



Village of Arlington Heights
Arlington Economic Alliance
Community Room, 3rd Floor
Arlington Heights Village Hall, 33 S. Arlington Heights Rd.
March 15, 2023
7:30 AM

I. CALL TO ORDER

II. ROLL CALL

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- A. Minutes - 1/18/23

IV. REPORTS

- A. Introduction of New Commissioners
- B. Development Update
- C. Arlington Alfresco Report

V. OLD BUSINESS

- A. Zero Interest Loan Program Evaluation

VI. NEW BUSINESS

- A. Village Board Strategic Priorities

VII. OTHER BUSINESS

- A. Public Comment

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

Persons with disabilities requiring auxiliary aids or services, such as an American Sign Language interpreter or written materials in accessible formats, should contact Erin Mercado, at 33 S. Arlington Heights Road, Arlington Heights, Illinois 60005, emercado@vah.com or (847)368-5793.



Arlington Economic Alliance
3/15/2023

Item: Minutes - 1/18/23

Department: Planning & Community Development

ATTACHMENTS:

Description

Minutes - 1/18/23

Type

Minutes

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MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE ARLINGTON ECONOMIC ALLIANCE HELD ON January 18, 2023 AT 7:30 A.M. AT THE VILLAGE HALL

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Andrew Stengren – Chairman
Tonia Etoh
Tony Guido
Heather Larson
Michele Petrie
Jon Ridler
Brian Roginski
Andi Ruhl

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Rich Casey
John Toliopoulos

STAFF PRESENT:

Michael Mertes – Business Development Manager

ALSO PRESENT:

Mike Driskell, Arlington Heights Memorial Library
Melissa Cayer, Resident
Keith Moens, Resident

Call to Order

Chair Andrew Stengren called the meeting to order at 7:31 AM.

Approval of Minutes – October 19, 2022

The meeting minutes of October 19, 2022 Arlington Economic Alliance meeting were reviewed.

HEATHER LARSON MOVED AND BRIAN ROGINSKI SECONDED A MOTION TO APPROVE THE DRAFT OCTOBER 19, 2022 ARLINGTON ECONOMIC ALLIANCE MEETING MINUTES. ALL ALLIANCE MEMBERS VOTED IN FAVOR OF THE MOTION.

Development Update

Springboard, the consultant hired to conduct the Village's rebranding campaign, presented to the Village Board the previous month. The Board's thoughts on the proposed logo were mixed and asked Springboard to re-review and come back with a different concept. The proposed tagline, "Take It to the Heights!", was better received. Ms. Ruhl asked if the rebranding is due primarily to the closure of Arlington International Racecourse, and Mr. Mertes explained that the project was initiated prior to the track's closure, and was temporarily halted during the pandemic. Mr. Ridler asked if there is an opportunity for the Alliance to provide feedback on this project, and Mr. Mertes explained that Staff's direction is to work directly with the consultant at this time.

The Arlington Park property is still under contract by the Chicago Bears. Ms. Petrie asked if other municipalities would approve an anti-corporate welfare tax, like the one previously proposed to the Village Board by an outside organization. Mr. Mertes couldn't speak on behalf of other communities, but replied that not being able to offer any incentives to businesses would put such a community at a competitive disadvantage against the rest of the region. Ms. Ruhl acknowledged a substantial difference in financing options for mom-and-pops as opposed to large corporations.

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Staff is continuing discussions with the developer for International Plaza. Plans involve redevelopment of the site into seven apartment buildings and one-story commercial buildings along Golf Road. The next meeting would involve a public hearing before the Plan Commission. In a separate project, the developer behind a proposed mixed-use building at 116-120 W. Eastman Street held a neighborhood meeting this past fall. The next step in the process also involves Plan Commission review. Per Ms. Ruhl's question, Mr. Mertes responded that an updated plan to provide affordable housing at International Plaza has not been formally submitted to the Village yet.

Arlington Alfresco Discussion

The Village plans to commence this year's Arlington Alfresco on the last weekend of April, and run until the last weekend of September to allow for setup of Harmony Fest featuring the Taste of Arlington Heights. Staff will be in communication with the business community and residents soon on dates and details. Chairman Stengren likes the timeline of the program and asked Mr. Roginski for his thoughts. He noted that he is ok with the current setup and timeline, although occasionally there is nice weather earlier in April.

Zero Interest Loan Program Evaluation

At the previous Alliance meeting in October, key improvements to the Zero Interest Loan program were suggested by the Commissioners. Among these were increasing the award amount to over \$20,000, allowing the loan to cover more than 50% of project costs, seeking alternatives to real estate liens as collateral, and condensing the application as much as possible. Based upon other feedback, Staff plans to market the program with greater frequency on social media and in business e-blasts, reiterate the program to local brokers and property managers, and will consider paying for digital advertising. Staff is discussing the aforementioned potential modifications internally, and plan to bring back any changes to the Economic Alliance before finalizing. Since the October meeting, one small business has applied for the program, and Staff is in communication with one other interested party.

