



Village of Arlington Heights
Arlington Economic Alliance
Commissions Room, 2nd Floor
Arlington Heights Village Hall, 33 S. Arlington Heights Rd.
February 16, 2022
7:30 AM

I. CALL TO ORDER

II. ROLL CALL

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- A. Minutes 11/17/21

IV. REPORTS

- A. Development Update
- B. Arlington Alfresco Report
- C. Economic Alliance Working Group Report

V. OLD BUSINESS

- A. Economic Alliance Work Plan - 2022

VI. NEW BUSINESS

- A. Making Recommendations to the Village Board

VII. OTHER BUSINESS

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

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Arlington Economic Alliance
2/16/2022

Item: Minutes 11/17/21

Department: Planning & Community Development

ATTACHMENTS:

Description

Minutes 11/17/21

Type

Minutes

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MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE ARLINGTON ECONOMIC ALLIANCE HELD ON NOVEMBER 17, 2021 AT 7:30 A.M. AT THE VILLAGE HALL

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Andrew Stengren – Chairman
Joyce Barabicho
Rich Casey
Tonia Etoh
Tony Guido
Heather Larson
Michele Petrie

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Jon Ridler
Brian Roginski
Andi Ruhl

STAFF PRESENT:

Michael Mertes – Business Development Manager

ALSO PRESENT:

Melissa Cayer, Resident
Keith Moens, Resident

Call to Order

Chairman Stengren called the meeting to order at 7:38 AM.

Approval of Minutes – October 20, 2021

The meeting minutes of October 20, 2021 Arlington Economic Alliance meeting were reviewed.

MICHELE PETRIE MOVED AND RICH CASEY SECONDED A MOTION TO APPROVE THE DRAFT OCTOBER 20, 2021 ARLINGTON ECONOMIC ALLIANCE MEETING MINUTES. ALL ALLIANCE MEMBERS VOTED IN FAVOR OF THE MOTION.

Introduction of New Members

Tonia Etoh and Heather Larson were introduced as the newest Commissioners on the Economic Alliance. Ms. Etoh represents International Services, Inc. and has the “Top 20 Employer” role on the Alliance. Ms. Larson is the President of Meet Chicago Northwest, the convention and visitor’s bureau that represents Arlington Heights.

Development Update

The Chicago Bears and the Arlington Park property were featured in a recent *Daily Herald* article. The actual purchase of the property is not expected to be finalized until late 2022 or early 2023, and any proposal put forth will need zoning and design review. In other regards, Scott Whisler has resigned from the Economic Alliance.

Ms. Larson asked if the Village was planning a marketing or public relations campaign in regards to the Chicago Bears and Arlington Park, and Mr. Mertes replied that he is not aware of any formal plans at this time.

Arlington Alfresco Discussion

Staff plans to go before the Village Board, as early as December, in regards to a recommendation on Arlington Alfresco for 2022 and beyond. Mr. Mertes said that he will keep the Alliance abreast of this meeting. Chairman Stengren inquired about customer responses to the program, and Mr. Mertes referenced individual feedback and past surveys showing significant support for Alfresco. In regards to a potential tax on Alfresco restaurants that was

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highlighted in a *Daily Herald* article, Mr. Mertes explained that such a tax has not yet been approved. However, the Village is pondering an additional 0.75% food & beverage tax on the Alfresco restaurants in order to help fund annual installation and maintenance. Chairman Stengren remarked on the growing appeal of outdoor dining prior to COVID and Mr. Mertes discussed the Village's allowing of restaurants to set up areas along the public walkway, assuming they meet all criteria and regulations.

Economic Alliance Work Plan – 2022

Mr. Mertes summarized that an annual work plan is typically discussed by the Economic Alliance in November and December, leading up to the next year. The Commission's budget is approved for \$16,000 to spend on potential programming or other economic development efforts. Past Alliance efforts include an annual newsletter to the business community, a letter to the Village Board prior to their annual strategic planning meeting, and a breakfast program for small businesses. Ms. Larson inquired if Village Staff attends the annual ICSC (Innovating Commerce Serving Communities) commercial real estate trade show, and if the Alliance could provide input regarding that. Mr. Mertes described his functions at this trade show and is open to the Commission's input.

Ms. Barabicho inquired about a marketing effort to residents, drawing attention to local employment opportunities if possible. Mr. Mertes shared data from the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP), which showed that, as of 2019, 6% of Arlington Heights residents work from home. Also, 11% of residents in the workforce are employed within the Village itself. For a potential small business program, Ms. Barabicho suggested having existing Arlington Heights businesses talk about their experiences. Mr. Stengren wondered if Amazon's Arlington Heights location has professionals that might be willing to educate, or provide guidance to, local business owners. Ms. Petrie added that Amazon has recently been promoting modified requirements for open job positions, which has helped them attract new workers. Presenting similar ideas to the Village's small businesses might be beneficial. Composing a letter for the Village Board regarding economic development-related items for consideration, as well as sending out a Village-wide business newsletter, are activities the Alliance has done in previous years that Chairman Stengren feels would have value in 2022.

