



AGENDA

Economic Development Commission Meeting

September 3, 2021

8:30 a.m.

LOCATION

DeKalb County Economic Development Corporation (DCEDC)

2179 Sycamore Road, Unit #102

DeKalb, Illinois 60115

- A. Roll Call
- B. Approval of the Agenda
- C. Approval of Minutes
 - 1. May 7, 2021.
- D. Public Participation
- E. Reports
 - 1. City Manager Report.
 - 2. DeKalb Chamber of Commerce Report.
 - 3. DeKalb County Economic Development Corporation Report.
- F. Old Business
 - 1. Transit System Update.
 - 2. Business Retention Program – Start or Stop?
- G. New Business
 - 1. Alternative Focus for the Economic Development Commission?
- H. Next Meeting: November 5, 2021.
- I. Adjournment

**MINUTES
CITY OF DEKALB
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION MEETING
MAY 7, 2021**

The Economic Development Commission (EDC) of the City of DeKalb, Illinois held a Regular meeting on May 7, 2021, at the DeKalb County Economic Development Corporation Office, 2179 Sycamore Road, Unit 102, DeKalb, Illinois 60115.

The meeting was called to order at 8:30 a.m.

A. ROLL CALL

Executive Assistant Ruth Scott called the roll and the following EDC members were present: Chair Jeff Richardson, Members Vernese Edghill-Walden, Grant Goltz, and Sam Walt. Also in attendance were Ex-Officio Members Paul Borek, and Matt Duffy. Member Mark Sawyer arrived at the meeting at 8:33 a.m. Member Brian Scholle was absent.

Others present included City Manager Bill Nicklas and Mayor-Elect Cohen Barnes.

B. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

MOTION

Mr. Walt moved to approve the agenda; seconded by Mr. Goltz.

VOTE

Motion carried by a 5-0-1 roll call vote. Aye: Richardson, Edghill-Walden, Goltz, Sawyer, Walt. Nay: None. Absent: Scholle.

C. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

1. March 5, 2021.

MOTION

Mr. Goltz moved to approve the agenda; seconded by Ms. Edghill-Walden.

VOTE

Motion carried by a 5-0-1 roll call vote. Aye: Richardson, Edghill-Walden, Goltz, Sawyer, Walt. Nay: None. Absent: Scholle.

D. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was none.

E. REPORTS

1. City Manager Report.

City Manager Nicklas reported on interest in Park 88, east of the Target warehouse area, noting the site would qualify for enterprise zone package.

City Manager Nicklas also reported that interest in the downtown area continues. A letter of intent has been signed by John Pappas, owner of the former Tavern on Lincoln, indicates that the Tangled Roots Brew Pub will be leasing the space, along with the former nail salon next door for future production.

Brief discussion ensued.

City Manager Nicklas further reported that there's a new owner of the building located at Fourth Street and Locust Street. The general commercial businesses will stay, and the apartments will be fixed up.

There was brief discussion regarding the former GE site and the Wurlitzer building site.

City Manager Nicklas stated that a meeting with Facebook's Development Director, Matt Sexton, Mayor-Elect Barnes, Police Chief David Byrd and the new District 428 superintendent, Minerva Garcia-Sanchez, noting that education is one of Facebook's biggest interests. At some point Kishwaukee College and Northern Illinois University (NIU) will be included in these discussions.

Mr. Walt asked if the City still owned the former gas station at the corner of First Street and Hillcrest Drive. City Manager Nicklas indicated the property had been sold. The new owner could reopen it, but they still have obligations to the EPA for monitoring, which is a slow process.

Brief discussion ensued regarding the sale of packaged liquor at gas stations.

2. DeKalb Chamber of Commerce.

Mr. Duffy began his report by commenting on his interaction with Facebook so far, stating they've been great to work with.

Mr. Duffy also reported on upcoming events being sponsored by the DeKalb Chamber of Commerce, beginning with the Local Showcase and Springfest at the DeKalb Taylor Municipal Airport (DTMA) on May 14, 2021.

