

**DUBLIN CITY COUNCIL
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
Tuesday, May 25, 2021
Virtual**

Meeting Minutes

Mr. Reiner called the May 25, 2021 Community Development Committee meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Members present: Mr. Reiner, Mr. Keeler and Mayor Amorose Groomes

Staff present: Ms. O'Callaghan, Ms. Gilger, Mr. Earman, Mr. Stiffler, Mr. Farrar, Ms. Noble, Mr. Fagrell, Mr. Hammersmith, Mr. Brown

Others present: Jamie Greene and Logan Stang, planning NEXT; Russ Balthis and Greg Daniels, Squire Patton Boggs

Approval of Minutes

Mr. Keeler moved to approve the Community Development Committee minutes of April 27, 2021. Mayor Amorose Groomes seconded the motion.

Vote: Mayor Amorose Groomes, yes; Mr. Reiner, yes; Mr. Keeler, yes.

- **Historic Dublin Task Force Recommendations**

Staff Presentation

Ms. Noble stated that staff and consultants from the law firm of Squire Patton Boggs have been collaborating on the goal of implementation of the Historic District Task Force Recommendations. This topic was also discussed by the Committee on April 27. As requested at that meeting, staff has provided in tonight's meeting materials a summary of investments that the City has made in the Historic District, divided into one-time investments, annual and re-occurring expenses. The following presentations will focus on the Commercial Façade Improvement Program in the Historic District; Special Improvement Districts; and private and public partnerships.

Commercial Façade Grant Program

Ms. Noble stated that the City implemented this successful grant program in 2018, but it was suspended in 2020 based on the recommendation of Squire, Patton and Boggs. The consultants were concerned the grant program was not being operated through another entity, such as a Community Improvement Corporation ("CIC"), nor was it directly correlated to job retention. The options of partnering with an entity such as the CIC and/or tying the program to job retention would ensure that the program fulfilled a public purpose and improved the economic welfare of the community. Council has expressed interest in re-instating the program. The program is a 50-50 match grant program, requiring that grant applications be reviewed and approved by the City and that the City's matching funds per project be capped at \$15,000. The packet materials provided examples of previous grant projects. Should City Council choose to reinstate a façade enhancement program in Dublin, Squire, Patton and Boggs recommends working with another entity, such as the City's CIC to develop and operate the program. The CIC was created in connection with a 2015 non-tax revenue bond issue and the powers of the CIC were limited for

that purpose. The CIC's bylaws and organizational documents would need to be reviewed and possibly amended to ensure a façade enhancement program would be a proper use of the CIC's authority. The City would also need to appropriate the funds necessary to the CIC to operate the façade improvement program.

An alternative to partnering with the CIC on the grant program, also suggested by Squire, Patton and Boggs, would be to add a job creation and/or retention requirement to the grant. Staff does not recommend tying job creation and/or retention to a façade improvement program as it would not be consistent with the City's economic development strategies. Often, the building owner, not the business or tenant, is making the facade improvements.

Staff recommends the following discussion topics for the committee's consideration:

1. Should Dublin develop and operate a façade enhancement program?
2. Should the façade enhancement program be limited to commercial development or be expanded to include residential development?
3. Should the program be limited to the Historic District or should it be throughout the City?
4. Should the façade enhancement program be limited to building improvements or should routine maintenance also be permitted?
5. What other funding mechanism should be considered to supplement the City's programs?

Committee Questions/Discussion

Mr. Keeler inquired if the other cities with façade improvement programs referred to in the staff report, including Worthington, Delaware and Tiffin, have CICs.

Ms. Noble responded that the City of Worthington has a CIC, but she would need to check regarding the others.

Mr. Keeler stated that if there is a way for Dublin to reinstate this program without having a CIC, he would prefer that. There has been discussion about creating a new entity with its own board. He would suggest that the City provide the grant program funds to that entity, and that entity would award the grants. He would welcome comments from the consultants on this suggestion.

Mayor Amorose Groomes inquired if it might be possible to use the City's existing infrastructure to handle the grant program. For instance, could the grant program be handled by the City's Architectural Review Board, which already reviews applications for building renovations within the Historic District? She is not necessarily opposed to a CIC or the façade improvement program, but she would be interested in determining if it would be possible to utilize the City's existing infrastructure and expertise for this purpose. She believes the grant funds that were issued for façade improvement projects within the Historic District were a good return on investment. She would like to see the City do more of that. She is not concerned whether it is for commercial or residential projects. The goal of the grant program is to enhance the streetscape in the District, and if residential buildings contribute to the streetscape, she would be willing to consider including them in the funding opportunity. The façade program concerns the exterior of a building, not the use within the structure.

