

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

3/11/2024 - 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 Jenni Swanson, Mark Poulos (via remote connection), Moses Robinson, Kevin Maynard, Randy Hurt and Mayor Mike Thoms.

Absent: Alderpersons Parker and Healy.

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

MOTION:

Aldersperson Hurt made a motion to allow Aldersperson Mark Poulos to attend the meeting remotely; Aldersperson Robinson seconded.

Motion PASSED on 4-0-2 voice vote. Aye: Swanson, Robinson, Maynard, and Hurt. Nay: None. Absent: Aldersperson Healy and Parker.

3. Public Comment

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

4. Presentations

a. Rock Island Downtown Alliance (RIDA) Presentation

Jack Cullen, Executive Director of the Rock Island Downtown Alliance, explained that the Downtown Alliance was founded in 2023 as a joint effort between the public and private sectors to improve downtown Rock Island. The Quad Cities Chamber is the organization's parent entity. The Downtown Alliance is contracted with the City to manage the Downtown Special Service Area (SSA).

Most of the funding for the SSA's improvements and enhanced services is provided by an additional property tax on parcels within those boundaries, making up 55% of the budgeted revenue. Contributions from the City make up 29% of the revenue, and the remaining 16% is from donations, sponsorships, and grants. The

Downtown Alliance Board of Directors assist with managing and applying the funds.

Mr. Cullen provided an update on the organization’s progress in terms of business and economic growth. The Rock Island Downtown Alliance serves as a pipeline for the City’s Property Enhancement Program and the Growing Rock Island Together Program and helps assist developers, entrepreneurs, and businesses seeking downtown space and those who wish to improve or expand their current space. The Downtown Alliance also created the Curb Appeal Rebate Program to incentivize improvements to storefronts and façades. This year, the program is focusing on awning, signage, and wall mural improvements. Mr. Cullen mentioned that they may be able to expand awning improvements to other neighborhoods.

To enhance the area’s livability and public safety, the Downtown Alliance launched the Clean and Safe program 6 months ago. The program’s services, include litter pick up, weed abatement, graffiti removal, and mobile safety patrol in the public realm. They are currently running a public safety pilot program through the end of June this year. In partnership with the Rock Island Police Department, the Downtown Alliance is also providing funding for a dedicated off-duty officer to patrol the area. A one-to-one safety rebate program is available, with a rebate up to \$1,000, for downtown business and property owners who wish to increase their safety by installing cameras and/or motion sensor lighting.

To advocate and promote the area, the Downtown Alliance produced the Alternating Currents event last summer in partnership with Parks and Recreation. The Downtown Alliance also held Deck the Downtowns to boost visibility and sales for small businesses during the holiday shopping season. Mr. Cullen discussed how the Downtown Alliance tracked its ambassadors’ activities over the last 6 months and provided data on their productivity.

Mr. Cullen said the Downtown Alliance wants to encourage family fun, share authentic experiences with the community, foster a welcoming environment downtown, instill a sense of community pride, and spur business growth. Mr. Cullen mentioned that the Rock Island Downtown Alliance has taken ownership of the downtown website and social media and is working with TAG Communications to update the website.

The Downtown Alliance has a new Events and Promotions Committee that will be looking at smaller activations and ways to leverage some of the existing events and activities, such as the Chalk Art Fest, haunted houses, and large-scale festivals. Currently, their budget and work plan will not allow for a large-scale festival or event, although it is a possibility in the future after the initial investment in the downtown public infrastructure is made. Mr. Cullen said the feedback and support of the SSA has been generally positive despite the initial push back made by residents and alderpersons.

5. Adjourn

- a. Motion to adjourn.

Motion: Motion whether or not to adjourn.

VV Voice vote is needed.

MOTION:

Aldersperson Swanson moved to Adjourn; Aldersperson Robinson seconded.

VOTE:

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