

**CITY OF ROCK ISLAND  
CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION  
March 8, 2021 - 5:30 p.m.**

**City Council Chambers, City Hall, 3rd Floor  
1528 Third Avenue, Rock Island, IL**

3/8/2021 - Minutes

**CALL TO ORDER**

Mayor Thoms called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone.

**THIS MEETING WILL BE CONDUCTED BY AUDIO AND VIDEO CONFERENCE WITHOUT A PHYSICALLY PRESENT QUORUM OF THE ROCK ISLAND CITY COUNCIL DUE TO THE DISASTER DECLARATION ISSUED BY GOVERNOR PRITZKER**

**ROLL CALL**

Mayor Thoms asked Interim City Clerk Linda Mohr to call the roll.

Present: Mayor Mike Thoms and Alderman Mark Poulos.

Alderman Randy Hurt, Alderwoman Jenni Swanson, and Alderman Dylan Parker were present via remote connection in accordance with Governor Pritzker's Executive Order.

Absent: Alderman Ivory D. Clark and Alderman Dave Geenen.

**DARI QUARTERLY PRESENTATION TO CITY COUNCIL**

Development Association of Rock Island (DARI) President Liz Tallman presented a quarterly update to Council. She said the presentation would encompass both the fourth quarter of 2020 and first quarter of 2021. She noted the new Executive Committee had expanded to ten members instead of the previous 6. She listed the members of the Committee by name as well as the Economic Development Team for DARI.

Ms. Tallman discussed the current state of the DARI-City partnership. She noted the recent 3-year Economic Development Services Agreement with the City, deeming it a one-stop shop for collaborative development. She said the pandemic has kept the group from gathering in a collaborative space, but have had remote meetings regarding development deals.

Ms. Tallman discussed the workplan program areas of the service agreement that meets Council goals and serves the DARI mission. The first area of concentration is business resources, or having one location for information and resources. She mentioned the FORWARD platform as a valuable online tool for local businesses, and summarized the user activity statistics through that portal. She then summarized the content of the website and what it offers to businesses.

Ms. Tallman detailed the business development portion of the workplan program. This includes collaboration with City Staff, local businesses, and the Quad Cities Chamber of Commerce. She said the goal is to attract and expand in new investments within the City. She said DARI would like to have more formal coordination on their end outside of business connection calls

once that is possible after the pandemic. She added the DARI team knows their responsibilities and working on the core processes helps get the work done. She noted the group meets bi-weekly with the Mayor and City Manager to update progress.

Ms. Tallman discussed the current expansion and development projects. There are 38 current economic projects taking place, and she noted there has been good activity as of late in the business attraction area. She noted there has been increased activity with businesses looking to expand warehouse or logistics capabilities due to the resulting nature of the pandemic. She then discussed the planned investments in the downtown for 2021, which includes a \$9.7 million investment. She noted work with the Mayor and City Manager regarding how to best spend the \$3.9 million in TIF money for the downtown. Ms. Tallman spoke on the business expansions and investments within the City. She noted even during a pandemic, 34 businesses invested in the City during 2020 at a total of over \$70 million.

Ms. Tallman next reviewed business corridors within the City and DARI's goals. She said DARI plans to facilitate conversations with local business organizations to determine opportunities in key corridors such as College Hill, the Hilltop, and 11th Street. She noted the idea is to develop recommendations and implement a strategy for each corridor, and create a sustainability plan for businesses at risk. She said DARI will no longer be doing the day-to-day work as it relates to the downtown area now that there is a Manager, but will work in partnership for economic development. She added DARI hoped to bring recommendations to Council by June 2021.

Ms. Tallman discussed product development to enhance and promote availability of quality buildings and sites. This includes an assessment of site inventory, identifying core and vacant properties, and working with realtors for development opportunities. She said the hope is to meet individually and then as a group with realty firms. She introduced the next area of housing, based on the stated Council goals of developing a residential programs guide and to spur new residential housing developments. She added a key thing is to share information regarding homebuyer or homeowner assistance programs, as well as partnering and promoting the Live-Work Rock Island program and referrals to financial education programs.

Ms. Tallman recapped the Live-Work program within the City. She said 30 homebuyers closed in 2020 during a down year, then provided average financial statistics for the program. She then discussed the various milestones the program reached in 2020. She noted the amount of investments through the program have brought significant dollars to the City, including property tax funds and 15 million in down payment, closing costs, and rehabilitation assistance over the last decade.

Ms. Tallman discussed DARI's housing and residential resources guide currently in progress. She said the guide includes information on the Live-Work program as well as all City assistance programs, Project Now, and any other program available to City residents. She then discussed the financial assistance programs through DARI intended to expand and grow within the City. This includes the resources guide on how to start a business and serves as an initial point of contact for sharing information on business assistance programs. She again referenced the FORWARD portal as a tool for businesses.

