

Minutes - August 11, 2003 - Committee-of-the-Whole

Minutes of the Committee-of-the-Whole Meeting

of the City Council of the

CITY OF DARIEN

AUGUST 11, 2003

1. CALL TO ORDER

The regular meeting of the City Council of the City of Darien was called to order at 6:30 P.M. by Mayor Carmen D. Soldato. In attendance were Mayor Soldato, Clerk Coleman, Treasurer Monaghan, Aldermen Biehl, Hagen, Tikalsky, Weaver, Cotten, Poteraske, Marchese, and Community Development Director Dreyer.

2. CONSULTANT INTERVIEW FOR BUSINESS DISTRICT DEVELOPMENT AND REDEVELOPMENT – TESKA ASSOCIATES, INC.

Mayor Soldato introduced Mr. Lee M. Brown, Principal of Teska Associates, Inc., who addressed Council and informed Council of Teska's background. He indicated that their approach is "fundamental to understanding that it is unlikely that municipalities will become developers; that they are very likely to become good partners for private redevelopment to a property". The community goals and market must be a good match; Teska would assist Darien to understand market economic conditions and what it can support. He noted that everything within the Comprehensive Plan was not doable; he wanted Council to understand that Teska may not always agree with the City's plan. Mr. Brown stated that the high quality and good character improvements anticipated in the Comprehensive Plan set goals and objectives for the sites, which could be supported by paying rents and businesses that would stay within the development. He distributed graphic materials that depicted what might be attractive for the site and examples of what other communities have done.

Mr. Terrence Jenkins, President of Business Districts, Inc., addressed the Council. He stated that Darien had a vision and inquired how it was different from other retail commercial areas; he referred to the Comprehensive Plan that articulated the differences. He explained their approach to developing the area. Mr. Jenkins noted that there must be a market for retailers to place their business at the particular location and that a market analysis would determine the level of interest, the desired categories, and the competition. Land economics would define the costs related to the designated intersection in terms of property, infrastructure, and layout. It would need to be determined if those costs match what the market place wants to do and if the potential rents match the ability of the infrastructure within the market place. The footprint or design would need to support what the people want. The Comp Plan addresses public and institutional uses, which is typical of a center place within a community; he stated that the City should factor in appropriate and practical, non-revenue generating uses along with revenue generating business. They would make suggestions about staging the project in order to achieve the City's goals; and economically, a determination would need to be made if public financing was necessary. Mr. Jenkins stated that a TIF should be considered as a backend approach to the project.

Mayor Soldato stated that the 'good news' was evident that no decision has been made on the development/redevelopment of the defined area; he noted that those opposed to this project had been making statements, most notably during the mayoral campaign, to the contrary. He indicated that the evidence brought forth challenges Council particularly because the economics may or may not work regardless of the firm hired. He inquired how they would define land economics since there are currently twelve different parcel owners/businesses; Mr. Brown stated that there was more than one market: the

market of what would happen on its own, the market of what you could get if you assisted the market, and the market of if we build it what can we do. He said that he was leery of basing development on what it would cost to acquire property; he said that the City may not want to own the property. He said that the City needed to know how to control what would be built. The value of the property would be interesting but may not achieve the goal; he indicated that an appraisal would be based on the current use but may not be the value for what the City would ultimately want to see there in the future.

Mayor Soldato stated that there was a timeline for the Commission; that the Commission would work with staff to prepare 'Request for Proposals'; and that they would interview developers based on the responses. He asked if Teska would interact with the City and the developers to say if the proposal was doable; Mr. Brown responded that the project would consist of a proposal process to generate the interest of private investors for the best use of the site. Mr. Jenkins interjected that the Comp Plan addresses three potential uses: institutional/public space, office, and retail. He noted that the Plan addressed the residential parcel and that it could become commercial; he suggested that Council consider replacement of the existing residential with high-end equity based residential. Mayor Soldato stated that it made no sense for the City to spend money unnecessarily and would like to pursue the 'Request for Proposals' scenario.

Mayor Soldato opened the forum for comments and questions from the Council members.

Alderman Poteraske stated that Teska focused on TIF eligibility in their 'Scope of Services' but the presentation did not; he inquired why they changed their approach. Teska responded that once they drove through Darien and had a better understanding of the community, they formed a different opinion; they commented that they learn as they go and they learned that there are numerous steps that need to be done prior to considering TIF. There was discussion about the cost of the phases and Teska indicated that there was a \$5,500 task prior to the TIF evaluation. Teska noted that they had prepared a revised Scope, which the Council did not receive.

Alderman Cotten stated that all credentials provided were from Teska Associates, Inc. and nothing was received from Business Districts, Inc. He noted that information should be submitted about BDI since they are an integral part of the proposal.

Alderman Poteraske asked that the submittal include additional information: 1) how much time and elapsed time Phase 1 would be, and 2) how much participation by staff would be needed.

Mayor Soldato stated that cost information was needed and that the best way to pursue consideration of development/redevelopment would be through the 'Request for Proposals' process. Mayor Soldato requested that Teska and BDI resubmit their proposal to Administrator Vana for distribution to Council.

Mayor Soldato advised the Council that there were no meaningful agenda items for the August 18, 2003 Council Meeting; he asked the Council if there were any objections to canceling the meeting, hearing none, he advised the City Council meeting of August 18, 2003 was cancelled. He stated that there would be a Committee-of-the-Whole meeting on Tuesday, September 2, 2003 at 6:00 P.M. prior to the Council meeting.

3. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Committee-of-the-Whole, the meeting adjourned at 7:25 P.M.

Mayor

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 08-11-03 Committee-of-the-Whole.

Minutes of 08-11-03 Committee-of-the-Whole