leads and help existing companies.

She provided a workplan implementation document sample to show Council what they were doing within the program. She said each program area is broken down into tasks. She said it is a three-year agreement, but they also want to be clear on a plan timeframe. She said there will be a metric to determine what has been successful activity or not.

She said the next steps are to finalize the implementation document, keeping the time frame for each year, finalizing metrics, developing reporting documents and schedules, and finalizing the internal processes. She said it was important to have the communication with Council to ensure they are doing what is requested of them.

Alderman Parker thanked Ms. Murray-Tallman and said he has been looking forward to seeing this public-private partnership take off for a while. He asked if DARI was reviewing existing plans, and trying to execute them. Ms. Murray-Tallman said yes, that there were 14 that they plan to look at and pluck things out that are doable. She said Ms. Sipes and herself were looking at resources for incentives and a loan program. Alderman Parker said he was excited that it is moving forward. Alderwoman Swanson said she was excited to see this plan go through. Alderman Geenen said it was good news about Rock Island moving forward in a positive way. Alderman Spurgetis said he was looking forward to seeing the new offices. Ms. Murray-Tallman said there would be a grand opening once it is finished. Mayor Thoms thanked her for the hard work and said he is looking forward to seeing what happens next.

## **MAYOR'S TASK FORCE MARKETING PROPOSAL**

Marketing Director Jason Wild came up to speak about the Mayor's Marketing Task Force. He said the Task Force was put together in late January of 2020 to get things established, and the first meeting was in February, followed by three additional meetings and a survey. He listed the Task Force goals and members, along with their credentials.

He said there are three marketing objectives. The first is to establish continued community pride among current residents. The second is to give Rock Island the identity it deserves. The third is to appeal to surrounding communities and attract new residents. He listed identified assets by the Task Force group, which included Housing and Neighborhoods, Arts and Entertainment, Recreation, and People.

He discussed the first 30-second video-based solution for marketing. He discussed the objective of the "This Town Rocks" videos, which is a campaign to further develop community pride and appeal to potential residents. He said the videos would start the discussion to bring more positivity with regards to the City. He discussed where these videos would be posted and what would be targeted.

He discussed the second 30-second video-based solution for marketing. He said this highlights neighborhood and housing statistics. He said the objective would be to highlight the best aspects of the City's housing market to attract newcomers. He discussed where these videos would be posted and what would be targeted. He discussed the third 30-second video-based solution for marketing. He said this highlights the City's most significant sources of recreation. He said it would aim to promote tourism and influence current residents to take advantage of that recreation.

He discussed the fourth 30-second video-based solutions for marketing. He said these would be testimonial videos from Rock Island citizens. He said the objective is to highlight City residents from different backgrounds to further develop community pride and connect with potential residents. He discussed where these videos would be posted and what would be targeted. He discussed the fifth 30-second video-based solution for marketing. He said these would be directed at Arts & Entertainment within the City. He said the objective is to spotlight mainstays in the City's Arts & Entertainment scene that show what a weekend in the City might be like. He discussed where these videos would be posted and what would be targeted, specifically in a 160-mile radius from the City. He also showed other idea considerations, including banners, a new web page, billboards, and full color posters.

He discussed the recommendations and cost overview for the project. He showed cost detail for each segment of the marketing objective. He said the total cost for the 2021 marketing proposal would be \$26,352.50. Alderman Hurt asked if the OnMedia TV Advertising is through Mediacom cable. Mr. Wild confirmed yes. Alderman Hurt asked if there were numbers on how many residents used Mediacom versus Dish Network or Direct TV. Mr. Wild said OnMedia is the most

cost effective way of TV advertising, but did not have the numbers. Mayor Thoms said this was seen as the most cost effective way of advertising on TV as opposed to being the most optimal. Alderman Geenen asked if there were numbers on the amount of subscribers to cable were located in the City. Mayor Thoms said no, and noted that Information Technology Director Tim Bain confirmed no. Alderman Poulos asked if the goal was to market to current residents or reaching out to non-residents. Mr. Wild said it is a combination, and Mayor Thoms said it would inform current residents.

Alderman Parker asked if there had been discussions with Visit Quad Cities. Mr. Wild said he had not spoken with them but could do so. Alderman Parker said if there was any way to reach out to that group, the City may be able to obtain resources. He asked how effective one media campaign could be. Mr. Wild said it is varied, but this would be spread out over time. Alderman Parker said the Council and City should find out how to invest long-term in ideas like marketing. He said the locally collected hotel and motel tax revenues should be used towards marketing to generate more visits. He said if the investment is seen worthwhile, a policy change may be needed to develop a long-term strategy for marketing.