Mr. Reiner stated that perhaps the Committee should continue reviewing these grant applications, as that review process worked out well previously. He referred to the Mayor's suggestion about the ARB reviewing them.

Mayor Amorose Groomes stated that she was attempting to identify another entity that could handle the program. However, if the Committee could also handle the CIC component, she would have no objection. The City is creating too many bodies, each of which has their own opinions.

Mr. Reiner requested the committee members to respond to the questions posed by staff.

1. Should Dublin develop and operate a façade enhancement program?

Consensus of committee was that Dublin should develop and operate a façade enhancement program.

2. Should the façade enhancement program be limited to commercial development or be expanded to include residential development?

Mayor Amorose Groomes stated that she had no objection to including residential development, if the building contributes to the High Street streetscape.

Mr. Keeler and Mr. Reiner expressed agreement.

3. Should the program be limited to the Historic District or should it be throughout the City?

Consensus of the committee was that the program should be limited to the Historic District.

4. Should the façade enhancement program be limited to building improvements or should routine maintenance also be permitted?

Consensus of the committee was that the program should be limited to building improvements.

5. What other funding mechanism should be considered to supplement the City's programs?

Mayor Amorose Groomes stated that OSU is adding a grant-writing specialist to MORPC. There are many historical grants available, but the application process is difficult. OSU is attempting to resume a land grant status, and they are tracking all the grants available for that purpose. Perhaps we could engage them at some point in this discussion. It may be possible to provide a link to the grant opportunities to individuals within the Historic District, who might be interested.

Mr. Keeler stated he would prefer to avoid the bureaucracy involved with the creation of another task force or steering committee. However, whether it is the ARB or a new entity, they would be in charge of disseminating funds. The funding component can include grant-writing, but it also could include receipt of donor contributions. Currently, no mechanism exists that permits private residents to make contributions to this program. For that reason, there may need to be a new entity. Whether it is a person or committee, that entity should be wholly invested in preservation efforts within the Historic District. Although Visit Dublin and Historic Business Association are good at their missions, there is a lack of focus on passionate preservation of the character of Historic Dublin. There needs to be a separate entity to handle the funding hierarchy of City funds, other grants and private donations.

Mr. Reiner stated that another missing element is the recognition of individuals who have contributed toward this objective. In regard to a CIC, would it be satisfactory to allow the Committee to run that program, or should ARB do so?

Ms. O'Callaghan stated that it is her understanding that the funds would need to flow through a separate entity from the City. She requested that the consultants respond to the question.

Mr. Balthis stated that Ms. O'Callaghan is correct. If the funds come directly from the City, they would encourage that there be a job retention or creation requirement applied to the application.

That would come with a lengthy list of additional challenges. He has experienced those challenges with other entities with whom he has worked. If residential buildings were included in the façade grant program, it would be more difficult for the City to provide direct funding. Minus a job creation/retention requirement, they would encourage a separate entity, such as a CIC or a non-profit for the Historic District.

Ms. Gilger stated that there cannot be a job requirement connected to the funding. A property owner must be the grant applicant, and typically, they are not the business tenant in the structure. A property owner cannot commit to jobs for a company that they are only housing.

Mayor Amorose Groomes inquired if the HDBA could be used as a pass-through entity, or must a new entity be created.

Ms. O'Callaghan responded that it does not need to be a new entity. The idea of using the CIC was due to the fact that the City currently has a CIC, so it would be necessary only for Council to adopt a resolution expanding its authority. She inquired the consultants' views.

Mr. Balthis inquired if the HDBA was a nonprofit organization.

Ms. O'Callaghan responded affirmatively.

Mr. Balthis stated that he would need to review the HDBA's bylaws and structure, but that option could be explored.

Mayor Amorose Groomes stated that if there already is a CIC, that entity would be satisfactory, as well. She would prefer not to create a new body, however. The function of this entity would require a certain level of expertise of the members.

Ms. O'Callaghan responded that the CIC was created with a narrow scope. That board is limited to City staff and City Council. If the role of the CIC is expanded, it will be important to ensure the Board has the correct composition. It may be necessary to include other individuals in its composition.

Mr. Keeler stated that he does not perceive the CIC as being an extension of the City. It is a completely separate entity, although the composition can include a City staff member or Council member. He sees it as a separate entity, such as the Dublin Arts Council, with which the City collaborates and provides funding. He is not suggesting funding any greater than what is currently provided for the Façade Grant program. Previous experienced City employees who may live in the Historic District might be prime candidates. If the City delegates the grant dollars to that entity, it would determine the grant awards.

