

**DRAFT MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
CITY OF OAKDALE
May 3, 2023**

CALL TO ORDER

A regular meeting of the Economic Development Commission (EDC) of the City of Oakdale was held on Wednesday, May 3, 2023, at the Oakdale City Hall, Oakdale, Minnesota. Chair Burns called the meeting to order at 5:15 PM. The commissioners then continued with the pledge of allegiance.

CALL OF ROLL

On a call of roll, the following were present.

Chairperson: Bill Burns

Commissioners: Dave Halper
Bob Boullianne
Carrie Frost
Frank Orsello
Stacie Penn
Gary Severson
Robert Stiglich
Erin Voca

Also Present: Noah Her, Council Liaison
Andrew Gitzlaff, Community Development Director
Max Lohse, Community Development Specialist

Absent: Jeff Bates, Commissioner
Luccia Shetka, Ex-Officio Student Representative

Quorum Present: YES NO

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A MOTION WAS MADE BY CHAIR BURNS, TO APPROVE THE MINUTES AS CORRECTED OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF FEBRUARY 1, 2023.

9 AYES.

0 NAYES.

MOTION CARRIED.

OLD BUSINESS

BUSINESS RETENTION, EXPANSION, AND ATTRACTION PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM UPDATE

Community Development Specialist Lohse began by introducing himself to the commission, describing his educational and professional background.

Lohse noted that there had been four business retention visits since the last EDC meeting.

Chair Burns described the EDC's recent visit to Little Inspirations Childcare. He stated the business was quickly growing and were glad to be located in the City of Oakdale. Commissioner Penn added that Little Inspirations staff appeared to be grateful for the visit and seemed receptive, indicating an interest in future city events. Additionally, Penn noted that this year was the ten-year anniversary for Little Inspirations. Community Development Director Gitzlaff added additional information from the visit notes, noting that it was a woman-owned business, had changed locations but remained in Oakdale, and currently had eleven staff. Gitzlaff also recalled that the daycare had remained successful in part due to the presence of reliable long-term staff as well as a focus on early childhood learning. Furthermore, Gitzlaff stated that the daycare had focused on new technology in recent years, allowing for improved information sharing with parents. Gitzlaff stated that the floor area of the business was approximately 4,000 square feet and that it had partnered with other businesses in Bergen Plaza, allowing for benefits like swim lessons and soccer activities. Gitzlaff concluded by stating that Little Inspirations Staff appreciated Oakdale's proximity to Saint Paul, making dropping off children while on a commute easier.

Gitzlaff transitioned to describing the Business Retention, Expansion, and Attraction (BRE&A) visit to Victoria Nails. Gitzlaff stated that Victoria Nails is a woman-owned business operated since 2016. The business caters to both men and women. Gitzlaff noted that the business was growing, but rents were relatively high. He added that the owner expressed some concerns with community perceptions, as some customers expect services to cost less in Oakdale compared to other communities. Gitzlaff noted that while the business is not currently interested in expanding, they recently signed a ten-year lease and will be with Oakdale for the foreseeable future. Gitzlaff concluded by noting that the owner employed approximately nine people.

After concluding the discussion on Victoria Nails, Commissioner Voca described the BRE&A visit to Hi-Five Sports. Voca began by describing the business model, noting that it focused on team sports for children. She added that it was originally franchised in the Chicago region, but had expanded to have two locations in the Twin Cities. Voca then concluded by expressing general support for the business and its practices. Gitzlaff added that Hi-Five appeared to function well as a non-retail business in Bergen Plaza, and more service-oriented spaces like it will likely appear. Gitzlaff concluded by noting that Hi-Five was interested in developing more City connections, and Mayor Zabel helped connect Hi-Five with the North St. Paul-Maplewood-Oakdale School District.

The discussion then transitioned to a description of the visit to CCF Bank. Commissioner Frost, who is also an employee of CCF Bank, began to recall how the visit went from an employer perspective. Frost stated that the trip went well and was a good opportunity to bring relatively new employees together to build relationships with the City. Frost added that CCF employees shared a desire to learn more about what is happening in the City. Chair Burns expressed praise for CCF and noted that CCF is relatively new to the Twin Cities market. Commissioner Orsello asked Commissioner Frost what the future of physical banks is, post-COVID. Frost responded that the bank had successfully transitioned its staff to a partial hybrid setup. Additionally, Frost added that while CCF and other banks are not likely to add new physical branches, there are considerable benefits to physical locations.

