



Minutes

City Council's Technology, Economic & Community Development Committee

February 3, 2009

Minutes of the meeting of the City Council's Technology, Economic & Community Development Committee held on Tuesday, February 3, 2009, at 3:00 p.m., in the 3rd Floor Conference Room, Tempe City Hall, 31 E. 5th Street, Tempe, Arizona.

Committee Members Present:

Councilmember Onnie Shekerjian, Chair
Councilmember Corey Woods

City Staff Present:

Kris Baxter, Marketing Specialist
Travis Dray, Parks & Rec Dep Mgr
Martha Garner, Comm Relations
Michelle Gurrieri, Comm Relations
Karen Fillmore, City Clerk's Office
Shelley Hearn, Community Relations Mgr
Dave Heck, Deputy IT Mgr
Ted Hoffman, Deputy IT Mgr
Gregg Kent, Light Rail
Chris Messer, Prin. Planner
Micah Miranda, Comm Dev Spec
Gene Obis, IT Mgr
Sheri Partridge, Comm Rel
Mark Richwine, Parks & Rec Mgr
Nikki Ripley, Comm Relations
Nancy Ryan, Comm Dev/Rio Salado
Chris Salomone, Community Dev Mgr
Alex W. Smith, Technology Dev Spec
Sheri Wakefield-Saenz, Econ Dev Administrator

Guests Present:

Laura Bachrach, The Academy
Jennifer Bucich, TAM – Insight Public Sector
Barbara Khalsa, Rio Salado College
Mark Richardson, The Academy

Councilmember Shekerjian called the meeting to order at 3: 10 p.m.

Agenda Item 1 - Introductions

Everyone introduced themselves.

Agenda Item 2 – Approval of Minutes from December 2, 2008, and January 13, 2009

Motion by Councilmember Shekerjian to approve the minutes from December 2, 2008, and January 13, 2009. Second by Councilmember Woods. Motion passed unanimously.

Agenda Item 3 – Public Appearances

None.

Agenda Item 8 – Discuss an Official City Drum Corps

Councilmember Shekerjian summarized that the Arizona Academy Drum & Bugle Corps, a division of the Arizona Academy of the Performing Arts (AAPA), brings a lot of attention to the community and they are interested in receiving an official status. This committee would be in a position to ask the City Attorney's Office to look at any liability issues, and she would then recommend that it be referred to the Sports, Recreation, Arts & Cultural Development Committee, along with any information from the City Attorney's Office. .

Mark Richardson, Executive Director of the AAPA.

- The organization came together in 2001 with the desire to provide programs for the community, particularly centering around the activity of drum and bugle corps.
- The Academy is a non-profit organization and the mission is "building great people through great performances."
- The Academy focuses on youth, but includes a full spectrum from young children to older adults.
- They desire to be recognized as Tempe's own Drum & Bugle Corps.
- The Academy is a member of a larger organization, Drum Corps International, comprised of 50 other drum corps across the country.
- This is a professional level marching band. Drum & bugle corps activity has evolved into an intense, competitive choreographed musical experience staged on a football field. They are considered to be the example to high school and college marching bands through the United States, Europe, Asia, and South Africa.
- The Academy is the only drum & bugle corps in Arizona. They travel coast-to-coast, competing in 10 to 30 different competitions, and performing in front of 400,000 fans.
- Tempe has been their home for ten years.
- The corps serves 150 kids and is one of the top 21 "world-class" corps.
- They would like an opportunity to be recognized. This is a positive organization for the City and does a lot of things such as building leadership and about 50% of the members give back to the local high school music and dance programs after they graduate.
- Two of the five high school band directors in Tempe are former members of the program.
- In combination with their performances and rehearsals, several events are also held: "Music Under the Stars", Memorial Day event, theater productions at the TCA, summer marching academy, and Southwest Corps Connection.

Councilmember Shekerjian clarified that the "Music Under the Stars" event this year, which featured high school bands as well as the community band, was wonderful. There were approximately 1500 people who attended that event the first year. This year's Memorial Day event has a vision to someday being similar to the Fourth of July event.

