

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

4/22/2024 - 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 Moses Robinson, Randy Hurt, Kevin Maynard, Jenni Swanson, Dylan Parker, Mark Poulos, Bill Healy, and Mayor Mike Thoms.

Absent: None.

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

3. Public Comment

Mayor Thoms asked if anyone in the public wished to speak. No residents were signed up to speak.

4. Presentations

- a. Presentation from DARI on the Service Agreement Workplan.

Economic Development Director Tom Flaherty introduced Development Association of Rock Island (DARI) Vice President Liz Tallman. Mr. Flaherty explained that DARI is the City's premier economic development partner, and a new service agreement was approved in early 2024 between the City and DARI. The first service agreement was adopted in March 2020 and was effective through December 2023. Key components of the 2020-2023 agreement included Business Resources, Economic Development, Site Inventory Development, and Workforce Housing.

Under the 2020-2023 agreement, the platform FORWARD was established to provide business information and resources. More than a thousand businesses and 98 financial resources were listed within its database. During the first three years, over 2,500 business engagements took place, DARI managed 284 economic development projects, and 42 new businesses opened. They facilitated support for businesses, resulting in \$27 million of local, regional, and state resources for businesses. Currently, \$205 million in business investment is planned or underway. They assisted in developing the programs and policies for the American

Rescue Plan Act PEP and GRIT and also the Homebuyer Incentive Program. They also implemented several marketing campaigns and promoted sites and buildings available for business expansion and attraction. A residential housing services guide was also created to provide information on housing assistance programs, and DARI members were encouraged to spread awareness of the Live Work Rock Island Program.

Under the new service agreement, DARI will continue to serve as the initial point of contact regarding business assistance programs. The platform CivicServe has been utilized to provide information on financial assistance programs for businesses and collect applications. DARI is hoping to use CivicServe as a searchable business database for public use. Ms. Tallman said they will also continue to identify preferred sites, improve site readiness, and promote availability of those sites by collaborating with real estate brokers, developers, construction companies, site consultants, and economic development partners.

The core of the new work plan focuses on helping businesses expand, looking into attracting new businesses, and assisting entrepreneurs in commercializing their ideas. DARI plans to create a business call program to help them prioritize the needs of existing businesses and hold neighborhood/business cluster meetings. DARI will be researching ways to attract new investment. They expect to partner with other entities in order to help entrepreneurs know what resources are available to them. DARI will continue to facilitate business assistance programs by packaging financial assistance and identifying new programs.

DARI will coordinate with the City and other partners to increase awareness and promote Rock Island’s assets. DARI, the City, Quad City Chamber, Rock Island Downtown Alliance, Visit Quad Cities and other partners will also collaborate on developing a marketing plan and materials. Mr. Flaherty and DARI’s executive board will be working together to formulate a strategic vision for economic development efforts. DARI’s next step is to create an action plan based on priorities.

5. Adjourn

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

MOTION:

Alderperson Poulos moved to adjourn; Alderperson Healy seconded.

VOTE:

Motion PASSED on a 7-0-0 voice vote. Aye: Parker, Poulos, Healy, Robinson, Hurt, Maynard, and Swanson. Nay: None. Absent: None.

The study session concluded at 6:23 p.m.