Community Development Specialist Lohse concluded the update by noting that three visits remain in the BRE&A program. Lohse added that City Staff will work with Kim O'Brien of the Saint Paul Area Chamber of Commerce to prepare a final report on the program, which would include common trends and concerns in the Oakdale business community as well as recommendations to the City to better support Oakdale businesses.

NEW BUSINESS

GLENBROOK SMALL AREA PLAN PRESENTATION

Community Development Director Gitzlaff provided a brief introduction to the Glenbrook Small Area Plan study, stating that the area, located between Highway 120, Interstate 694, and Highway 36, contains conflicting land uses, high truck traffic and unusual traffic circulation. Gitzlaff described what work has been completed to date, which included background research, goalsetting, stakeholder engagement and development of alternatives. Gitzlaff went on to describe the identified alternatives, including:

- Alternative A – An approach that does not address truck traffic, changing land uses instead.
- Alternative B – Development of a new frontage road in the study area to address truck traffic concerns.
- Alternative C – Development of a new road on existing right-of-way to partially mitigate truck traffic concerns.

After describing the alternatives, Gitzlaff summarized recent public input efforts, identified next steps and requested feedback from EDC commissioners.

Commissioner Frost asked why truckers are choosing a route through Glenbrook. Gitzlaff responded that while business owners have been asking drivers not to drive through the neighborhood, GPS services often select routes through the neighborhood.

Chair Burns added that while he liked the idea of a frontage road, he is concerned with outputting more traffic near 50th Street, Highway 36 and Highway 120. Gitzlaff responded that a signalized intersection or roundabout would likely be necessary, although it is too early to know which intersections will undergo major changes.

Commissioner Penn shared concerns about traffic backups. Additionally, Penn expressed concern with the potential removal of naturally occurring affordable housing in Alternative A if redevelopment were to occur. Gitzlaff noted that the planning process remained open to input on land uses changes, and other alternatives may lead to the creation of additional housing.

Commissioner Halper expressed appreciation for the planning process of the study, adding that he felt speaking one-on-one with business owners was thoughtful.

Chair Burns noted the conflicting land uses associated with the area. Commissioner Orsello noted that the land use and economic contexts of Oakdale were different when the Glenbrook area was developed.

Commissioner Frost asked when MNDOT was scheduled to complete a study on Highway 120. Gitzlaff responded that they were in the very initial phases of the study, and would likely not see designs for three years or so.

Commissioner Boullianne expressed support for Alternative C.

COMMISSIONER UPDATES

Commissioner Frost asked Community Development Director Gitzlaff if there were any updates on Tanner's Lake. Gitzlaff stated that there were a handful of proposals submitted to the City, although the names of each developer were not yet revealed.

Commissioner Halper asked how Central Bark, a newly opened business, was doing. Commissioner Frost responded that they were doing an excellent job, and she chose to bring her dog there.

Commissioner Voca provided updates on several recent bills passed by the State Legislature that she expects to impact small businesses, including the Paid Family and Medical Leave Act and the cannabis bill. She noted that the cannabis bill may impact businesses that rely on employees with commercial drivers' licenses.

Commissioner Orsello highlighted an article in the Saint Paul Pioneer Press about Ukrainian soldiers who received free, high-quality prosthetics from an organization in Oakdale based out of the 4Front Campus. Additionally, Orsello praised Slumberland's positive treatment of veterans. Orsello asked if it was possible for the City to recognize Slumberland's efforts for the community; Gitzlaff stated he would share Orsello's suggestion with the City Council.

Chair Burns noted that the Oakdale Area Chamber of Commerce planned to host a meeting at the 4Front Campus on May 4, 2023.

COUNCIL LIAISON UPDATES

Councilmember Her introduced himself as the new Council Liaison to the Economic Development Commission. Her described his background growing up in Wausau, Wisconsin as a member of a family of refugees from the Vietnam War. Her stated that he worked as a small business consultant and lender for small businesses. Her concluded by expressing excitement to work with the Economic Development Commission.

Chair Burns asked Councilmember Her what his top concerns are as a Councilmember. Her expressed interest in exploring business support tools in Oakdale and marketing Oakdale as a vibrant, business-friendly, and competitive community.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT UPDATES

Community Development Director Gitzlaff had no updates.

ADJOURNMENT

A MOTION WAS MADE BY CHAIR BURNS TO ADJOURN THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION MEETING OF MAY 3, 2023 AT 6:05 PM.

9 AYES.

0 NAYES.

MOTION CARRIES.

Respectfully submitted,
Max Lohse
Community Development Specialist