DIRECTION: Refer to the Sports, Recreation, Arts & Cultural Development Committee (Mark Richwine). Staff was directed to work with the City Attorney's Office on the liability issue.

Agenda Item 4 – E-Payment/Input Systems

Gene Obis summarized that Councilmember Shekerjian had asked staff to prepare an outline of the current systems for citizens to communicate with or do business with the City of Tempe over the net.

Ted Hoffman provided a list and summarized that the list begins with applications supporting financial transactions and shows the status of whether active (completed), future, or no plans. The next section shows interactive information submittal and retrieval, which are informational applications that either request information or submit information to the City. The next section lists forms which can be downloaded on request. The last section includes the applications used to distribute information to citizens, such as list server.

Councilmember Shekerjian clarified that the list shows all of the things the City could be doing or is currently doing on line. She asked for clarification on the tax payments and the reason this is a problem.

Mr. Hoffman responded that the City could purchase a module for \$300K to \$500K. An upgrade which cost about \$325K is currently being done to the tax and license system starting next month. To purchase the module would be an additional cost.

Councilmember Shekerjian suggested including estimated cost for the “no plans” items and noting a date for that estimate. She asked for clarification of the “future – no ETA” items.

Mr. Hoffman responded that those either involve cost or resources. Many are being worked on internally, but given the resources, it is unknown when they might occur.

Councilmember Shekerjian stated that the Development Services organization is working on the idea of electronic plan submittal.

Mr. Hoffman responded that the item is noted “future – no ETA.” He was unsure as to the status.

Agenda Item 5 – Social Media Opportunities Update

Shelley Hearn summarized that the City Attorney's Office is working on guidelines before this is rolled out to the entire organization. This should be ready for the next meeting, and she suggested setting a larger portion of the meeting time to discuss this. An internal subcommittee has been developed and is working on this.

Councilmember Shekerjian added that she hoped the audience would not be just the economic development community, but that the audience would be the community as a whole. This has tremendous potential for the community.

DIRECTION: Add this item to the March meeting agenda.

Agenda Item 6 – Neighborhood Centers

Chris Salomone provided a perspective on neighborhood retail. The City has been very successful over the years in creating retail opportunities because so much of the City's operating budget relies on sales tax. With the University, the City's size is doubled every day. There is an expanded capacity for retail beyond just the neighborhood centers and in some ways this is counter to the success of the neighborhood centers. The neighborhood centers have many times gone to service or other uses rather than delivery of goods. Currently, retail is contracting nationwide at a fairly aggressive rate. The likelihood will be that retail will reinvent itself as it did when it went from malls to big box to lifestyle centers. It is not likely the reinvention will be the neighborhood center, however, but will likely be on the internet and the question becomes how the City can get tax revenues from internet sales or from smaller kiosk type retail venues.

- From 2008, the City added over 2M square feet, but at the same time, increased lease rates.
- Tempe is a desirable place for retail, and the problem is to determine a way to do it proactively.
- The vacancy rate is at nearly 9%. That has a greater impact on the neighborhood centers.
- It is also impacted by the growth of the surrounding communities. Major retail has been added in other areas.
- On a per capita basis, Tempe's retail generation of sales tax is better than the surrounding cities. Tempe's performance on a per capita basis is good, but it is basically not in the neighborhood centers, but in the other centers.
- The City's reliance on sales tax as a percentage of its operating revenue shows its vulnerability.
- Chandler proposes that mixed use housing would help the neighborhood centers, although it was proposed at the time housing was in high demand. In today's market, that isn't a solution.
- Tempe's average rents are acceptable.
- There have been successes in the neighborhood centers, and some have been regenerated, such as 5120 South Rural and 6460 South Rural.
- There are rehabilitation opportunities at the southwest corner of Southern/McClintock, southwest corner of Southern/Baseline, and southwest corner of Southern/Price. The key is having a funding source to provide the necessary remedies and getting the right tenant mix.

Councilmember Shekerjian noted that the ideas generated from other communities all require money from the City.

Mr. Salomone responded that staff is working with Development Services and the Quality of Life Committee to set up a criteria to designate which centers to save. A possible funding source is Community Development Block Grants. They are used in other cities and could be used for façade treatments and landscaping and tenant improvements.