Mayor Amorose Groomes inquired if he is suggesting that it be a different CIC, not an expansion of the role of the existing CIC.

Mr. Keeler responded that he was not aware of an existing CIC. The discussion at the previous Committee meeting did not address a CIC; however, if there already is a CIC organization, it could be utilized. He inquired if the Over the Rhine or Short North CICs were connected with the municipality.

Ms. O'Callaghan responded that she believes he is referring to SIDs, Special Improvement Districts.

Mr. Keeler inquired if a SID is a financial tool, but a CIC is more of an entity or organization.

Mr. Balthis responded that a SID is a financial tool for a special assessment process, but it is also possible to create an entity that is a SID. The downtown partnership entities either are SIDs or

are closely associated with nonprofit organizations for which a SID generates the funds supporting that nonprofit organization. A CIC, a Community Improvement Corporation, is a specific creation of state law that is required for certain purposes, such as issuance of certain types of bonds. Some community CICs also can provide loans to small businesses. The City's CIC was created to approve a bond issuance, and it now is inactive. Nonprofit organizations also can be created to focus on a downtown area. It may be, but is not required to be, a CIC. When this topic was discussed before, he was not referring to the City's current CIC.

Ms. O'Callaghan stated that she could provide Mr. Keeler with copies of the legislation that created the existing CIC for the issuance of bonds, if he would like to see those.

Mr. Keeler responded that a CIC for issuance of bonds would have a municipal purpose, and he was not envisioning that type of entity. He was envisioning a nonprofit entity with its own governing body, which collaborates with the City. From that perspective, the City would not write the rules for the nonprofit entity.

Ms. O'Callaghan stated that discussion is the next item on the agenda. The CIC for the Façade Program was suggested, because it would be an existing mechanism through which the grant program funding could occur.

Mr. Reiner inquired the members' recommendation regarding use of the existing CIC.

Mr. Keeler stated that as he envisioned it, the CIC would not be his choice. However, if the consensus of the other members is that the CIC mechanism is the best choice for the Façade Grant funding alone, he has no objection.

Mr. Balthis stated once another entity is created, it would be the appropriate mechanism to handle the Façade Grant Program. However, the reason the existing CIC has been suggested to handle the grant program at this point is that because it already exists and with minor adjustments could be utilized to re-start the grant program more quickly. Depending on Council's decision on the next agenda topics, however, it may not be the best long-term mechanism.

- **SIDS/Non-Profits**

Mr. Balthis stated that this topic relates to private-public partnerships and SIDs. He will provide some examples of public-private partnerships and SIDs. He has provided links to each of their websites, as it would be very helpful to visit those websites and view their projects. Each of the funding mechanisms has been designed for the needs of a particular district. He presented overviews of the following:

- Downtown Columbus SIDS at Capitol Crossroads
- Short North Alliance
- Uptown Westerville, Inc.
- Downtown Cuyahoga Falls Partnership

Mr. Balthis stated that the first steps in creating a SID include consideration of the following elements:

- Steering Committee Recruitment
- Advantages and disadvantages of SIDs
- The Community/District's needs
- Opportunities to incentivize a SID

Mr. Keeler stated that if the existing CIC could be used in the short term to reinstate the Façade Grant Program quickly, he would prefer to explore that option. Evaluating creation of a SID may be the next stop. In the long-term, he believes a non-profit entity would be a preferred direction for addressing the needs of the Historic District. There is significant overlap between nonprofits, Visit Dublin and the HDBA; however, currently, something is missing. If one of the existing bodies could be restructured to emphasize preservation within the Historic District and accept grants for preservation purposes, that could be considered. Of the examples shown tonight, the Short North Alliance and Uptown Westerville Alliance reflect the type of entity he would prefer. It does not need to be paired with a SID, but could be.

Mr. Balthis stated that there can be overlap between organizations. They recommend that if there are already some existing organizations in the District that they be included in the Steering Committee for creating a SID. This encourages collaboration versus conflict and competitiveness between organizations.

Mayor Amorose Groomes stated that historically, fundraising has been difficult in Dublin. Although it would be great to create an entity to accomplish fundraising for a District, it would require significant work to be successful. In the meantime, she agrees with Mr. Keeler in using the existing CIC to reinstate the façade grant program.

Mr. Reiner concurred with using the existing CIC in the short-term, and perhaps a SID, if that can be created, in the long-term.

Mr. Reiner inquired if a 50-50% matching grant program, capped at \$15,000 for City funds would be the same financing structure the Committee would recommend.

Committee consensus was to utilize the same financing structure.

