

**MINUTES
CITY OF WOODSTOCK
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
September 3, 2020
Council Chambers**

A Regular Meeting of the City of Woodstock Economic Development Commission was called to order by Chairman Rick Francois at 8:02 AM on Thursday, September 3, 2020 virtually, via Zoom webinar due to the COVID-19 pandemic and Governor Pritzker's stay-at-home mandate.

ROLL CALL

COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT REMOTELY: Chris McGowan, Wayne Read, Henry Patel, and Chairman Rick Francois.

COMMISSION MEMBERS ABSENT: John Buckley.

STAFF PRESENT REMOTELY: Economic Development Director Garrett Anderson, Business Development Coordinator George Hahne, and Executive Assistant/Chief Deputy City Clerk Jane Howie.

OTHERS PRESENT REMOTELY: None.

ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES:

Motion was made by W. Read, second by C. McGowan, to accept the Minutes from the June 4, 2020 meeting. Ayes: C. McGowan, W. Read, H. Patel, and Chair R. Francois. Nays: none. Absentees: J. Buckley. Abstentions: none. Motion carried; Minutes were accepted.

PUBLIC COMMENT: None.

GENERAL BUSINESS/DISCUSSION:

Mr. Anderson shared several reports that he sends to City Council. Monthly sales tax. Projected significant declines early; however, the City is only down 4% since March. The collections are performing better than expected. Mr. Anderson shared information to further explain the details of the report.

There has been a positive change in home businesses. He explained the month-to-month break-down. The report includes an average over the past twelve months. The City is at half of the sales tax collected compared to numbers at this same time last year. Mr. Anderson shared information pertaining to specific areas of Woodstock.

Chair Francois asked if the City's sales tax changed over 2019/2020. Mr. Anderson said this includes the 1% municipal sales tax. This does not reflect the 1% Home Rule sales tax. Mr. Anderson mentioned the transformation between Benoy Motors and Kunes

Country Auto Group. Retail and home goods have definitely been hit hard due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Trending basis; grocery stores are trending up from last year. Restaurants are definitely struggling. Mr. Anderson said the spring season was better than expected. W. Read said the negatives are most vulnerable, so we definitely need to support these establishments. He was pleasantly surprised by some of these numbers, although he doesn't believe we've seen the full impact of this pandemic yet. Mr. Anderson said we believe there will be some serious strain on restaurants once the weather changes. There was some discussion about the movie theatre. H. Patel asked about numbers for hotels. Mr. Anderson said the City doesn't see a lot of sales tax from hotel/motels. Might be classified as services/financial. Mr. Anderson will look into this.

Chair Francois said this is interesting information. He asked what the City forecasted? Mr. Anderson said staff explained to City Council that we are entering an unknown, so the numbers will have to be further discussed as we move through the pandemic. W. Read agreed that some of this information is very positive. Mr. Anderson reviewed the various categories. A discussion ensued about why Woodstock didn't see as much of a decline, Woodstock doesn't have as many regional shopping centers that Crystal Lake and Algonquin have. It is believed that Woodstock residents shopped local rather than heading out to these other areas. Chair Francois agreed that the lack of commuting was a benefit to Woodstock. Retail, automotive and gas are all up. Auto dealerships saw a decline in March; however, by April the numbers were back to normal. Total sales have been consistent.

1. Project Activity Report – August 2020

Mr. Anderson said the new Chipotle restaurant opened earlier this week. Swift Wash, the former Jiffy Lube, sign variance was approved regarding signage on Route 14. Cedarhurst broke ground. Kishwaukee Brewing is doing very well. Hoping to be done later this month. Woodstock Square apartments are up to their full height, as a whole they're not even as tall as the roof height on Benton Street. W. Read asked about possible occupancy? It is expected that they will open around February, owners won't start signing leases until a couple months prior to opening day.

Check out Dura-Bar, 15-acre site is installing solar panels.

Under construction, Wendy's will be remodeling, mostly the exterior. Walmart's renovations are underway; re-doing the jewelry section, which might be a Claire's inside the store. They might be doing some upgrades to their home delivery; grocery pick-up started a couple of years ago. Aldi is moving forward working in permitting process.

