



MEETING NOTES

Historic Dublin Task Force

Tuesday, February 25, 2020 | 6:30 pm

Historic Dublin Task Force Members Present: Clay Rose, Sally Van Horn, Garrick Daft, Kim Way, Burt Dowden, Carol Matune, Ed Ostrowski, Craig Price, Enas Lanham, Kathy Lannan, Alan Szuter, Mary Szuter, and Rohan Madan.

HDTF Members Absent: Jay Nordenbrock, Paula Yonnotti-Ansel, Lynn Long, Becky Brightman, and Olivia Wirth.

City Council and Dublin Staff: Council Member Jane Fox; Dana L. McDaniel, City Manager; Colleen Gilger, Director of Economic Development; Matthew Stiffler, Deputy Director of Finance; Jennifer Rauch, Planning Manager & Interim Planning Director; Tammy Noble, Senior Planner; Sara O'Malley, Economic Development Administrator; and Laurie Wright, Administrative Support II.

Guest Speakers: Scott Dring, Executive Director of the Dublin Convention and Visitors Bureau and Downtown Alliance; Jenny Amorose, representative for the Dublin Chamber of Commerce; Jean Ann Connelly and Linda Kick, representative of the Historic District Business Association.

Ms. Rauch welcomed everyone and thanked them for their participation.

Ms. Gilger gave an overview of the Economic Development Department. She said there are four members of the Economic Development team who help ensure that businesses stay within Dublin and bring in new businesses. They primarily focus on professional workers in industries such as information technology, medical, company headquarters, and autonomous vehicles, etc. She explained that only 2% of the income tax collected is allocated to roads, parks, police, and the Recreation Center, etc.

Ms. Gilger said the Economic Development team does a lot of research on companies who wish to bring their business to Dublin. She said the City does pay incentives to attract new businesses but no tax dollars are used. She explained it is all paid out of a specific allotment of money. The size of companies who may qualify for incentives need to have 15 – 20 employees, a minimum of one million dollars in revenue, and want to double their size of business and be able to meet performance standards.

Mr. McDaniel added that not all incentives are provided by a means to save money; amenities in the form of infrastructure have been provided for larger companies for example. He said they consider what drives a need for service. He added in the Historic District there are amenities such



as the Façade Improvement Program, construction of parking lots, wellness programs, and fiber optics.

Ms. Gilger said the City would prefer a service industry over an office building because office uses can be provided anywhere. She stated that there is a lot of competition from Westerville, Hilliard, and New Albany who offer tax abatements. The City has tried tax abatements before and found that it was not a sound business incentive for the City. She states that businesses who were offered abatements would be offered reduced rents for a certain amount of time but when the term of the agreement is expired, at end of 15 years, the business would move to where it is more economically feasible and thus we were not sustaining businesses. She said Sara O'Malley is the point person for the Historic District and oversees the façade program. We want businesses in the Historic District to reinvest in their properties therefore the City provide funding for aesthetics in the district, which may include parking areas. Ms. Gilger said other amenities can include lights, roads, parks, and other improvements. She also said their goal is to have a healthy balance of land uses and not solely residential uses.

Mr. Stiffler, Interim Director of Finance provide information to the Task Force on how the City funds its operations and highlighted the importance of income tax and bed taxes. He also discussed TIF's in the city and how they are used occasionally to pay for infrastructure up front and usually associated with larger development projects.

Alan Szuter said he is a small business owner in the Historic District and will never reach \$1 mil in payroll so they did not qualify for incentives. Alan said there needs to be more of a focus on small businesses.

Dana McDaniel said that many of the investments that the City has made in the Historic District have not been done in other areas including the construction of the parking garage that was a ten million dollar investment. The City has also rented parking spaces at church and will be working on burying electric lines, which will be a multi-million dollar investment. Mr. McDaniel reiterated the Façade Improvement program and the existence of fiber optics, which is vital to all businesses.

Jane Fox, City Council Member said that these are the topics that we need your input.