Ms. Ruhl asked if the loan can only be used for improvements, and Mr. Mertes explained that tangible enhancements such as build-out or purchase of equipment are typically what is required. Mr. Guido asked about the term of the loan, and Mr. Mertes responded that term is whichever is less: five years or duration of lease. Mr. Ruhl suggested a forgivable provision, assuming that payments up to a point have been made on-time, which could add value to the program and generate more interest in it.

With modifications to the program not yet brought before to the Alliance, Mr. Ridler does not feel this project is a Staff priority. Mr. Mertes acknowledged his concern, but stated that Staff is dealing with multiple priorities. But Staff has put together options for the program, based on Alliance feedback, that are being reviewed internally. In regards to Mr. Ridler's question, legal review would occur prior to Staff bringing the changes back to the Commission. He would like to see the updated program released in the spring and asked if unused funds are able to be utilized elsewhere. Mr. Mertes said that the loan fund is also approved to be used for other economic development programs, as allowed by the Village Board, and Staff will consider other viable uses for additional unused funds. Mr. Ridler expressed concern with how that money might be spent, especially on a program that the Alliance has not had input on.

Chairman Stengren expressed concern if the program may not be adequately funded for potential demand, and asked at what point a determination is made to use those funds for other projects. Mr. Mertes replied that the fund is at a point where unused dollars exceed the demand for loans, but that Staff wants to ensure that there is enough in that fund to continue providing loans as requested. Also, the mechanisms that finance the zero interest loan fund continue to bring in money on an annual basis. Mr. Ridler asked to go on record stating that no other programs should be put forward using zero interest loan fund money until the Commission has fully vetted the suggestions that they have brought forward to make the loan program more economically incentivizing to local businesses. Chairman Stengren concurred.

Diversity in Business Program

Mr. Mertes explained that the "Diversity in Business" program stems from the Village Board's 2022-2023 strategic plan. This calls for "expanded efforts to embrace diversity, equity, and inclusion within the community and the Village Government" as well as "improving communications with residents and businesses." Staff has spoken with various

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business owners about such a potential program. Key sentiments from those discussions included making sure the program is as inclusive as possible, explaining why the program exists and why diversity is a benefit to the community, showing the added value that the businesses and their owners bring, highlighting the diversity and uniqueness of their products and services, and making the information digestible especially if promoted on social media. Mr. Mertes provided a visual example from the Village's *Re-Tales* program from the 2021 holiday season.

To execute this concept, a web-based spotlight program has been conceived by Village Staff. Stories can be saved on the Village website. The program would begin with a few social media posts to introduce the program, explain why it exists, and show why diversity is a positive to the community. Following this introduction the focus would move to posting articles about the participating business on social media. Planned outreach to business owners would involve a short questionnaire provided to the respective business owners, highlighting aspects such as why diversity is good for the community, and what their business offers that makes them unique. Outreach would be conducted by the Business Development Manager, Communications Staff, and interns. If Arlington Economic Alliance Commissioners wished to be involved as well, they would be welcome to do so.

Mr. Mertes requested assistance from Alliance in the form of additional thoughts on production and promotion of program, assistance in finding businesses and business owners to highlight via this program, and opportunities to expand the program's reach. Chairman Stengren supports promoting diversity and inclusion, and asked how participants would be selected. Ms. Petrie feels that this can highlight what Village businesses offer that residents might now know about, and help encourage resident spending within Arlington Heights. Ms. Larson emphasized the value of utilizing social media for such a campaign and Ms. Ruhl sees opportunity by tying the program in with certain times of the year (e.g., promoting women-owned businesses during National Women's Small Business Month). Providing a list of participating businesses could be helpful as well.

Canvassing the entire business community, to start, is a good way to get potential participants according to Ms. Larson. Per Ms. Ruhl's question, Mr. Mertes indicated that there is a space for that on the current business license application to identify as woman-owned or minority-owned. However, some business types are exempted from municipal licensing, so it's harder to identify those owners. If a business owner has concerns about being identified as minority-owned, Mr. Ridler points out that they can always opt out of the program. Chairman Stengren considered a two-phase approach, the first being listing the businesses, then the second being the individual spotlights. The better the initial outreach, the stronger the implementation. Ms. Ruhl stressed the importance of avoiding a lag between the two phases. Window clings were also suggested by Ms. Larson.

Other Business and Public Comment

Ms. Cayer asked which Staff persons would handle the Diversity in Business program, and Mr. Mertes responded that it would primarily be himself, the Planning & Community Development Department, and the Village Manager's office. Ms. Larson provided a summary of the upcoming Meet Chicago Northwest *Restaurant Week* promotion. Also, Meet Chicago Northwest staff will be attending "Family Day" at the upcoming Chicago Auto Show. Mr. Guido noted that the Auto Show is returning to its full program this year, following a truncated show the past few years, and highlighted several of the event's amenities. Ms. Ruhl inquired about a paid time-off ordinance proposed at the State level, and sees it as important information for the business community.