Ms. Tallman summarized the investments made via the first round of COVID-19 relief funding, and pointed to a list of 69 businesses receiving assistance from the \$140,609.50 pool. She added within three weeks the City had disbursed funds to businesses in need. She summarized the disbursement of funds for the second round of COVID-19 relief program, which included 36 approved City businesses, of which \$90,000 to \$100,000 remains from a total of \$280,000. She noted the disbursements would continue until the funding is gone.

Ms. Tallman summarized loan programs offered through DARI and the recipients under the Bridges program for the last six months. She then described the upcoming programs for 2021.

This included the DIY RI, Rock Start, Storefront Improvement, and Discover Rock Island Events programs. She discussed the online instructions via the DARI website on how to start a business in the City.

Ms. Tallman discussed DARI's comprehensive marketing and communication strategies. She said the plan is to have Council provide feedback on what is and is not working in this area, and formulate plans based on the outlined Council goals. She noted the local love campaign that will highlight businesses and try to get residents to support them. She said there are 25 businesses currently participating in the campaign, and as a result they plan to run more in the near future.

Ms. Tallman summarized the highlights for 2020. She noted the Rock Island Resilience Community Marketing Series has launched, which showcases the resiliency of City residents, businesses, and organizations. She noted the page has received 60,000 views to date, and five videos have been developed. She then discussed the partnership goals of DARI related to Council goals. Current partnerships include DARI members, City Council, economic development partners, business development resources such as the Chamber of Commerce and Bi-State Regional Data Center, Real Estate professionals, workforce professionals, and quality of life amenities such as Visit Quad Cities.

Ms. Tallman discussed the DARI goal of furthering education for businesses on how to operate well within the City. She noted the current perception of the City and the desire to show the realities of running a business here. She said this approach was based on data collected by DARI via a program entitled MetroComp. She showed a case example of a theoretical manufacturing business and the reality of operating costs and property taxes within the Illinois Quad Cities versus the Iowa Quad Cities.

Ms. Tallman thanked Council for their time.

## **FINANCE DEPARTMENT PRESENTATION ON A PURCHASING POLICY WITH LOCAL BIDDER PREFERENCE**

Interim Finance Director Linda Barnes presented an update on the City's purchasing policy regarding local bidder preference. She began with a summary of what the policy entails, as well as the restrictions it presents.

Ms. Barnes discussed the common types of local bidder preferences. She said a tie bid involves an award to the local bidder in the case that all other factors are equal. A percentage preference with a cap is a given to local bidders up to a certain contract amount. She then summarized the common types of bidder preferences. She described a percentage preference without a cap as a preference given to local bidders for any contract amount, expressed as a percentage of the bid. She described a percentage preference with ability to match a low bid as a preference given to local bidders with the ability to match the low bid.

Ms. Barnes said it is the philosophy of the City to conduct purchasing processes which will result in maximum value in goods and services for tax dollars spent. She described two different categories. Category A through C are goods and services with costs exceeding \$5,000, and Category D is goods and services with a cost less than or equal to \$5,000. She then compared the local bidder preference portion of many different municipalities' purchasing policies as examples.

Ms. Barnes finished by explaining the advantages and disadvantages of local bidder preference policies. Advantages include encouraging businesses to stay or relocate within the City, increases tax revenue, and represents a commitment to, and improves the relationship with local businesses. Disadvantages include increased costs and decreased competition, potential

for reciprocal action by other communities, increased administration to oversee policy, and an increased risk of a challenge to the procurement process. City Manager Randy Tweet asked Council members if the purchasing policy would be something they wished to pursue. Alderwoman Swanson said she was not in favor, as the City is not in a financial position to commit to local businesses alone. Alderman Parker said he was in favor and should be pursuing the policy as City tax dollars should go to City businesses. Mr. Tweet asked each Alderperson to contact him individually to state their preference on the direction of the policy.

## **PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT PRESENTATION ON A RESPONSIBLE BIDDER ORDINANCE**

Public Works Director Mike Bartels introduced the subject of Responsible Bidder Ordinances (RBO), a policy that sets minimal requirements for contractors bidding on publicly-funded projects. He said the requirements include proof of participation in training programs, proof of certificates of insurance, pre-qualification surveys, and compliance with all applicable laws. He added RBOs ensure that local governments hire only professional, competent contractors to provide high-quality work.

Mr. Bartels discussed the need for RBOs. He said a RBO is an acknowledgement that governments should consider benefits in addition to costs. He added RBOs protect taxpayers by setting minimum standards and awarding projects to the lowest responsible and responsive bidder, and they increase the likelihood that local contractors will win bids and keep tax dollars in the community.

Mr. Bartels discussed the RBO background within the City. He noted it was presented and approved in 2016 as a 16-page document with 24 questions. He summarized the City-specific factors for the RBO, and compared it to a number of other municipalities in Illinois. He noted the requirements in the Rockford, Illinois policy is similar to what Rock Island has adopted. He further detailed finer points of the City's policy as it stands.

The study session concluded at 6:34 p.m.

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Josh Adams, Deputy City Clerk