

**ECONMOMIC DEVELOPMENT ZONING COMMITTEE (EDZC) ORGANIZATIONAL MINUTES  
MONDAY, JANUARY 24, 2022 9:30 A.M.  
CITY HALL, COUNCIL CHAMBERS, VERO BEACH, FLORIDA**

**PRESENT:** Joseph Cataldo, Terry Torres, Bob DelVecchio, William Watkins, and Sheila Schweitzer **Also Present:** Jenny Flanigan, Assistant City Attorney; Tammy K. Bursick, City Clerk; Jason Jeffries, Planning and Development Director and Heather McCarty, Records Retention Specialist

**1. SWEARING IN OF NEW MEMBERS – CITY CLERK**

The City Clerk swore in the members en masse.

**2. ELECTION OF OFFICERS**

**A) Chairman**

**Mr. DelVecchio made a motion to appoint Mr. Cataldo as Chairman. Mr. Torres seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.**

**B) Vice Chairman**

**Mr. DelVecchio made a motion to appoint Mr. Terry Torres as Vice Chairman. Mr. Cataldo seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.**

\* At this time, item 3-B) was discussed.

**3. NEW BUSINESS**

**A) Jason Jeffries, Planning and Development Director, to discuss the Mission of the EDZC**

Mr. Jason Jeffries, Planning and Development Director, went over the mission of the EDZC with the Board members. He said their plan right now is heavily focused on improving the lighting and the sidewalks downtown. He talked about the annual budget process and the five (5) year capital plan. He said they generate about \$100,000 a year and what's budgeted this year is doing the designing for the lighting upgrades in the downtown area. That work order has been issued and Kimley-Horn was selected.

Mr. Torres asked how much they have in the budget right now. Mr. Jeffries reported they ended the fiscal year with \$246,000. He said they have \$50,000 budgeted this year to do the lighting plan. He said that once the lighting plan is complete, then they will go into budgeting for the actual construction of those lighting improvements. He added that at their June meeting, they will be updating as to where they are at and give their recommendation on next year's budget.

Mr. Cataldo asked if there was anything going on with the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) or Public Works with the Twin Pairs. Mr. Jeffries said Public Works, the City Manager and himself have had discussions with FDOT relating to the Twin Pairs. He explained that FDOT is doing some safety analysis and they are expecting in the next fiscal budget the 3R project for the Twin Pairs will be budgeted.

Mr. Torres asked if they are still anticipating closing one (1) lane in each direction and on-street parking. Mr. Jeffries answered no, they are looking at any type of safety improvements that can be done within what the State will do in their budget. He said that anything beyond the 3R resurfacing project would have to be funded locally, or they would have to get grants for.

Mr. Cataldo asked about the Complete Streets program. Mr. Jeffries explained that any type of Complete Streets funding comes through the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). He added that the MPO staff are County employees. He said there is a specific pot of money for transportation alternative funding and that the MPO annually gets \$400,000, which they have been budgeting for the bike trail in Fellsmere.

Mr. Torres said the proposed traffic calming was a restriping project and wasn't going to be an expensive capital project. Mr. Jeffries said they are looking at what can be done with restriping, but it is not going to include parking. Mr. Cataldo asked if the FDOT is saying no, or if the City is not on board.

Mr. Jeffries said the City Council had a discussion where they were willing to explore options for the Twin Pairs, as long as it didn't cost the City of Vero Beach any money.

Vice Mayor Rey Neville said he thinks the situation with the Twin Pairs is dangerous and bad for business and said they need a louder voice to share that.

Mr. Jeffries said what he recalls from Council was to work within the 3R project and to see what could be done with the resurfacing funds from FDOT. Mr. Cataldo asked if FDOT is open to restriping. Mr. Jeffries said they would bring back more information to them once the safety analysis is done.