Mr. McDaniel mentioned that our consultants will be doing a two-day visit with the City next week and helping the City identify other useful tools for the district.

Scott Dring, Dublin Convention and Visitors Bureau, introduced himself and stated he would like to discuss their role in the Historic District. The Bureau attracts tourists to Dublin in hopes of spurring economic benefits to our community. The Historic District is a prime destination and a

ideal place for visitor attraction. He said visitors from all over the country visit the Historic District and go to our restaurants, stay at our hotels, and attend community events like the Irish Festival.

Jenny Amorose, Dublin Chamber of Commerce introduced herself and stated that she would like to discuss how their non-profit group works with the Historic District. She said the group was founded to strengthen the local economy and make Dublin a better place to live and work. She highlighted some of the events they organize including the Bunny Hop, which was held on the first weekend in April. She said these events help create fun activities in the district and attract people to the district.

Jean Ann Connelly, the Historic District Business Association, introduced herself and stated that she would like to discuss how the business association benefits the Historic District. She said the Historic District Business Association is a non-profit organization that promotes businesses within the district. Like the organizations that previously discussed their roles in the district, the HDBA organizes events that bring people to the district and provide economic benefits to the local businesses. A few of the popular events are the Red Wine Trail, the Street Stroll, the Sliders Challenge, and the Chili Cookoff. All the events are fun activities that stimulate the economics of the district.

Linda Kick, Historic District Business Association, introduced herself and stated that she is a long time business owner within the Historic District. She discussed the benefits of having bed tax to fund events that are completely organized by volunteers. These events bring people the district to help support local businesses. She said that not only benefits the businesses in the district but the Dublin community as a whole. She said they will continue to help with local events and discussed how retail is changing across the country. She said that they provide monies to the local food pantry to help the residents of Dublin. She said her business has continued to grow and be successful and she said she chooses to stay in the district because it feels like home.

Alan Szuter said he is concerned with the loss of certain businesses, rents are increases and property taxes are increasing.

Scott Dring said retail businesses in Dublin has always been a struggle.

Sara O'Malley said the Economic Development team has designated business districts throughout the City and the Historic District is her primary focus area.

Jane Fox mentioned the continued high ratings that we received in the community survey we conducted last year. Among the reasons for the high ratings is the district is an urban core with quaint parks, local restaurants and close proximity to community attractions like the Columbus Zoo.

Ms. Fox also asked how to we acquire another business attraction similar to Biddies. She asked if we should incentivize it or utilize other methods. She emphasized boutiques and quaint business and not permit larger format stores. She asked the Task Force what the City would look like in 2035. She asked the group to contemplate what businesses they should attract, infrastructure they need, and our policies on preservation of historic structures. She said the group should be thinking of the character of the area, scale of the businesses and what they want. She said the north side of the district has lost its character and the Architectural Review Board struggle.

The Task Force members provided the following comments and concerns regarding this discussion that should be considered as the work moves forward:

- Need to provide additional retail opportunities
- Concerns that rent costs are increasing, which increases property tax
- Like the quaint and uniqueness of Historic District
- Emphasized that the streetscape character is important to the District
- The vibrancy of the Historic District has increased over the years
- Connections need to be made business/property owners and city resources
- The fairy trail is a great draw for visitors to the Historic District
- Need to think outside the box on retail. Need to look for experiential retail
- More clearly identify a dedicated staff person for to the Historic District
- Need to provide a better connection between the historic and new
- Find opportunities to incentivize retail
- Additional research is needed to determine whether there are incentive models that will work to attract retail
- Aesthetic appeal of South High Street needs to improve
- Art opportunities should be focus
- Provide a better/unique way to provide the history of the buildings
- Oral history needs to be recorded for the Historic District before it is lost – learn the history
- Preserve the S. High Street character in terms of building scale and character
- Need city resources to navigate exceptions to ADA requirements for existing businesses
- Redevelopment needs to fit with character, scale and intimacy of the District
- Need to develop more user-friendly approvals

Ms. Rauch thanked the members of the Task Force and adjourned the meeting at 8:30 PM.