

**Economic Development Corporation Meeting
December 8, 2017
City Hall
10 N. Division, Room 302A
Battle Creek, MI
8:00 A.M.**

Present: Rebecca Fleury, Ted Dearing, Joe Sobieralski, Julie Bosley, Brenda Whited, Tom Beuchler, Anmar Achu, John Gallagher, Lynn Ward Gray

Absent:

Staff Present: Victoria Houser, City Clerk: Jill Steele, City Attorney

Call to Order:

Mr. Beuchler called the meeting to order at 8:04 A.M.

Public Comment: There were no public comments.

Approval of Minutes:

A motion was made by Mr. Dearing, supported by Mr. Sobieralski, to approve the December 9, 2016 Economic Development Corporation meeting minutes. All yes, none opposed. Motion approved.

Appointment of Officers

A motion was made by Ms. Fleury, supported by Mr. Sobieralski, to reappoint the same slate of officers to the Economic Development Corporation, specifically Tom Beuchler as President, Julie Bosley as Vice President, Ted Dearing as Secretary, and Lynn Ward Gray as Treasurer. All yes, none opposed. Motion approved.

Discussion of 76 Armstrong Road, Battle Creek

Mr. Dearing provided an update to the 76 Armstrong Road project, stating it is progressing, but there are some issues the attorneys are still addressing. Mr. Dearing stated he would find out if additional documents still needed to be signed.

Attorney Steele stated the City was waiting for title insurance, noting there are some differences in the deeds and the legal descriptions. Attorney Steele informed the committee that the other party's attorneys had requested a warranty deed, but as the EDC never had control over the property, she was not able to do a warranty deed, but that she was able to complete a Quit Claim Deed.

Commission Discussion:

Committee members discussed other projects in the City, including the Heritage Towner Project, the clearing of vacant land in the Fort Custer Industrial Park as they prepare for new development, and the restoration of the new Schweitzer Building.

Mr. Achu discussed an Inspection issue regarding a new business at 2545 Capital Avenue, stating they were threatening to move the business to Kalamazoo.

Mr. Beuchler discussed the progress of the Small Inspections Group, emphasizing the Inspections Departments' relationship to economic development. Mr. Beuchler noted that although projects had to follow State code, the inspectors have been challenged to find creative solutions. Mr. Beuchler noted the hiring of a Chief Building Official, Rick Bolek, should provide assistance and backup to the inspectors.

Mr. Beuchler stated improvements in service and communications have been seen, noting not everyone will be satisfied with and inspector's findings, as they still need to comply with State code.

Comm. Gray questioned if customers know whom to contact to resolve conflicts or to find a solution to a problem.

Mr. Beuchler noted the inspections documents have been revised to better communicate the process and provide direction if there is an issue, noting there is often tension between inspectors and contractors/homeowners, stating there is an appeal board if they cannot reach resolution.

Mr. Sobieralski stated they have received several properties back from 180 Urban, stating they will be issuing an RFP by the end of December, noting several people have already inquired into the locations.

Mr. Dearing stated the Downtown Advisory Committee meets quarterly, stating they continue conversations with downtown business owners.

Mr. Beuchler discussed a group modeled after Grand Rapids Angels, who would provide support and assistance to business start-ups in Battle Creek.

Mr. Dearing discussed the work of the EDF team, noting they would be meeting with GWJ Consultants to develop a business plan. Mr. Dearing stated the EDF team has been reaching out to the minority community on business development, helping them through the regulatory process. Mr. Dearing stated there continues to be opportunities to work with BCU, to analyze the best way to utilize the Smart Zone, and to access resources. Mr. Dearing stated the City was very thankful for people and businesses who are investing in our community, and making adaptive use of old obsolete buildings. Mr. Dearing noted it was good to acknowledge the investment and improvement in Battle Creek.

Comm. Gray discussed a recent request from a Hip Hop Concert to appear at the Kellogg Arena, noting the request was denied, along with a subsequent request at the WK Kellogg Auditorium, agreeing to discuss with staff after the meeting. Comm. Gray also provided a list of minority owned businesses in Battle Creek provided by her sorority.

Mr. Dearing informed the committee that the McCamly Hotel hired a broker for the atrium space, stating they have been working with the prospects, of which Tim Surprise was one, stating he did not believe a deal with Mr. Surprise was imminent.

Mr. Beuchler asked if there was anything the Committee members could be doing over the next year to help the City to continue economic development.

Committee members agreed a coordinated effort among all the local economic development organizations in the City, such as BCU, CCDC and other downtown efforts, with information in one place, such as social media or an app, would be beneficial. Committee members discussed to need to designate one person to input and maintain the information. Committee members also discussed the need to share positive narratives about Battle Creek, to let everyone they encounter know of the good things going on in the City. As to negative information, Committee members agreed it was important to clarify information, realizing some only want to spread negative images.

Next Meeting: Friday, December 7, 2018 at 8:00 A.M. in Room 302A.

Adjournment:

Mr. Beuchler asked if there were any further comments. Hearing none, the meeting was adjourned at 8:44 A.M.