Mr. Torres asked Vice Mayor Neville what his position is. He said he thinks there are ways they can manage the traffic, make it more attractive and more appealing and have people more willing to cross the traffic. He feels they need a crosswalk at American Icon and also near the Flower Box. He thinks with proper calming, people would slow down. He remarked that the number of lanes is an argumentative issue that has been going on for years. He thinks they can make downtown beautiful and do better. He said those that have a stake in that community need to speak to them regularly.

Mr. Torres thanked him for sharing his point of view and commented he is breath of fresh air. He hopes other Councilmembers can embrace that point of view.

Mr. Torres said the whole idea of traffic calming is a very old idea and dates back to the Vision Plan. He said they need to study this because there is a window of opportunity. He said they still embrace the concept of traffic calming on SR 60 and on-street parking, and anything they can do to facilitate it, they should explore.

Vice Mayor Neville said he thinks that is wise. He said FDOT is exploring safety issues. He commented that US-1 has four (4) lanes and it has more traffic. He talked about hurricane evacuations and how all lanes go west during an evacuation.

Mr. Cataldo told Vice Mayor Neville that he appreciates his position and hopes they can get more City Councilmembers on board.

**B) Jenny Flanigan, Assistant City Attorney, to give a briefing of the Sunshine Law**

Ms. Flanigan went through a Power Point presentation on the Sunshine Law with the Board members (on file in the City Clerk's office).

\* At this time, item 3-A) was discussed.

**4. PUBLIC COMMENT**

None

**5. MEMBER'S MATTERS**

Mr. Watkins brought up the \$50,000 they have budgeted for the design of the lighting and asked about having the design bids come in to them directly. Mr. Cataldo explained they are an advisory board and it has to go out to bid. Mr. Jeffries explained the RFP process. He said after they complete the design work, those results will come to this Board.

Mr. Watkins asked if there was a way to avoid the \$50,000. Mr. Jeffries answered no.

Mr. Torres explained that over the last two (2) years, they have had lighting presentations and were exposed to examples of what can be done and some types of downtown lighting.

Mr. Torres referred to the availability of the streetscape plan that was done by Kimley-Horn. Mr. Jeffries said that is on the website.

Mr. Cataldo talked about the history of the Twin Pairs and that four (4) lanes in downtown was originally constructed because it was the most economical way. He said there is a resurgence for Downtowns, but it needs the community behind it, which it hasn't had.

Ms. Schweitzer asked if they have already contracted somebody for the \$50,000 lighting study. Mr. Jeffries answered yes, Kimley-Horn is doing the lighting study and design. Ms. Schweitzer asked if it includes doing anything with the Twin Pairs. Mr. Cataldo answered no, that the City is not on board with doing anything with the Twin Pairs, other than having a safety study done.

Mr. Jeffries said it is a safety study and he thinks they are looking at the possibility of eliminating one (1) of the lanes westbound through downtown.

Mr. Cataldo talked about the workshop he attended on Complete Streets. He brought up speed studies and that they can actually lead to the speed being increased, which is not what they want. He would like the City to tell FDOT that their road doesn't work in its current condition. He feels a lot of people would be favorable to a project downtown.

Mr. Torres agreed that studies can indicate higher speeds rather than lower speeds, which is counter to the thinking of the EDZC. They want to see traffic calmed, so they need to stay away from the concept of speed studies. He said they look at the safety from a pedestrian point of view and need to re-visit that streetscape with City Council. He referred to the window of opportunity with the 3R project and the repaving of SR60. He said the time has come and they need to press their case.

Ms. Schweitzer asked how do they get that plan in front of City Council.

Mr. Jeffries said they are working with the State on the safety analysis and they should wait and see what comes back. Then they can schedule the Public Work's Director, Matt Mitts, to present that to this Committee. Also, through the budgeting process, as they are budgeting their capital improvements, they can suggest that, since the Twin Pairs is in their plan.

