

**CITY OF DARIEN**  
**GOAL SETTING SESSION**  
**MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING**  
**November 20, 2024, 6:30pm**

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Present: Mayor Joseph Marchese, Alderpersons Tom Belczak, Ralph Stompanato, Eric Gustafson, Joe Kenny, Ted Schauer, Mary Sullivan, Gerry Leganski, City Administrator Bryon Vana, and Treasurer Mike Coren

**1. Business Advertising on Community Marque Sign**

Staff advised the marque sign at the SW corner of Cass and Plainfield is now advertising community events, not for profit group events, and the businesses at the sign location. During the project approval by the council, there was discussion about allowing local businesses to buy advertising on the sign. Staff presented a draft policy that could be used regarding business advertising. The Council discussed options including the possibility of limiting the sign advertising to certain types of businesses or prohibiting all business advertising. Staff advised that it would be virtually impossible to limit certain Darien businesses from advertising. A majority of the council concurred that we should not preclude certain businesses from advertising. The council also discussed limiting the number of advertisements at one time, limiting the number of times a business could advertise in a 12-month period, and how we choose the order of which businesses could purchase advertising. Staff advised they are reviewing how long each ad would appear on the sign. The Municipal Services Committee for final changes will review the draft policy.

**2. Business Alliance and Community Events Coordinator**

Mayor Marchese presented a proposal to incorporate a new staff position responsible for special events and business outreach. The intention would be for April to fill this position. This is similar to the concept discussed at the City Council's goal setting in 2022. Staff responded to several questions regarding position benefits, the part-time person. This would include the city serving the business community similar to what a local chamber of commerce would do. Mayor Marchese also mentioned the intention is to develop a five-person business alliance committee that would meet with April periodically to assist in chamber issues. Staff will present the specific changes for approval at the January 20 Council meeting.

**3. Finance Director Position**

Administrator Vana discussed a recommended staff reorganization relating to the city's financial management responsibilities. In summary, the change includes promoting Julie Saenz from the position of accounting manager to a newly created position of finance director. It also includes creating a part time accountant position (estimated at 1000 hours per year) under supervision of the Finance Director. Vana answered several questions. The council unanimously agreed to the proposal. Staff advised this would be presented to the council for formal approval at the December 16, 2024 council meeting.

**4. Strategic Plan Implementation**

Mayor Marchese reviewed the timeframes established for implementation of the city's recent strategic plan. The Administrative/Finance Committee will review the progress of the strategic plan periodically.

5. Elected official survey

The council reviewed the results of the recent city council survey and each council member had an opportunity to present topics they wanted to discuss but were not listed as a separate agenda item.

Alderman Belczak presented his concern of overflow parking at local schools primarily at student pickup times. Mayor Marchese will discuss this issue at his next meeting with the local elementary school superintendents when he meets with them in the near future. Alderman Belczak suggested the city perform a total review of the city code recognizing the need for updates and new ordinances that may be needed. Staff will review the code to prioritize the review. Alderman Leganski asked about potential growth from annexations. Staff advised that the revenue from annexations would not meet the expenses nor services needed to bring the unincorporated area to city standards. Mayor Marchese asked if the council wanted to continue to mail the event calendar to residents. The consensus was to eliminate the post card mailings and possibly include the events in the newsletter. The council requested that they be advised upon a petition for zoning relief or development. Staff advised we can email that to the council but staff might not have reviewed it yet.

Adjourned at 9:12pm

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JOSEPH A. MARCHESE, MAYOR

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JOANNE E. RAGONA, CITY CLERK