Cannabis growers are currently working with the state. It's possible that Woodstock might get one grower. Asked H. Patel about pet depot, still in negotiations; which would go into the former Ace Hardware strip. Proposal for the downtown Die Cast site. Two buildings, 112 total units, would be constructed at the corners of Newell and Clay Street. Very intriguing proposal, working through financial negotiations at this time. The developer is from Elgin (in response to a question from R. Francois). They've done a lot

of commercial/industrial and hotels. This would be their first residential project. One and two-bedroom apartments, geared toward young professionals, empty nesters, and retirees,

Mr. Anderson mentioned several other renovations going on in the community. New stairway and elevator in the Old Courthouse. This will go back to the OCASH & HPC for further feedback.

R. Francois talked about the high-density apartments on the Die Cast site, G. Anderson explained that the current residents in the area were opposed to the previous development project. With this project, they are generally in agreement with the developer's proposal. Mr. Anderson explained the differences between the previous project and the current proposal, which is more acceptable to the neighbors. The west would be an open space, possibly a park. He mentioned that there is still discussion about moving the train depot to the other side of the train tracks; however, we're unsure if this will happen. W. Read added that commuter traffic will continue to be greatly diminished due to the pandemic. Mr. Anderson said ridership has already decreased over the past few years, prior to the pandemic. However, there has been an increase in Crystal Lake, which could be due to the Woodstock schedule.

In response to a question from W. Read, Mr. Anderson confirmed that Frisbie-Lohmeyer is going in to the former gas station at the end of Main Street. Unsure as to what else, if anything, will be going in there.

Mr. Anderson mentioned that a former office space may be converted into apartments, not in the downtown. G. Hahne said there is a very serious investor; developed 200 hotels, multi-family dwellings, recommended to the City, they have a great reputation. Several phone meetings with them already, strong relationship with both Holiday Inn and Hilton hotels. They believe Woodstock could support an 80-room hotel. The City looks forward to their site visit in two weeks.

Fifth/Third Bank off of Catalpa Lane is going to be converted into a funeral home. Gas station is looking into putting a station in the north side of town. Metra, two projects that would help our commuters. General upgrades to our current building. Warming shelter across the tracks, not expected for another two years, it's in the budget. Long-term project, hoping to move the railyard from Crystal Lake to the west side of Woodstock. Funds have been allocated to this project, Metra is looking to acquire land. Would be about four years away.

Mr. Anderson briefly discussed a possible restaurant that was hoping to come to Woodstock, mainly a video gaming parlor.

Shooting range has fallen through on misunderstanding on budgets, as to who would pay for what. W. Read asked about investment levels, coming into the Old Courthouse, do we have a real sense of cancellation rate. Has the City recalibrated? Mr. Anderson said yes, we have revisited several ideas, long list of people that are having second thoughts,

putting projects on hold. R. Francois asked about small business tenants, what is the City hearing. Mr. Anderson said a lot of people are charging forward; however, there is a lot of concern. Outdoor dining has definitely helped. However, when the weather changes and outdoor dining no longer works, and dining can only be inside, there is a strong concern as to how the restaurants can survive. DeWane's photography, the pandemic accelerated their closing, along with Indepth Graphics. We just heard that Mixin Mingle will be closing; COVID-19 related closure. R. Francois asked about some of the programs that were available, are they still in place. Mr. Anderson provided information pertaining to some loans and grants. City emergency loan was \$5,000, fifty-six loans were issued. He explained the terms and qualifying conditions.

G. Hahne attended a conference, which indicated that tier one locations are not renting, rent is too high right now. The commercial real estate businesses are looking at tier two and three markets. They said Woodstock is between tier two and three. Traveling to Woodstock is more of an investment in time; they want all the stakeholders at their first meeting. Mr. Hahne further explained ways in which Woodstock should proceed. He remains optimistic as Woodstock could be the next new level for placement of national retail.

Chair R. Francois said next month's meeting is scheduled for October 1st; however, he will be unavailable due to a prior commitment.

COMMISSION COMMENTS / UPDATES: None.

ADJOURNMENT:

Motion by W. Read, second by C. McGown, to adjourn this meeting. Ayes: C. McGowan, W. Read, H. Patel, and Chair R. Francois. Nays: none. Absentees: J. Buckley. Abstentions: none. Motion carried. Regular Meeting adjourned at 9:05 AM. The next regular meeting is scheduled for Thursday, October 1, 2020 at 8:00 AM.

Respectfully submitted,

Jane Howie
Chief Deputy City Clerk