



3RD WARD MEETING MINUTES – ALDERMAN DENISE RODD

February 10, 2016

AGENDA

- What do you want to discuss?
- Health benefits for elected officials

WELCOME

Items you'd like to discuss

- Last Council Meeting
- Engineering Report
- Economic Update on Vacant Buildings and what is being done to fill them.
- New HR Person
- Des Plaines Theatre
- LP Tax Gas
- New Hot Dog Stand

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- Ozinga: Plans were to shut down operation at the Wolf Road plant within 2 years. Ozinga will still be using the location as storage.
- Upholstery (7-11) building on Thacker is still owned by the original owner who leased it out to the Upholstery store. The Upholstery shop owner moved out. Building continues to sit vacant.
- Daycare at the circle: Nothing new. Place was ready to open at the same time the State cut daycare funding.
- Is the State budget affecting us? Casts a cloud; budget planning is conservative. Des Plaines is doing okay and budget is still on track.
- New development is coming up within the city and yes, there are vacant buildings but a new development is being started on Lee Street that will bring more density to the downtown area. Plus the future development of the Littlefuse location.
- What is the current occupancy of the Downtown Condos? Most are owned or rented by the owners. Should we be taking up our commercial space for residency? Generations coming up don't want to own single family homes, the millennial generation prefers townhouses and condos and be within walking distance to businesses. Economic Development Department is getting a lot of calls and fielding a lot of interest. City is taking a more provocative approach to looking to fill buildings and started attending shopping center convention.
- AIC: Hopefully a resolution this year.
- Hot dog stand on Wolf and Algonquin: April is the goal for the opening. There will be a drive through window. No seating inside, but there will be tables outside in summer.
- Des Plaines Theatre: Still privately owned by same owner. Theatre is not up to code for public use. There was a time limit put on the owner to fix the theatre and he did not meet it. It now sits vacant. Current owner is not interested in working with anyone to bring it up to code. Owner has taken out loans against it. City is willing to work with the owner but he is not interested. Building not designated as a historical landmark. Eminent Domain? Council will have to decide in the future.

ENGINEERING

- Met with the Engineering Department regarding the S Curve construction. City put out an RFQ to look at the S Curve cut out for pedestrian traffic. RFQ went out to 7 firms. List has been cut down to 3 firms. Engineering Department is going through these creating a matrix on these 3. Department will go back to these 3 requesting a proposal and each will have an hour to present to the city. Firm picked to do the pedestrian walkway will do a feasibility study and a scope on how to proceed, at this time, we don't know if the pedestrian walkway will be over or an under pass. Plan is to have wrapped up by spring.
- There will be an enhanced crossing with flashing pedestrian signal at Hoffman and Wolf. This is being done by a community grant.
- Miner Street: There will be an improved crossing, yet no flashing crossing sign. State wants to do a study but can't because there is no budget.

CNG GAS

- CNG GAS is on the Council Meeting Agenda (2nd reading). Motor fuel tax in place but not for compressed gas. These 2 CNG/LP Gas is not taxable and would need to bring Des Plaines code up to date with State. We want to promote using this gas and at other municipalities that use CNG Gas if taxed, how much. Council was debating if Des Plaines should tax CNG Gas users. If building a CNG LP Gas station at the TIF 7 location at Manheim and Higgins could take some of the revenue away from the City of Chicago. City of Chicago have an alternate fuel for taxis and limos.
- Speedway has been getting quite a bit of revenue with their newly build station and Speedway sells LP Gas.

HEALTH AND DENTAL BENEFITS

Since being a council member, Denise has been trying to get this topic on the agenda. She succeeded to have it on the February Council Meeting. (It takes 3 members to add an item to the agenda.) Council Members are receiving health and dental benefits through the city costing taxpayers \$90K per year. A "benefit" Council Members feel they are entitled and deserve yet, no one can say when it started and no city ordinance can be found dating back to the 1960s saying such a benefit exists.

UPDATE: City Council Meeting of February 16: City Attorney did a thorough investigation, along with the City Clerk that found no ordinance allowing this benefit. City Attorney further stated that per State Statues an ordinance needs to be in place allowing health benefits to council members. A motion was passed to have an ordinance put into place.

CITY ISSUES

- Fire Calls: City has had 120 – 130 fires overall; 40-60 were big structures. Ambulance call are going up each year.
- Dog Park – What happened? Up to the Park District to decide. You can bring leashed dogs to all parks in Des Plaines, whereas a Dog Park allows dogs to run free. Denise has talked with Park District about this...no interest in pursuing.
- How did City evolve to be so different with City Council and Park District, why a disconnection? Not sure and actually, this is common to have 2 parts to a city. We do have a good relationship, each segment has their own boards and committees.
- City Attorney: Keeping it the way it is with outsourcing to an outside firm. This costs the city less money and provides more attorneys to serve in more diversified areas than one staff attorney.

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