

**MINUTES
COMMERCIAL REVITALIZATION COMMITTEE
VILLAGE OF LA GRANGE PARK
June 23, 2011
Village Hall
447 N. Catherine Avenue
La Grange Park, Illinois
7:00 P.M.**

Chairman LaVelle Topps called the first meeting of the Commercial Revitalization Committee (CRC) to order at 7:00 p.m. on Thursday, June 23, 2011, in the Board Room of the Village Hall, 447 N. Catherine Avenue, La Grange Park, Illinois.

Present: Chairman LaVelle Topps, Trustees Susan Storcel & Patricia Rocco

Absent:

Also Present: Jim Discipio, Julia Cedillo

Preliminary Goals and Objectives

Chairman Topps began the meeting talking about ideas for both a Mission Statement as well as a Vision Statement for the Committee. He tasked the Committee Members to think about this and bring their ideas to the next meeting for discussion and finalizing.

Then Chairman Topps talked about business retention and what that means. He came up with a plan to identify the top ten (10) La Grange Park businesses and to personally contact them to question them regarding their future business plans. All were in agreement with this plan of action.

Chairman Topps brought up the next point – that being what can the Village do to lure new businesses into La Grange Park.

Interim Manager Cedillo talked about her ideas regarding business retention and how important it is for the Village to have good relationships with all of our businesses. After the storm, Director Maggos went out personally to several businesses to see how they were faring including Jewel, Plymouth Place and Bethlehem Woods. His proactive approach was greatly appreciated. Manager Cedillo also stopped in at Jewel to provide support and guidance especially regarding ComEd.

Getting back to the top ten businesses, Chairman Topps wanted to know the best way to go about identifying them. Manager Cedillo said she would get together with Director of Finance Garesché to do some brainstorming.

Committee Member Rocco brought up using E-Briefs as a way to highlight one business per week and tying it in with the idea of Shop Local. There followed a discussion about what an equal opportunity this would afford to local businesses. They provide the logo, and the text. President Discipio said that there could even be a separate section to E-Briefs called Economic Development / Commercial Revitalization Committee giving updates on what the Committee is doing. All were enthused and excited about this idea. The fact that E-Briefs is almost up to 1,000 recipients was mentioned.

Interim Manager Cedillo wanted to bring up the light industrial area along the IHB and getting to know who and what those businesses are. She said that she told Chairman Topps to think about the Village like a triangle. There is Village Market, 31st Street and the light industrial commercial center. She said to keep in mind that these are the three main areas to be considering at the same time.

Chairman Topps then moved the discussion on to point number four which was stakeholder input. The Village Board and the local businesses were discussed as stakeholders. Committee member Storcel stated that residents are more of an advisory body, advising the Committee about what they want to see here in La Grange Park. Committee Rocco stated that the Committee take advantage of what has already been done, i.e. the EDC, the 31st Street study and the survey that was sent out to all residents.

Interim Manager Cedillo said that she and Chairman Topps had talked about putting together an informational binder for the Committee members to use. This binder would include items such as Village map, the EDC study, the Hitchcock plan. It would be a working binder where items would be added on a regular basis and then referred back to as needed.

Chairman Topps said the next topic for discussion was available resources. He talked about putting the CMPA financial assistance data into the binder. Ms. Cedillo also talked about the DCEO as a resource. It was suggested that a representative from each entity address a future meeting of the CVC. Chairman Topps also brought up Northern Illinois University and GovQA. Northern recently did an article entitled "NIU Crunches Numbers Businesses Crave."

Ms. Cedillo talked about GovQA. She said it is a company that writes computer programs that adds a layer to your Village website enabling residents to go on-line and ask questions. She talked about a new product they have recently introduced where there is an icon on our Village website that takes the user to another website that provides a service directory to all the businesses in the Village by type. This would necessitate that each business in the Village has a website. She pointed out that the really great thing about this is that even home-based businesses would be able to have a website. The kicker is that the Village has to pay for this service. She said there is a start-up fee for building the program and then there is a monthly fee for maintaining the program. The key is that each website is built by the business that wants to participate.

There was further discussion about the features and benefits of this program. Ms. Cedillo came to the bottom line – the cost of participating in this program - \$1200 to start it up and then \$250 a month for maintenance fees. There followed discussion about innovative ways to cover the \$250 monthly fees headed by Chairman Topps with the idea of raising business licensing fees.

Ms. Cedillo said that our GovQA representative called her and said she would be happy to attend the next meeting of the Committee in order to give an overview and provide a presentation.

Chairman Topps asked the Committee if there were any other resources they were aware of. Committee Member Storcel brought forth some items she was given when she attended an idea exchange with the ICSC. It was all about how to market your community using social media, things like blogs, twitter and facebook. Possibly use GovQA for this. Ms. Cedillo pointed out that GovQA offers local commercial realtors the opportunity to advertise their properties that are for sale and to post pictures. There was discussion about signing up for \$100 per year.

Committee Member Rocco brought up Woodman of the World and what was going on with them. President Discipio stated that Ms. Cedillo has regular conversations with Peter and Lester Barritt from TB&Z Realty who represent Woodman. It was agreed that small steps are being taken to move forward with improvements. Chairman Topps said that he would like to invite them to come to a future meeting to see if there is anything the Village could do to support them in their efforts to fill the vacancies.

Committee Member Storcel said the same should be done with Mrs. Troost since she is the owner of the strip mall on 31st Street. There followed discussion about the strip mall and the different store fronts there.

The discussion shifted back to Village Market and Family Video coming in to the space previously occupied by Blockbuster. Ms. Cedillo said that she had spoken with them about scheduling a ribbon-cutting ceremony – all were in favor.

Committee Chairman Topps said that he wanted to flip-flop business attraction and business retention. He said that business retention needs to be first. That must be the first step. Step two would be business attraction. There was discussion about compiling a packet of information to distribute to realtors or businesses that are looking to come into our community. Chairman Topps said he would like to have this put together for when he calls on the top ten employers in town.

Manager Cedillo talked about a business resource guide that would contain all the requirements, what you need to do to start up a business, FAQs. She said that when the Committee puts together its documents they must be certain to include the forbes.com Sustainable Communities 2010 information as well as Tree City USA designation and adding this information to the Welcome to La Grange Park signage that

is already in place. Public Works could affix an additional sign. The Committee also talked about adding the information to the columns that are on 31st Street. Manager Cedillo said that she was pretty certain that the Village could use that claim (Forbes) for a five-year period.

In summary, the next steps is the homework which is the mission / vision statement language, brainstorming, invite TB&Z to a meeting, get someone from GovQA to come and give a presentation, initial thinking about a letter to go out to all the businesses in order to introduce the new Committee and to be certain they are aware of the meeting dates and encouraged to attend to voice their opinion. One additional item is to identify the top ten employers in the Village.

NEXT MEETING DATE

The Committee agreed to meet again on Wednesday, July 20, 2011, at 7:00 p.m.

With no further business to come before the Committee, Committee Chairman Topps declared the meeting adjourned at 8:07 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted

Andrea L. Bagley
Deputy Village Clerk