Ms. Flanigan commented they have about a year prior to the State finalizing its plans and a project would then begin in 2026 or 2027. Mr. Jeffries agreed, but said this year, they are in the critical planning and design process, which they want to be ahead of.

## **6. CHAIRMAN'S MATTERS**

Mr. Cataldo asked if this Board could recommend allocating funds over the next five (5) years to widen the sidewalks on the stretch of 20<sup>th</sup> Street between 14<sup>th</sup> Avenue and the Courthouse to create landscape and buffers, understanding the work would be in the right-of-way and require FDOT permits, could they

budget those funds to make it a friendlier and aesthetically pleasing stretch. He understands it is within the State's right-of-way.

Mr. Jeffries explained that yes, it is within FDOT's right-of-way and is their jurisdiction. Mr. Cataldo asked hypothetically, if FDOT was to relinquish their ownership of that land, would it go to the City or the abutting property. Mr. Jeffries said there are examples where agreements are entered to take over responsibility for right-of-ways, but he doesn't see that occurring here.

Mr. Cataldo said their mission is to help the downtown district and the Twin Pairs are a major element of that and they need to get the City on board. He thinks it starts with staff, then it goes to Council. Mr. Jeffries reminded them that policy is set by Council and this Board advises Council.

Mr. Torres agreed it would be good to have the blessing of staff.

Mr. Jeffries said it is a policy decision. He said from a planning perspective, he doesn't disagree that traffic calming is important for the vitality of downtowns.

Ms. Schweitzer asked if they could go to the public and say what they are recommending. Mr. Cataldo said yes, but not together as a Committee. Mr. Jeffries cautioned them about the Sunshine Law.

Ms. Schweitzer asked if this Committee could place an ad in the paper. Mr. Cataldo answered no. He said they can make a recommendation to City Council.

Mr. Cataldo said there are a lot of people that live in downtown that don't get involved in politics and don't know what is at stake.

There was a discussion on how they can educate the public about the issues and also get them involved.

Ms. Schweitzer asked if they could collectively attend Coffee with the Mayor to educate people. Ms. Flanigan answered no because collectively it would be a Sunshine Law violation. She said as an individual, they can go to Coffee with the Mayor and say that they want the Twin Pairs to be discussed by City Council. She added the safest way is to say they are a member of this Committee, but are speaking on behalf of themselves.

Mr. Torres suggested they invite the Mayor to one of their meetings and that way they can all speak.

Ms. Flanigan said they can pass a motion to take advice to the City Council at any time. She said they work with the City Clerks' office and generally the Chair presents to the City Council.

Mr. Cataldo asked if they could invite the Mayor.

Ms. Flanigan explained the best way to give advice from this Committee would be in an official motion to be presented to City Council at their meeting.

Mr. Jeffries suggested they finish the study and then they can have a presentation and a discussion and decide what to present to City Council.

**Mr. Torres made a motion that the EDZC Committee invite the Mayor to attend their next meeting. Mrs. Schweitzer seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.**

There was a discussion about Main Street Vero Beach and how their EDZC Committee was formed to be a mechanism to finance improvements in the downtown area.

Vice Mayor Neville pointed out Main Street is not subject to the Sunshine Law and can advocate for anything they want, anytime they want, and with as many people as they want. He suggested they could

have the President of that body come before the City Council and talk about what they are wanting and say that they are representing every business owner downtown.

Mr. Watkins said that he is currently on the Board of Directors for Main Street and they are 100% in favor of calming the Twin Pairs. He will bring up making a bigger push with them.

Mr. DelVecchio said that he spoke with Mrs. Susan Gromis in the Main Street office and talked to her about coming to their meetings and she said she would start with the next meeting.

**7. NEXT MEETING DATE**

**A) February 14, 2022**

Mr. Jeffries said their meetings will go back to being held the third Monday of the month at 9:30 a.m.

**8. ADJOURNMENT**

Today's meeting adjourned at 10:44a.m.

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