

APPROVED

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE ARLINGTON ECONOMIC ALLIANCE HELD ON JANUARY 10, 2024 AT 7:30 A.M. AT THE VILLAGE HALL

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Andrew Stengren – Chairman
Rich Casey
Tony Guido
Heather Larson
Kerri Oots
Brian Roginski
Andi Ruhl

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Tonia Etoh
Terry Iverson
Ellen Para
Michele Petrie
John Toliopoulos

STAFF PRESENT:

Michael Mertes – Business Development Manager

ALSO PRESENT:

Keith Moens, Resident
Mary Ellen Graf, Township High School District 214

Call to Order

Chair Andrew Stengren called the meeting to order at 7:36 AM.

Approval of Minutes – October 18, 2023

The meeting minutes of October 18, 2023 Arlington Economic Alliance meeting were reviewed.

HEATHER LARSON MOVED AND RICH CASEY SECONDED A MOTION TO APPROVE THE DRAFT NOVEMBER 15, 2023 ARLINGTON ECONOMIC ALLIANCE MEETING MINUTES. ALL ALLIANCE MEMBERS VOTED IN FAVOR OF THE MOTION.

HEATHER LARSON MOVED AND TONY GUIDO SECONDED A MOTION TO AMEND THE JANUARY 10, 2024 ARLINGTON ECONOMIC ALLIANCE AGENDA IN ORDER TO DISCUSS NEW BUSINESS PRIOR TO OLD BUSINESS. ALL ALLIANCE MEMBERS VOTED IN FAVOR OF THE MOTION.

Development Update

The Mylo development at 116-120 W. Eastman Street was approved by the Village Board in December following additional changes from developer, notably lowering the height to six stories and having the higher floors set back further from single-family residences across the street. The first phase of the Arlington Gateway redevelopment was also approved by the Village Board in December. Located at the southeast corner of Algonquin and Arlington Heights Roads, the first phase would cover 3.65 acres with an eight-story building featuring 301 rental residential units and approximately 25,000 square feet of first-floor commercial space.

Two small business interest-free loans have been approved, and staff is currently working on other applications in various stages of completion. One approved loan was for the relocation of a dental office within Downtown, with funds being used for interior build-out. The other loan was for a start-up pet grooming business, using the funds for build-out and purchase of equipment.

Sounds of Summer Concert Series

Mr. Mertes introduced Avis Meade, the Village's Communications and Outreach Coordinator. Ms. Meade is the staff person tasked with managing annual Sounds of Summer concert series. This agenda item pertained to potential date changes planned for this year's program, and stems from the Village Board's request that the Economic Alliance review and provide a recommendation. Ms. Meade presented a history of the program and explained that, per data from Placer.ai, Sounds of Summer and Arlington Alfresco cumulatively brought as many as 7,500 visitors within a

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small section of Downtown on Friday evenings in 2023. She explained the challenges of putting on such events, including public safety, parking demands, accessibility, and bathroom usage.

In light of concerns stemming from the busiest evenings of last year's program, Village staff is recommending that the Sounds of Summer program be changed from Thursdays and Fridays over six weeks, to being held exclusively on Thursday evenings over a 12-week period. This would result in the same number of concerts, and the program would extend into August instead of ending in late July. This change would help limit damage to the Harmony Park lawn, bring more people Downtown on Thursdays in August, and allow businesses to have live music and more parking for customers on Friday evenings. Impact on residents is expected to be limited, and Village staff will continue to communicate with them.

Other weekday nights, such as Wednesdays, were also considered. However, the Park District has concerts on Wednesday evenings and the Village does not want to create competition. Also, Downtown residents have an expectation of Thursday evening concerts. There would be a minimal increase in costs to the Village as a result of changing the dates. Chairman Stengren asked when staff began considering the proposed date changes. Staff considered this after last year's concert series, although there have been requests made to the Village in the past as well. Ms. Larson said that she understands the reasoning behind the new proposal and why other weekday nights were not chosen.

Mr. Roginski feels that the proposal is a fair compromise. He also noted that Thursday night crowds tend to be down in August (compared to June and July) and that Thursday night concerts could bring more customers to the businesses that month. Additionally, customers often have to wait over 90 minutes for a table at some of the restaurants during Sounds of Summer. As a result, numerous people will put their names on multiple restaurants' waiting lists, then choose whichever one comes available first. This can create some confusion among employees at these restaurants, and a loss of business. He also expressed concern with many attendees reserving spots in Harmony Park as early as 2:00pm, some of which claim a larger area of the lawn than actually needed and limit the number of people who can sit in the park.