Employee recruitment, Mr. Casey suggested, could be a Village program. It could be a recommendation sent to the Village Board prior to their annual strategic planning meeting. The Chamber may be getting substantial outreach from employers regarding hiring and human resources, and Ms. Petrie thought they might have resources that can be provided to the business community. Melissa Cayer, resident, recommended having a program early in 2022 as businesses are currently in need of assistance. Chairman Stengren recommended the creation of an Alliance working group to create a program or event for small businesses. Both Ms. Etoh and Ms. Petrie volunteered for it.

JOYCE BARABICHO MOVED AND HEATHER LARSON SECONDED A MOTION TO CREATE A WORKING GROUP OF THE ECONOMIC ALLIANCE IN ORDER TO DEVELOP A SMALL BUSINESS PROGRAM IN 2022. ALL ALLIANCE MEMBERS VOTED IN FAVOR OF THE MOTION.

Chairman Stengren offered to participate in another working group to help put together a letter to the Mayor and Trustees, in regards to economic development-related areas of focus, in advance of the Village Board's annual strategic planning retreat. Mr. Casey volunteered as well. The plan is to gather Commissioner feedback and condense it into a formal document.

ANDREW STENGREN MOVED AND TONY GUIDO SECONDED A MOTION TO CREATE A WORKING GROUP OF THE ECONOMIC ALLIANCE TO DISCUSS IDEAS FOR THE VILLAGE BOARD TO CONSIDER FOR THEIR 2022 STRATEGIC PLANNING MEETING. ALL ALLIANCE MEMBERS VOTED IN FAVOR OF THE MOTION.

Keith Moens, resident, believes that the Village's pilot program for retail cannabis is set for re-review next year. He said that the positive economic impact from adult use cannabis (Verilife) has likely helped contribute to the municipal tax levy not being raised. Some other communities have been more lenient in allowing such businesses, and he feels that the Alliance should support expansion of such uses. Ms. Petrie inquired about job creation from Verilife, and Mr. Moens responded that numerous people work at that business, and an expansion of adult use cannabis

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sales would create more employment opportunities. It has also brought significant tax revenue to the Village. Ms. Petrie suggested obtaining and reviewing additional data, verifying the economic impact.

For context, Mr. Mertes explained the approvals process for Verilife which permitted the business to sell retail cannabis in Arlington Heights. The Alliance made a recommendation in 2019, at the request of the Village Board, and voted to recommend approval of retail marijuana sales (note: vote was 8-3 in favor). Chairman Stengren advocated for an Alliance discussion on retail cannabis at the Commission's next meeting. Ms. Barabicho suggested the Chamber as potentially a good resource since it recently hosted a dispensary panel discussion. If the Mayor and Trustees are meeting in January, Mr. Casey recommended reviewing the data that is currently being gathered for the Board's consideration (note: in December the Village Board extended the retail marijuana pilot program through March 31, 2022).

Chairman Stengren asked if the Alliance can make recommendations to the Village Board, without the Board making such a request from the Commission. Mr. Mertes said that he would look into the process for this. Ms. Cayer referenced a section of the Village website which highlights the Economic Alliance as an advising body to the Village Board. Mr. Moens mentioned that other Commissions have made non-binding recommendations to the Village Board on their own volition as well.

Other Business

As part of the Commissioner Reports agenda item, Ms. Petrie discussed the state of the banking industry. She explained that pipelines have grown exponentially. Interest rates collected by banks for loans, and paid by banks for deposits, have been low for many years. Many economists are expecting interest rates to rise next year, and some are predicting that the economy will be choppy due to hiring and supply chain issues. Fast food, manufacturing, and residential development are some of several booming industries. The quality of loan portfolios for banks have not deteriorated, due to COVID, as much as expected. Inflation over the past year has been highest in the energy sector and in used auto sales. Wage inflation is also increasing faster than interest inflation. Overall, there are lots of good signs in the economy, but also many deep industry issues.

Mr. Casey asked to elaborate on her comment about the pipeline expanding, and Ms. Petrie explained that it was based upon significant new loan requests that may be based on pent up demand. With wages going up, Ms. Larson asked if minimum wage jobs would also see a bump. Ms. Petrie explained that the economic situation should be ok as long as they do not continue to rise at a faster rate than the rate of inflation for the long term.

In the health care industry, Mr. Casey is seeing wages rising across the board in order to try and attract or retain employees. Mr. Guido asked if the SBA is changing the way banks loan out to businesses based upon the demand for the PPP program. Ms. Petrie does not believe this is the case, saying that requests for bank loans face just as much, if not more, scrutiny than in the past. She also does not expect to see cryptocurrency becoming a predominant universal currency anytime soon. Ms. Cayer commented that she would like to see local government functions consolidated.

Adjournment

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

The meeting adjourned at 8:53 AM.

Andrew Stengren, Chairman
Arlington Economic Alliance

Prepared by Department of Planning & Community Development