

## Minutes - February 11, 2002

Minutes of the Special Meeting  
of the City Council of the  
CITY OF DARIEN  
FEBRUARY 11, 2002

### 1. CALL TO ORDER

The special meeting of the City Council of the City of Darien was called to order at 7:30 P.M. by Mayor Carmen D. Soldato.

### 2. ROLL CALL - The Roll Call of Aldermen by City Clerk Coleman was as follows:

Present: Morgan Cotten Joseph Marchese  
Sean P. Durkin James Tikalsky  
David Hagen Kathleen Moesle-Weaver  
Absent: Richard Biehl

Also in Attendance: Joanne F. Coleman, City Clerk  
Arthur P. Donner, City Treasurer  
Rick O. Curneal, City Administrator  
JoEllen Charlton, Director Community Development

### 3. DECLARATION OF A QUORUM - There being six Aldermen present, Mayor Soldato declared a quorum.

### 4. BUSINESS OF THE DAY

#### A. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mayor Soldato stated that the purpose of the meeting was to discuss economic development for parcels within the City based on the proposed Comprehensive Plan. He said there was a desire to more vigorously pursue this issue by Staff or consultants, because the planner position was about to expire after a two-year period. The meeting was scheduled to discuss procedures for economic development. He stated that he distributed a memorandum to Council in January stating two planners were not needed within the City, and he offered his alternative. He spoke about the open Building Inspector position and expressed his opinion that the Code Enforcement Officer could take on additional responsibilities. He recommended that discussion evolve around what economic development would look like in Darien and what it means. He said that Council needed to determine what should be done to make sure that Darien's name was out there for potential parcel users and to inform those users that the City was willing to work with them and offer incentives.

Alderman Hagen commented that he wanted the Community Development Director to fully take over economic development and to oversee the Planner position.

Alderman Marchese stated that Council should review open parcels and provide staff with specifics for development that goals needed to be determined. He noted that there should be better communication between Council and Staff, that all Aldermen should receive the same information.

Alderman Durkin said that communication had improved. He questioned if the City had ever considered hiring a professional broker. Aldermen Hagen and Weaver said that it was previously considered.

Alderman Cotten was concerned with the general concept. He said that staff did not have the necessary time and that shifting responsibility would not be workable due to the need for expertise and need for

specific qualifications to do the work. He did not support elimination of the Planner position because it would be a redistribution of existing work. Alderman Weaver said that the position would be re-titled and perform a different role.

Mayor Soldato stated that there was an overall problem with the amount of work and the number of staff; he did not foresee a problem with eliminating the Planner position and redistributing the work.

Alderman Weaver noted that Council had spoken about adjusting the workload and that the Administrator should take on added responsibility. Mayor Soldato said that the City did not need two planners and suggested the Administrative Assistant could assist Administrator Curneal.

Alderman Hagen said that the Community Development Director would still need to be involved and would oversee the Planner. He suggested hiring an economic development consultant and keeping the Planner position.

Alderman Weaver said that the City could not afford a consultant and a planner.

Alderman Cotten suggested hiring an economic development consultant on a 'short term' basis. He noted that he did not feel that staff had sufficient time to accomplish what Council wanted achieved if the Planner position was eliminated besides performing the day-to-day operations.

Mayor Soldato said that economic development would take an additional half hour per day. He suggested that there could be 'cold' contacts; that contact information should be documented; that the liaison could pursue potential buyer's at Council's direction; and that the City would work with the developer to expedite the process.

Alderman Weaver said she would be curious to know how much success the City would have and what kind of feedback there would be from brokers. Mayor Soldato said he would like the City to be more involved.

Alderman Cotten suggested a detailed inventory of sites available, which should include information about lot size, utility locations, zoning, etc.

Alderman Durkin introduced Mr. Mueller, who was in the audience. Mr. Mueller was the broker who marketed the Center Cass School District property at 83rd Street and Lemont Road, the current site of Walgreen's.

Treasurer Donner suggested that the liaison meet with the owner/seller of the marketed property to know what the asking price was and, depending on that price, offer incentives to the buyer, i.e., sales tax sharing.

Mayor Soldato asked Administrator Curneal how he felt about economic development. Administrator Curneal admitted to being somewhat clueless because of the range of potential activities. He said that if only a half-hour of time per day was actually required, he would be able to take on the responsibility; but according to discussion, more detail would be required, which would make it more labor intensive and would require additional time. Mayor Soldato felt that Administrator Curneal could handle economic development issues.

Alderman Tikalsky asked Director Charlton if it were feasible for her to handle the extra duties if the Planner position was eliminated. She responded that development had not slowed down, that it would be difficult. He asked specifically if one property could be focused upon at a time, accomplish development and then move forward to the next item.

Mayor Soldato said that the Planner position could not be justified since the City was already utilizing many outside consultants.

Alderman Marchese said that a process needed to be decided upon and that personnel have always given quality and now Council was speaking about quantity. He said that he was not convinced that the Planner position should be eliminated.

Alderman Durkin asked if the City could approach potential developers and be more aggressive instead of developers always approaching the City.

Mayor Soldato reiterated that Director Charlton was capable of the added responsibilities. Alderman Cotten was concerned, he stated that the turn around time would take longer due to the amount of work and projects would be lost.

Alderman Marchese suggested waiting six months and keep things as they are and then make a decision.

Mayor Soldato said that he saw the Director of Community Development being able to plan and manage people. He said that there was not enough work to justify the current Director position and another planner.

Director Charlton explained that her role was shifting, that there are sensitive issues involved with development and that many hours were being spent with adjacent owners, developers, etc. and that if time was not spent with these people, the elected officials would be contacted more frequently.

Alderman Hagen said that in order to measure success that things should be kept as they are for a six-month trial basis and then evaluate. He had difficulty distributing responsibility and also eliminating a position.

Alderman Marchese spoke in favor of the current planner and felt the position should be retained at least for another six months.

Mayor Soldato said the City Council previously agreed upon the elimination of the current planner and the position; but after being lobbied by Staff and in an attempt to remain "friends" with Staff, some Aldermen have now changed their position. He said that Council needed to decide what must be done and inform the Administrator and Director.

Alderman Weaver suggested utilizing Administrator Curneal in the role of economic development and to meet with Mr. Mueller.

Mayor Soldato said that Ms. Hill would serve in that position until the end of the fiscal year only. He inquired if the City really needed to hire someone else for 3-6 months. Alderman Cotton said that there would be down time for a new person due to an adjustment period.

Discussion continued about elimination of the current planner and the position. Alderman Tikalsky felt that even though this issue was discussed in an Executive Session, a vote was not taken.

Mayor Soldato stated that the Council did not come prepared to discuss economic development issues as was contemplated that there was no need to continue the meeting and requested a motion to adjourn.

## 5. ADJOURNMENT

It was then moved by Alderman Durkin and seconded by Alderman Weaver to adjourn.

Roll Call: Ayes: Cotten, Durkin, Hagen, Marchese, Tikalsky Weaver

Nays: None

Absent: Biehl

Results: Ayes 6, Nays 0, Absent 1

MOTION DULY CARRIED

The City Council meeting adjourned at 8:55 P.M.

Mayor

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City Clerk

JFC/jr

All supporting documentation and report originals of these minutes are on file in the Office of the City Clerk under File Number 02-11-02. Minutes of 02-11-02 CCM  
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