Adjournment

TONY GUIDO MOVED AND HEATHER LARSON SECONDED A MOTION TO ADJOURN. ALL ALLIANCE MEMBERS VOTED IN FAVOR OF THE MOTION.

The meeting adjourned at 8:27 AM.

Andrew Stengren, Chair
Arlington Economic Alliance

Prepared by Department of Planning & Community Development



Arlington Economic Alliance
3/15/2023

Item: Village Board Strategic Priorities

Department: Planning & Community Development

ATTACHMENTS:

Description

7-20-22 - Signed letter to VB

Type

Correspondence

July 20, 2022

The Honorable Mayor Thomas W. Hayes
and Trustees of the Village of Arlington Heights
33 S. Arlington Heights Rd.
Arlington Heights, IL 60005

Dear Mayor Hayes and Village Trustees:

On February 11, 2019, the Village Board requested that the Arlington Economic Alliance provide a list of key economic development items for consideration at your annual strategic planning meeting. This time last year, we provided you with a similar letter, covering relevant topics at that time. Following these precedents, and as the Village's economic development advisory commission, we would like to present you with another letter.

While we understand that not every element outlined in this letter will be included in your next set of strategic priorities, we are grateful for your consideration of what is outlined below.

Vehicle Charging Station Infrastructure

Ford and General Motors are aiming to have 40%-50% of their vehicle sales be electric by the year 2030 (*Reuters*, 8/16/21). Seeing this trend only increasing, the Arlington Economic Alliance recommends that the Village continue to look for ways to install, or incentivize installation of, electric vehicle chargers at key locations. Examples of such locations include:

- Public parking lots and garages
- Outside of public buildings
- Large shopping centers
- Auto dealerships and gas stations
- New large-scale developments

Taking a proactive approach will allow Arlington Heights to be a Chicago area leader in accommodating environmentally-friendly vehicles. This can also be an element of a larger focus on alternative energy, and the Village can seek partnership with ComEd on this. Additionally, a head-first approach will allow the Village to capture a growing audience as the share of the market taken by electric vehicles only increases.

South Arlington Heights Road Corridor Reinvestment

The Arlington Economic Alliance acknowledges substantive efforts that have gone into enhancing the South Arlington Heights Road corridor. This includes the establishment of a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) district, and the development of a comprehensive plan in 2018. Still, several key properties remain underdeveloped or in need of redevelopment. Identifying and supporting Staff and property owners with resources to help maintain and enhance the area are crucial. This can assist with improvements in pedestrian mobility, economic development, and overall aesthetics.

The South Arlington Heights Road corridor, including Algonquin Road, remains a key gateway into the community and hosts numerous assets such as Mitsuwa Marketplace. Seven hotels along Algonquin and Arlington Heights Roads serve business and leisure travelers, and would benefit from a beautified and pedestrian-friendly intersection. Walkable restaurants and other amenities would welcome them to Arlington Heights and encourage their return.

Employee Recruitment Assistance for Businesses

One of the greatest challenges that businesses are currently facing is the recruitment and retention of quality workers. This is not just a local phenomenon, but one faced by enterprises across the country. The Alliance recommends identifying key partners that can help connect job seekers with local businesses. Potential local and regional partners include Harper College and the Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES).

In an effort to support and educate the business community, the Arlington Economic Alliance is hosting a breakfast program on May 26, 2002 entitled "Roll Up Your Sleeves: Hiring & Employee Retention in a New Economy." This is one example of ways the Village can partner with its local businesses.

"Complete Community" for Workers

A "Complete Community" offers a variety of elements that make a community self-sustaining, among those being a diverse housing mix, quality of life amenities, and numerous transit options. Another key aspect of a "Complete Community", is one in which people work within the same town they reside. The Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) estimated in 2018 that 11.3% of Arlington Heights residents also worked within their municipal boundaries.

The Arlington Economic Alliance would like to engage residents in potentially working in their home town. This would require drawing attention to employment opportunities within Arlington Heights, and also helping local entrepreneurs grow their businesses within the community. The residual benefits entail more spending on local businesses (due to a higher daytime population), and less environmental impact as travel will be local and not over longer distances.

Other Recommendations

The Arlington Economic Alliance feels that much of what was submitted to the Village Board last year is still relevant. The Commission believes that these recommendations are crucial to the success of the local business community, and the Village as a whole. In summary:

- Continuing to support Arlington Alfresco as an annual program
- Working with partner organizations on programs to incentivize residents to "buy local"
- Supporting a plan for gradual and regulated growth of retail adult-use cannabis
- Allowing the Alliance to provide input on business-related code and ordinance changes
- Promoting the Village's business-related assets by community stakeholders
- Seeking to promote and educate small businesses through public-private partnerships
- Continuing to establish and grow the Village's social media presence

The Arlington Economic Alliance is always appreciative of the opportunity to bring economic development matters before the Village Board, and is grateful for your consideration of its input. We welcome any questions, feedback, or direction from the Board stemming from this letter.

Sincerely,



Andrew Stengren

Chairman – Arlington Economic Alliance

C: Randall R. Recklaus, Village Manager