Councilmember Shekerjian stated that Michael Pollack had some ideas about putting together a redevelopment package that might be offered to strip mall owners. It might specify that if the property is redeveloped, there are some things that could be negotiated. That could be looked at on an individual basis, much like new development. In doing the new development, there are some things the City has done outside the box that were appropriate for where they were located, but the same opportunities aren't available when it comes to redevelopment. Will staff be looking at that?

Mr. Salomone responded that staff is working directly on that and are setting up the meeting with the commercial code group. He added that they are also using development agreements as a tool to do that. Ordinances don't allow some of those things.

Ms. Shekerjian added that new projects have a little advantage in those things, rather than redevelopment. Consistency and fairness should be priorities. In terms of attracting businesses, attracting the right tenants to a particular center is important. She agreed that both the kinds of businesses and the synergies of the businesses are important. Is there something the City can do to look at the centers we want to help rehab and aid them in attracting the kinds of synergistic businesses?

Mr. Salomone agreed that potentially there would be. Development Services staff will come to the next meeting to outline the criteria.

Councilmember Woods asked about the comparison of rents and whether there is a comparison for the downtown rents to surrounding cities.

Mr. Salomone responded that could be easily done.

Councilmember Woods supported the façade conservation program. In the long run, it would pay tremendous dividends in keeping businesses here and attracting new ones.

Agenda Item 7 Youth and Amateur Sports

Mark Richwine summarized that staff has been working with ASU since last fall to identify both opportunity and future needs and Chris Salomone is working on issuance of an RFP for youth amateur sports within the Rio Salado area.

Travis Dray summarized that he is working with ASU and staff has laid out by calendar year, per day, and per month the use of City fields, when they are vacant, what times, etc. ASU will do the same for their facilities and they will overlay the information and evaluate where sharing and open fields might be. That will be a starting point to step forward in the partnership in using shared facilities.

Councilmember Shekerjian clarified that Mr. Dray will let the Council know what they can do as individual councilmembers to help the process.

Mr. Richwine added that there are two opportunities. First, to determine whether there are existing resources that are being under-utilized at either the City or ASU to better allocate the timeframes for their use, and second, if we have peak periods where we don't have adequate facilities, we can identify those so that we can focus our departmental CIP requests to address those needs. We want to maximize opportunities where possible. If either ASU or the City has an over-abundance of certain space, we may look at opportunities to transition that space into a greater and higher need. Staff is also looking at the requests for space and where we are not able to accommodate them. A significant number of requests for daily, weekly, or monthly usage are turned down. Many of the City facilities were built during the time when sports transitioned. Now, with club sports and other programs, those sports that used to be seasonal are now year-around activities and there are unique pressures on the limited resources.

Mr. Salomone summarized that staff was directed to issue an RFP for a sports facility. It will be similar in nature to the previous RFP where we asked for youth and amateur sports-related facilities on all or part of the City-owned land west of Priest, along Rio Salado Parkway.

Councilmember Shekerjian asked if we are looking for someone to build it or someone to build it and operate it.

Mr. Salomone responded that ideally it would be for someone to build it and operate it. The 75-day RFP should be issued next week.

Nancy Ryan added that the RFP will go on the web and mailing lists have also been created. Because such a broad net is being cast, we are utilizing economic fiscal analysis to be able to evaluate the benefit to the City and the benefit to the respondent.

Mr. Salomone added that staff will work with Mr. Richwine and his staff in the evaluation.

Agenda Item 9 – Future Agenda Items

Councilmember Shekerjian stated that since Councilmember Woods has a job conflict with the Committee meeting time, she suggested scheduling the committee meetings for the second Friday morning of each month, at 10:00 a.m.

- Constituent Resource Management
- Open Access to Information
- Transit Corridor Planning Strategies – Apache Boulevard

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- Workforce Development
- Expansion of Solar and Biotech Companies
- Social Media Opportunities
- Drum & Bugle Corps update

Meeting adjourned at 4:10 p.m.

Prepared by: Connie Krosschell
Reviewed by: Chris Messer

Jan Hort
City Clerk