

CITY OF ROCK ISLAND
CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION
City Council Chambers, City Hall, 3rd Floor,
1528 Third Avenue, Rock Island, IL

12/16/2024 - Minutes

1. Call to Order

Mayor Thoms called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. and welcomed everyone.

2. Roll Call

Mayor Thoms asked City Clerk Samantha Gange to call the roll.

Present: Alderpersons Randy Tweet, Jenni Swanson, Dylan Parker, Mark Poulos and Mayor Mike Thoms.

Absent: Alderpersons Randy Hurt and Bill Healy.

Alderman Moses Robinson arrived at 6:10 p.m.

Staff: City Manager Todd Thompson, Attorney Leslie Day, City Clerk Samantha Gange, and other City Staff.

3. Public Comment

No one was signed up for public comment.

4. Presentations

a. Rock Island Downtown Alliance (RIDA) Presentation

RIDA Director Jack Cullen provided history and background information on the partnerships, special service area (SSA) boundaries and SSA guidance. He noted the three primary goals for RIDA including, infrastructure and livability, business and economic growth and advocacy and promotion. He gave a brief synopsis of the activities of the SSA over the past year and the improvements made to the downtown.

Mr. Cullen introduced the owner of La Flama, who recently opened in the downtown. He noted there were 10 new businesses in the downtown over the past year and provided photos of businesses that have opened.

Next, he introduced the RIDA team and ambassadors and discussed their role in improving the downtown. He discussed the details of the holiday market in Arts Alley and the successful tree lighting ceremony that was held.

Mayor Thoms and Economic Development Director Tom Flaherty thanked the RIDA team for their hard work and noted it was a great partnership.

b. Presentation from the Quad Cities Chamber of Commerce

Senior Vice President for Business and Economic Growth Julie Forsythe shared their board's vision and how it led to hiring a new CEO. She introduced Chamber President Peter Tokar and said he would be providing an overview of the future of the Chamber.

Mr. Tokar discussed his background and experience in economic development and the goals and future for the Quad Cities. He explained that the Chamber's focus and success with economic development in the Quad Cities has historically been recruitment of manufacturing and industrial companies. However, this coming year the Chamber will focus on other industries as well that have not been pursued aggressively. He noted the expanded portfolio of priorities for the coming year and that the chamber will have two arms; the chamber arm will now serve as the internal organization that connects regional businesses and the economic development arm, or GROW, will focus on bringing new opportunities to the Quad Cities. He discussed the three pillars of focus and the Chamber's new agreement for services, which is on the agenda tonight for Council consideration. He noted the services the expanded agreement covers and there was a better menu of options to serve the community. He discussed their legislative advocacy efforts at the state and federal levels and the growth of their Government Affairs department.

Aldersperson Parker asked what efforts the Chamber has made towards workforce development, specifically place-based workforce development. He asked if the Chamber had been working with the West End Revitalization project.

Mr. Tokar said there are several organizations addressing workforce development. The Quad Cities Chamber, Visit Quad Cities, United Way and the Community Foundation are collaborating on these efforts. He noted the Chamber and United Way have partnered to do a regional workforce study analysis to determine what jobs are high-demand and pay a livable wage and take those opportunities to our education system to create career paths and create a pipeline for those jobs.

Ms. Forsythe provided an overview of the Chamber's activities over the past year and said there were five successful retention projects to note in the region. She detailed activities in each of the three pillars of focus and discussed the site selection marketing efforts and how they market the region. Ms. Forsythe provided statistics over the last year on business attraction and retention for the region and detailed how they respond to businesses requests for information. She said site readiness is a challenge and they recently hired a consultant to complete a site analysis for the the region to provide detailed information on what our sites look like compared to others and what we need to do to get the sites to a higher level of readiness.

5. Adjourn

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| a. | Motion: | Motion to adjourn. |
| | VV | Voice vote is needed. |

MOTION:

Aldersperson Parker moved to adjourn the study session meeting; Aldersperson Poulos seconded.

VOTE:

Motion PASSED on a 5-0-2 voice vote. Aye: Parker, Poulos, Robinson, Tweet, Swanson. Nay: None. Absent: Healy, Hurt.

The meeting concluded at 6:43 p.m.