

Community Development Committee Report for Special Meeting on August 28, 2013

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 pm

Present: Aldermen Hawley, Vieyra, Bilotto, Carr, Ostling, Frausto and Thompson.

Also Present: Nick Crite and City Treasurer Carmen Bilotto

This meeting was called specifically to talk about the revision of the New Business Application and the handbook given to potential business owners.

Chairman Hawley thanked Nick Crite for his work in putting together the revised materials.

We started by looking at the New Business Application. Alderman Bilotto pointed out an incorrect word on the form and there was a wrong code for the type of business. Some formatting issues were discussed.

Completed applications currently go to Liz Flores in the Building Department. She reviews the applications for completeness. If she is not there, someone in the Building Department can accept them.

Ald. Carr wanted to add the question as to whether or not they are a Police Officer, City employee, or an elected official. Police Officers are not allowed to open a bar, for example.

Discussion on using the same form for a home business. Add a check box for a home business and explain that only page 1 of the application needs to be completed. A question from page 2 should be shifted up to the bottom of page 1 to make it complete.

Discussion about whether there should be an application fee being charged. Nick said most cities do not charge an application fee. It was decided that there should not be an application fee.

Discussion about when a business comes in front of them. Do we want to see every business or just certain types of businesses? Nick asked if a Walgreens comes in, do we want to see them? It was decided we would want to know about it, but maybe wouldn't have many questions. We might want to see plans for the building/façade.

Discussion about whether the CDC could deny a particular business if it is within the Zoning Code and meets Building Codes. Businesses that are outside of the Zoning Code, they need to apply for a Special Use Permit. That would need to go through Zoning, Plan Commission, CDC and City Council for approval. Nick said in his research, this is the only community that requires a business to come before such a Committee. That might be one of the reasons businesses say it's hard to open a business in Blue Island. There are building owners who will rent a space to an unqualified business and won't tell them they even need a business license. This needs to be tightened up.

Discussion about when a business comes before the CDC. Should business license approval be administrative (handled through the Building Department/Inspection Department/Planning) or should it go through CDC? Nick said CDC should be used for disputes or problems with businesses (illegal signage, not operating in business they applied for, grievances, etc.). Everyone wanted to see them at some point. Some thought it should be the last step. The problem with that is business owners won't want to start rehabbing and spending money if they think there is a possibility they won't be approved by the CDC. Ald. Vieyra suggested coming twice. Once at the beginning and before issuing the Business License. That would be hard to do.

It was decided they should come to the CDC toward the beginning of the process, then complete the process and get inspections, etc. If they pass all of the inspections, they go ahead and get their license. If there are any issues or problems, they can come back to us to make the decision if it is OK or not. If a Business License is pulled by the CDC, in order to reinstate, it should go through the CDC to reinstate it. If an inspector goes in and shuts down a business for violations, they should come to the CDC.

Discussion about Peddlers and Solicitors. That needs to be tightened up. We need to look into the Ordinances. Ald. Carr said years ago, a business needed a permit to pass out flyers.

When a potential business owner comes in to apply for a business license, they will pick up the application and the Information Booklet. Take it home and fill it out. They will return it to the Building Department with all of the items requested. Then Floor Plans, Façade Improvements/Exterior Elevations, Signage and Remodeling Plans will all go through the Building and Planning Department for approvals. It was decided that coming to the CDC should be after turning in the Business Application. When they pick up the application, they should be told when the next meeting is.

Ald. Vieyra suggested having someplace online where any Alderman could go in and look at the business application for any business in town. Ald. Hawley suggested also having inspection reports on there as well so people know what needs to be done. It could be set up to be password protected.

Ald. Bilotto suggested having an email sent to the Aldermen of the Ward when a business application is filed for their Ward. A box for Ward should be added to the application.

Discussion about the Business License Inspector and what he will do. The CDC, and City Council, should get a report breaking down the number of active business licenses, expired, about to expire, etc.

Other items needing to be added include an email address on page one, change of location check box, date line on the inspection signoff page. Fees are all set by Ordinance and will be updated. Revocation of a Business License is also set by Ordinance. Any changes to that would need to be done through an amendment to the Ordinance.

The CDC asked Nick to incorporate all of the suggestions into the forms.

Next, a discussion about the Business Directory for Olde Western Avenue occurred. The sign has been down for a year or two. There were funds available for way-finding signage and on deposit at Colyer Sign. There were some questions as to what that money was to be used for. Nick Crite will speak with Jason Berry and Jodi Prout about the status of the money and what it would be used for. Another sign before the Western Ave. bridge would be good as well directing cars over the bridge for Olde Western Business District and down the hill for the Arts District. The CDC agreed that we would like to support the signage for this vibrant business district.

There being no further business, it was moved by Ald. Bilotto and seconded by Ald. Carr to adjourn at 8:47 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Tom Hawley, Chairman