

Observer Report

Planning & Development Committee

October 27, 2008

Observer: Ruth Singer

Aldermen present: All Aldermen present

Staff present: Dennis Marino

Media Present: Evanston Now

Meeting began: 7:40 pm (scheduled 7:00 pm)

Meeting ended: 8:50 pm

ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

(P1) Consideration of a Request for an Additional 2-Year Extension for 1700-1722 Central Street Approved Planned Development

Consideration of a request for an additional 2-year time extension for the 1700-1722 Central Street Planned Development (Ordinance 7-O-07), which currently expires April 5, 2009.

The Committee voted unanimously to grant the developer (Mr. Crocker) a two year extension (Evanston Theatre location) to 4/5/11. Mr. Crocker has another location on Prairie Avenue, He has sold only four units in a 14 unit building. He mentioned that the developer of the building at Kedzie and Chicago Avenue plans to rent all those units.

Neighbors complained that Evanston will lose property tax revenue. Another suggested that the city should buy back the property and turn it into a park (which Rainey said was a sure way to guarantee that the site never generates any property tax). Someone also said that he didn't know that this was the best use of the property. Tisdahl supports the two year extension but will vote against another extension if it comes before the Committee.

The developer paints a fairly black picture for the near future but feels his property will weather the storm because of its closeness to the City and its location between Metra and the CTA. Mr. Crocker will come back in a year to brief the committee on where things stand.

(P2) Recommend Allocation of HOME CHDO Operating Funds. The Housing Commission and staff recommend that \$81,830 in HOME funds reserved for operating grants to Community Housing Development Organizations (CHDOs) be awarded to Evanston's five CHDOs on an equal basis.

At the Oct. 13 meeting the P&D committee had requested that the five CHDO groups submit their budgets. Rainey had also wanted to know if there can be rental and owners in same project.

Don't know if this was answered.

Rainey feels this is money down a sink hole. She charged that the Citizen's Lighthouse Community Land trust has one single family home which hasn't yet sold and is paying its executive director and assistant \$50,000 a year even though it only manages one six unit building and half the units are vacant. She thinks it was a good idea but it hasn't worked out. They can't find people in Evanston to purchase the homes or banks that will loan money.

Baptiste suggests shifting the focus to preventing foreclosures. Tisdahl agreed and said she would vote for splitting the money equally among the groups but it didn't make sense to her and she felt we could get "more bang for the buck" Suggestion that use some realtors which will cost money but it would help the marketing of the empty units.

Marino said Home funds cannot be used for foreclosures.

David Jansen from Reba Place said \$16,000 was for part time salaries and the City and the banks and Reba are in this together. Ald. Holmes questioned him on where the salaries are in his budget figures (it sounded as if they were listed under management). She was not happy with this answer.

When the vote was taken 8 supported the equal split and Holmes voted "No"

Discussion items will be taken up at the next meeting.