Ms. Ruhl wondered if it's possible to create a rule that during set-up in Harmony Park, the attendee is required to stay at their spot, rather than just claiming a space with chairs or blankets before the concert. Mr. Guido asked if the residents were ok with the change. Ms. Meade and Mr. Mertes explained that the proposal was discussed with Downtown residents and HOA representatives in the fall, and no objections were raised. Chairman Stengren asked if the Downtown Arlington Heights Business Alliance is in support of the change, and Mr. Roginski responded that most of the restaurants he has spoken with support it.

Mr. Casey believes that the Commission, representing the business community, should acknowledge business feedback especially if there is not an economic concern with such a programmatic change. Mr. Roginski asked if an extension of the concert series into September was possible, and Ms. Meade replied that it could be considered in future years. Ms. Ruhl inquired about feedback from businesses not adjacent to Harmony Park, and if partnering with smaller, local musicians was possible. Ms. Meade said that conversations with various Downtown businesses via online meetings, and conversations with the Downtown Business Alliance, did not have objections raised. Efforts to work with local performers do occur, such as the Special Events Commission hosting events with students from School of Rock and Bach to Rock, adding that it's important to support those artists as well.

Ms. Oots asked if consideration was given to concerts on Sundays. Ms. Meade said that could be a consideration, although there would be additional costs for the stage and staff overtime. Ms. Ruhl asked about bathrooms, and Ms. Meade said that the Village is providing maintenance of the Metropolis Performing Arts Centre washrooms for attendees. Furthermore, adding more directional signage is planned in order to prevent attendees from using private business' bathrooms. Portable toilets are not ideal, especially if in near proximity to restaurants. Mr. Guido asked if there are concerns with bigger crowds coming on Thursdays. Ms. Meade said that the Village will continue to monitor attendance. Considering the popularity of Arlington Alfresco, Sounds of Summer shouldn't syphon off customers from businesses on Friday evenings.

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ANDI RUHL MOVED AND HEATHER LARSON SECONDED A MOTION TO RECOMMEND APPROVAL OF VILLAGE STAFF'S PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE DATES OF THE 2024 SOUNDS OF SUMMER CONCERT SERIES. ALL ALLIANCE MEMBERS VOTED IN FAVOR OF THE MOTION.

Chairman Stengren complimented Ms. Meade on the job she is doing for the community, and noted that greater police presence was helpful at last year's events. Ms. Ruhl suggested providing a medical station and drawing awareness to that. Also, a sign at Harmony Park highlighting the dates, performers, and rules about reserving space on the lawn would be helpful.

Economic Alliance Work Plan – 2024

Mr. Mertes summarized the proposed work plan presented to the Alliance, based upon discussions over the past several Commission meetings: small business seminars, small business profiles, and "thank you" messages to businesses that have reached five-year and ten-year milestones. Mr. Guido suggested consideration of businesses hitting three-year and seven-year milestones as well, if possible. Retention visits could also be valuable. Ms. Ruhl feels that the notes are considerate of the investment made by business owners and would like to have dates set in which the Commission would write those messages. This could also be done at the conclusion of future Alliance meetings.

A pre-printed card, providing an overview of the Economic Alliance, was suggested by Mr. Casey. These could be included with the "thank you" notes. A program or certification that helps prospective business owners know if a tenant space meets zoning and other common Code requirements was suggested by Ms. Ruhl. Such a program could encourage landlords to collaborate with Village staff. A notice that highlights the zoning, and other features of the tenant space (such as a grease trap or commercial sprinklers), could be helpful to realtors marketing the site.

HEATHER LARSON MOVED AND TONY GUIDE SECONDED A MOTION TO APPROVE THE PROPOSED 2024 ARLINGTON ECONOMIC ALLIANCE WORK PLAN. ALL ALLIANCE MEMBERS VOTED IN FAVOR OF THE MOTION.

Other Business and Public Comment

Mr. Mertes mentioned that Jon Ridler has resigned from the Commission, and that the Chamber is expected to appoint a new representative to serve on the Alliance. Mr. Ridler was acknowledged by the Commission for his service.

Adjournment

BRIAN ROGINSKI MOVED AND ANDI RUHL SECONDED A MOTION TO ADJOURN. ALL ALLIANCE MEMBERS VOTED IN FAVOR OF THE MOTION.

The meeting adjourned at 8:52 AM.

Andrew Stengren, Chair
Arlington Economic Alliance

Prepared by Department of Planning & Community Development