Mayor-Elect Barnes asked why Sycamore was not part of the event as they have been in the past. Mr. Duffy responded that Sycamore wanted to hold the event indoors and the space they would be using was not large enough to accommodate both groups due to COVID.

Mr. Duffy continued his report, stating that a Part-Time and Summer Job Fair would be held on May 25, 2021, noting that businesses in the area are struggling to find employees.

Brief discussion ensued.

Mr. Duffy also reported that a Back Alley Market would be held on May 8, 2021, to be run by downtown merchants. He noted this would be an annual spring and fall event.

Brief discussion ensued regarding the S. Fourth Street corridor and the Annie Glidden North area and the need for more businesses in those areas. There was also brief discussion regarding the need for an updated land use plan since the one we have now is 15 years old.

There was brief discussion regarding the Opportunity Unbound program sponsored by the DCEDC. Mayor-Elect Barnes stated the program is amazing. There are a lot of negative impressions about DeKalb, and this is a great way to market ourselves.

Brief discussion ensued regarding local bussing and the lack of ridership due to COVID. There was also brief discussion regarding the transit hub, the transit service, and the need for more bussing availability in the Annie Glidden North area. It was agreed that the City's Transit Manager, Marcus Cox, would be invited to the next EDC meeting to provide an update on the transit system.

City Manager Nicklas mentioned the Belonging Initiative, noting it is being advertised on buses. He further noted that community development, not just economic development, is important for DeKalb. We have an economic system that will provide leadership and growth possibilities for people of whatever income level.

City Manager Nicklas also reported that what was once the City's annex building is now the Belonging Center, which will be a place where people can go to see what's going on within the community. Information regarding the DeKalb Area Rental Association (DARA) will be there, as well as information regarding the transit system, Safe Passage, and NIU. Further, Kishwaukee College will be moving their part of their GED service to the location.

Mayor-Elect Barnes stated there needs to be a more concerted effort across all levels and asked Mr. Duffy for the demographics of Latino and black owned business within DeKalb. He also stated he would like to address the DeKalb Chamber of Commerce board on this issue.

Mr. Duffy stated that he has reached out to these businesses in the past, but they are quite guarded.

Ms. Edghill-Walden stated it has to do with building trust and part of that is making them feel like they belong. The DeKalb Chamber of Commerce and the Belonging Council can work together to do that.

Discussion ensued regarding the Belonging Initiative.

Mr. Nicklas suggested that the EDC temporarily meet more often in order to discuss all these issues.

3. DeKalb County Economic Development Corporation (DCEDC).

Mr. Borek reported that DCEDC has been very busy working to identify sites and locations for development opportunities of all sorts. He also stated that part of a strategic economic development initiative includes business retention.

Mr. Borek continued, stating that he attended an industrial trade show in person recently.

Brief discussion ensued regarding space availability within DeKalb for development.

F. OLD BUSINESS

1. Business Retention Program Update.

Mr. Nicklas asked the group if the Business Retention Program was still something they wanted to move forward with.

Discussion ensued regarding doing virtual or in-person visits. Mr. Borek stated that some smaller manufacturers would prefer an in-person visit. However, larger businesses, such as the distribution centers, are too busy for an in-person visit so a virtual visit would make sense.

Discussion ensued regarding EDC goals, funding, the time it takes to complete the interview process.

Mayor-Elect Barnes suggested that the EDC have more of a presence within the community, such as aiding with new building permit issues. City Manager Nicklas added that due to his busy schedule, he can't be aware of every issue, but the EDC could be a good oversight committee for the process. He also spoke of the difficulties businesses had with the permit process during the Gaura administration.

City Manager Nicklas stated the impression of DeKalb being difficult to work with still exists.

Brief discussion ensued.

Mayor-Elect Barnes stated that he would like for the EDC to be the lead on discussions regarding property taxes and disproportionate assessments. He added that he wants to see the EDC make a lasting impact beyond himself and City Manager Nicklas by creating a structure to keep the city business friendly.

At this point in the meeting Mr. Goltz excused himself from meeting, as did Ms. Edghill-Walden, which created a non-quorum.

G. NEW BUSINESS

There was none.

H. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the EDC will be July 2, 2021.

I. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 9:57 a.m.