

**CITY OF ROCK ISLAND  
CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION  
October 10, 2022 - 5:30 p.m.**

**City Council Chambers, City Hall, 3rd Floor**

**1528 Third Avenue, Rock Island, IL**

10/10/2022 - Minutes

**CALL TO ORDER**

Mayor Thoms called the meeting to order at 5:30 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 Moses Robinson, Randy Hurt, Judith Gilbert, Jenni Swanson, Dylan Parker, Mark Poulos, Bill Healy, and Mayor Mike Thoms. Absent: None.

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 virtually.

**DARI 3RD QUARTER REPORT**

Development Association of Rock Island (DARI) Director Liz Tallman discussed an update on their activities. She introduced the development team, including Program Manager Stacey McIntosh and City of Rock Island Economic Development Manager Tarah Sipes. She reminded Council of the service agreement signed in March of 2020, and looked forward to what would be done with the next agreement. Their current process is to review the accomplished activities in the past three years, as well as reviewing documents such as the workplan and job descriptions. A new service agreement will come before Council in November for consideration.

Ms. Tallman said the first assignment in August of 2020 was to develop a workplan, which was split into eight core work areas. These included business resources, business development, business corridors, product development, housing promotion, financial assistance, marketing and communication, and partnerships. She discussed each area of the workplan and the current status.

The business development core area is meant to attract and expand new investment in the City. Ms. Tallman noted that in 2022, there have been 18 new economic development projects, 83 managed business expansion and attraction projects, 3 successful projects announced, and approximately \$64 million in capital investments underway. She discussed a list of new expansions and investments within City businesses. She made note of additional investments by Modern Woodmen of America and Bally's Quad Cities that were not a part of the list provided on the slide.

She noted a new business entering the area called Navarro Canoe Company, which will create three to five new jobs. They are working on a business plan where they hope to double the number of canoes that can be built. Also, Crawford Company is planning an expansion within the City, where they would purchase and renovate three buildings and land in Sunset Business Park, adding approximately 30 to 40 jobs with benefits. Additionally, ALM Positioners plans to invest \$7 million and create six new positions as part of a move to purchase the company itself and keep them in the City.

Ms. McIntosh discussed the next area of the workplan, business development corridors. She said the FORWARD platform they are utilizing online has communicated available resources to over a thousand businesses. There have been 41 email campaigns, 853 completed profiles, 15 resources available at local, state, and federal levels, and a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) tool created to track funding, applications, and notes.

Ms. McIntosh discussed potential 2022 DARI program grants. These include storefront improvement grants, do-it-yourself creative placemaking grants, Discover Rock Island event grants, and Seed Rock Island grants to help start small businesses. She noted there is \$20,000 currently earmarked for these program grants in 2022, which is in addition to anything added by the City, the Bi-State Regional Commission, or any revolving loans. She discussed celebrations held in 2022. This includes ribbon-cutting openings for Big T Wear, Atomic Coffee Bar, and other re-openings and press events such as Arts Alley.

Ms. McIntosh discussed what assistance was offered to potential City businesses in 2022. This has included resources to over 50 individuals who are currently looking to start a business in Rock Island. She noted that she gets the question everyday of why a business should come to Rock Island, as well as what the incentives might be. She said DARI has connected with 405 City businesses in 2022 thus far, of which 36 percent of that contact has been about business assistance, 52 percent about resources and grants, 11 percent about events or membership, and 1 percent of other subjects. She summarized the Divots Fore DARI event, which brought in \$17,000 in proceeds and had 25 represented businesses.

Ms. Tallman discussed the housing portion of the workplan. She noted that a housing assistance guide was built into the website, specifically pertaining to the Live Work Rock Island program, as it is one of the best talent attraction tools the City has. In 2022, 10 transactions within the program have occurred, resulting in approximately \$76,000 in down payment assistance.

Ms. Tallman summarized the product development area of the workplan, which includes having a site inventory with core properties, vacant property recommendations, and real estate management and development opportunities. She discussed the possibility for a seed or

planning grant to develop concepts for the property near the Sunset Business Park area. She said her team is working on concepts for development of the 11<sup>th</sup> Street Watchtower Plaza site similar to the marketing video previously done for the Bally's Quad Cities corridor. She added there are also some prospects that may be interested in the site. She noted there is a prospect for the Southwest Business Park area as well. In reference to the Bally's Quad Cities corridor, she added that they have a potential partnership with Bally's to make a nearby property viable for a prospect, for which a proposal will come to Council soon.

Ms. Tallman discussed the marketing and communications portion of the workplan. She referenced the ongoing *Why Rock Island* campaign, which awarded two scholarships of \$5,000 for high school students that won a competition involving a written essay and video. Both videos from the winners have become part of the campaign. She noted their recent contract with MediaLink to assist in updating their social media and marketing. She referenced a free community marketing campaign called Time to Rally Rock island, which reached over 3,000 people and grew the social media base for DARI.

Ms. Tallman noted that there will be a holiday pop-up store called Brick & Motor in DARI's space beginning on November 5<sup>th</sup> for weekends. This is meant to assist the business in an attempt to move them to a more permanent storefront location. She noted that she plans to send similar notices to other businesses inviting them to do the same pop-up type of event. DARI is not charging rent for this type of temporary store.

Ms. Tallman said the next step is to come back to Council with a new service agreement concept in December 2022. DARI will also return before Council in November to discuss the economic development ecosystem. She asked if Council had any questions. No questions were asked.

## **MOTION TO ADJOURN**

MOTION:

Aldersperson Gilbert moved to adjourn; Aldersperson Hurt seconded.

VOTE:

Motion passed on a 7-0-0 roll call vote. Aye: Healy, Robinson, Hurt, Gilbert, Swanson, Parker, and Poulos. Nay: None. Absent: None.

The meeting adjourned at 6:03 p.m.



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Josh Adams, Deputy City Clerk