- **Building Standards Update**

Brad Fagrell, Director of Building Standards, provided an overview of Building Standards operations, which fall within two categories, Inspections and Review Services. He described the division's operations and reviewed the progress accomplished over the past few years. He is proud of the very impressive City projects that their team has reviewed in minute detail. He is proud, as well, of the fact that new processes have enabled them to reduce significantly the turn-around times for plan reviews.

Committee members thanked Mr. Fagrell for the impressive presentation.

- **Dublin 2035 Framework**

Mr. Greene stated that as an update, all four Council committees have met once to discuss big ideas for the Framework 2035 Plan, and after tonight, three committees will have met twice. In the discussions, approximately 80 big ideas have been generated. Those ideas have been consolidated, and the Committee will attempt to refine 39 of the ideas tonight. The committees' refined ideas will be compiled for the June 21 Council work session. At that meeting, a futurist will present innovative ideas for cities. After that meeting, a public process will be launched to allow City residents to present their big ideas for the future of Dublin. Tonight, this Committee will review the 39 ideas on the list and identify which ideas should be (1) elevated to a big idea for the Dublin 2035 Framework; (2) clarify why it should be elevated – what is the anticipated outcome of that idea; and (3) consider what type of community the ideas would be creating.

Mr. Green stated that the four committees were each assigned a focus topic. The Community Development Committee focused on land use. On the chart being displayed by Mr. Stang, the land use topics are shown in dark blue. However, as the chart shows, on many ideas, all four committees were aligned. Some smaller ideas could be grouped together as one. Some ideas should be elevated for the Dublin 2035 Framework. Committee members and staff members present reviewed the 39 consolidated ideas reflected on the chart and discussed which ideas should be elevated.

Mr. Reiner recommended elevating the following ideas: specific roadway connectors; resident ID cards; interactive digital events in public gathering spaces; creating "micro city" nodes within the City; achieving gold status as a Bicycle Friendly community; land acquisition to facilitate City growth; becoming a Blue Zone city, increasing resident health and safety.

Mayor Amorose Groomes recommended elevating: the regional partnership complex for supporting community sport services; a non-automotive super greenway; a high-speed multimodal terminal; becoming an energy self-sufficient city; provide a toolkit supporting investment and revitalization; adoption of financial structures supporting local land development; land acquisition and annexation.

Mr. Earman recommended elevating the regional sports complex and strategizing the City's land mass.

Ms. Gilger concurred on the regional sports complex and land mass strategy. Land acquisition and redevelopment of buildings for economic development purposes is important.

Mr. Greene stated that some cities have conducted extensive analysis of the capacity of all their land assets.

Mayor Amorose Groomes noted that a capacity study was conducted several years ago for the entire Bridge Street District.

Mr. Stiffler concurred on the regional sports complex idea. It could transform not only the area, but also the community's reputation and economy. Big ideas that would create a place worth going to should be elevated.

Mr. Farrar stated that the future trend is to move away from fossil fuels. Devices are increasingly becoming powered by electricity. Having a vast electricity storage infrastructure to support the increasing electrical elements in a city should be a key focus. Renewal energy sources, such as solar or wind-generated, could also contribute toward a blue zone city. Several recharging points within a city would be essential in delivering the new technologies.

Ms. O'Callaghan recommended elevating: sustainability opportunities, which include mobility and wellness; land acquisition; a super greenway; creating mini cities/nodes within the City, which would address economic development, housing options and mobility elements.

Mr. Greene noted that there is also a dimension to sustainability that is about emotion. No place can be sustainable if the residents do not care about it. Having an attachment to place is fundamental. Dublin has that element, but it should not be taken for granted.

Mr. Hammersmith stated that he believes the City's evolving transportation system is an idea that should be elevated in the 2035 Plan. It is essential that transportation be in harmony with a City's

land uses. Maintaining a balance as mobility evolves and providing key connections/links within the community will be critical. The success of Dublin depends on how well its transportation functions.

Mr. Greene noted that going forward, it may be important to “tell the story” about Dublin’s transportation goals more comprehensively. Having graphic descriptions of new transportation ideas would be helpful.

Mr. Reiner agreed with the need to focus on the City’s transportation system, connections and links. Dublin is a well-planned community and must continue to be.

Mr. Green invited participants to describe the future 2035 Dublin community with one or two words.

Meeting participants offered the following: community of choice; unique; different; distinctive; pride in community; home; well planned, well dressed and well funded; idealistic; a benchmark community; creative; innovative; special.

Mr. Greene stated that the group’s input will be incorporated into refinement of the list of big ideas. He noted that staff will be collaborating with the futurist on a program for the upcoming June 21 Council work session.

There being no further business to come before the Committee, the meeting was adjourned at 7:56 p.m.

Assistant Clerk of Council