Alderman Spurgetis asked if there was a place to list more activities in the City. Mr. Wild said the listed activities represented the best of what the City offered within a 30-second timeframe. Mayor Thoms said unless the video is longer than 30 seconds, it would be difficult to show all activities. Mr. Wild said many other activities are shown through social media channels as well. Alderwoman Swanson said she has a degree in marketing and knows the subject well. She said the City should come up with a plan, including the City's website. Mr. Wild said there is a plan to have a new webpage with a new photo and video gallery. He said he agreed with her regarding the rest of the website.

## **VACANT PROPERTY REGISTRATION DISCUSSION**

Mr. Brainard updated Council regarding vacant property registration. He discussed the problems previously stated in previous meetings. He said there is not currently a good way to collect data on these properties. He said there is currently an abandoned buildings ordinance in the City, which was last updated in 1987. He said it empowers the City to address those properties and how to secure them, but does not require a registry. He discussed the various circumstances on the continuum of property statuses. He said right now there is no tracking or registering of these properties.

He discussed what would be potential updates to the ordinance in accordance with the proposed ProChamps partnership. He said those updates would be incorporated into the current ordinance. He said the idea behind a registry would be to have owners register every six months with a \$300 fee that can be appealed. He said the data is the most important thing that is needed.

Mr. Brainard discussed the difference between the commercial/industrial and residential property registrations. He said commercial and industrial properties that are listed for sale will not be registered if there is a plan in place. He said residential properties that are well-maintained and secure will not be considered Registrable Properties. He said this addresses concerns of residents that are having difficulty occupying or renting their properties.

He summarized by saying it makes sense to expand the existing Vacant Buildings Ordinance to include foreclosed and vacant properties. He said the registry establishment will help provide the missing data needed for better enforcement. He said a partnership with ProChamps is still sought, but also encouraged discussion and questions. Mr. Tweet said Council should expect a draft of this shortly. Alderman Parker asked if the wording in the draft explains properties that are being renovated, and would rehabilitation be under consideration as a non-registrable property.

Mr. Brainard said there was language highlighted in the draft which would specify how to review and enforce these circumstances. He said each situation is defined with some flexibility.

## **DOWNTOWN PARKING GARAGE DISCUSSION**

Public Works Director Mike Bartels discussed the downtown parking garage. He provided a brief history of the parking garage from 1972 to the present. He said a Condition Assessment and Repair recommendation was done in 2019, describing the condition as in fair to poor condition. He said he personally felt it was more on the poor side of condition. He showed photos from the 2019 report and discussed options for repair.

He said the first option is to rehabilitate the garage for \$4.5 million, which would take 4 to 5 years for completion, and would be good for 15 to 20 years. He said the second option would consist of four phases, which would extend the useful life of the garage by five years but would not address all of the needed repairs listed in Option 1. He said this would only address high priority repair items, and would cost \$1,381,000. He said the third option is the demolition of the deteriorated garage and installation of a new parking lot with green space. He said the estimate would be \$400,000 for demolition, and a new parking lot would be \$660,000. He presented a new parking lot plan that would have around 22 less spots. He provided a summary of the current options. He said there is the potential for a fourth option of a new parking garage. He said this would be a 400 car garage at an estimated cost of \$8 to \$10 million.

Alderwoman Swanson asked how many people currently park there. Mr. Bartels said most of the spots are occupied with mostly staff. He said the first floor is usually full, but gets more sparse on each level. Alderman Hurt asked if some of the spots were reserved for the hotel across the street. Mr. Bartels confirmed yes. Mr. Tweet said the spaces on the east side of the garage are rented to the hotel, as well as overflow spaces on the second and third floor. He said there are future projects in the downtown to consider when thinking of a garage, and this did not need to be decided today. Alderman Parker asked if a parking study has been done for the downtown. Mr. Tweet said there had not been one done recently. Mr. Brainard said one was done in the 1990's due to excess parking at the time. Alderman Parker asked if there were any mentions of the parking garage in the downtown revitalization plans. Mr. Brainard said most of the measures have been implemented, including removing of meters as well as time limits. Alderman Parker asked if the City would charge for parking within the garage to assist in paying for renovations. Mr. Tweet said part of the downtown plan was to remove the paid parking. Mr. Brainard said downtown Davenport does have paid parking using an app. Alderman Parker asked with the number of potential projects in development, would there be the possibility of having a vertical structure on the property, and would the City want to partner with the private sector to build a new garage. Mr. Brainard said historically that it would take 40 to 50 years for that type of development on the property if it was demolished. Alderman Poulos asked how critical this project is, and what the best option would be. Mr. Bartels said the garage does need repairs, but a decision does not need to be made immediately. Mr. Tweet said if TIF money is to be used for such a project, a decision would need to be made this year. He said it might be possible to complete Phase 1 or Phase 2 and finish later. Mr. Brainard said the current condition would lead to a more concerning outcome.