

**MINUTES
COMMERCIAL REVITALIZATION COMMITTEE
VILLAGE OF LA GRANGE PARK
July 21, 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, July 21, 2011, in the Board Room of the Village Hall, 447 N. Catherine Avenue, La Grange Park, Illinois.

Present: Chairman LaVelle Topps, Trustee Patricia Rocco

Absent: Trustee Susan Storcel

Also Present: Jim Discipio, Julia Cedillo, Dan Ungerleider of CMAP, & Pam Karaisz of WebQA

Interim Village Manager Cedillo stated that a quorum was present. Chairman Topps said the first item was the approval of the minutes from the June 23, 2011 meeting. Committee Member Rocco said "I move to approve the minutes of the June 23, 2011 Commercial Revitalization Committee Meeting." Chairman Topps noted one typo on Page 2, paragraph 5. The change was noted for the record that CMPA should read CMAP. The motion was seconded by Chairman Topps. There were no other additions or corrections and the motion to approve passed unanimously on a voice vote.

Chairman Topps began the meeting by introducing Pam Karaisz the Collaborative Activities Manager from WebQA. Ms. Karaisz thanked all present for allowing her to give a presentation. She stated that she would be going over a tool that was developed based solely on economic development and local business support. This tool is called Shops QA. She gave an overview of her company and then went into the specifics of Shops QA and how it would tie into the Village website using a link. When the link is clicked on the user would be taken to the WebQA server which has taken on the same look and feel of the Village website so to the consumer it is seamless. She said that every business in the Village would be listed with the whole idea being to show support to current businesses, the retention of them and to help them be successful as well as attracting new businesses to the area. She went through an exercise showing how the tool worked using examples of current WebQA customers.

When asked how the citizenry and retailers get educated about this product she explained that they can conduct business training sessions, inserts in water billing, they handle press releases – whatever method the Village currently uses for communicating with its citizens and business owners. Ms. Karaisz explained their training program.

The next item she talked about was the business license aspect of the tool and the specifics of that. Businesses would be able to renew their annual business license online with this and in turn the Village could generate reports such as indicating who had not paid their renewal fee. She talked at great length about the program and showed examples of actual communities that were using it.

She concluded by talking about the ability to do advertising and about the analytical reports that are available. The cost involved with the advertising is completely on the business – no cost to the Village but the Village would have to make the decision to offer it as an option. There followed a discussion regarding risk and liability.

Committee Member Rocco summarized by stating that the cost was a \$1500 start-up fee and \$225 per month. Interim Manager Cedillo re-iterated that it was at no cost to the businesses (with the exception of advertising) and Ms. Cedillo fielded a question about staff time that would be dedicated to this program. She thought it would be beneficial to contact other municipalities that are currently using this program and asking the question of how much time is being spent on it. Ms. Karaisz said that her company tries to do as much of the work as possible that is why they conduct the training sessions with the businesses – to try to alleviate the extra time placed on staff. She said that every Tuesday and Thursday they hold one-hour webinars for the business owners with a Q&A format. Interim Manager Cedillo asked if it would be possible to hold a webinar for the Committee member who was not able to attend the evening's meeting and she was told absolutely, yes.

Chairman Topps thanked Ms. Karaisz and then introduced Dan Ungerleider, a senior manager for Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP).

Mr. Ungerleider began by giving a brief background about himself and CMAP. He said he worked specifically with the Technical Assistance Program and that that Program was created in part to help implement the Go To 2040 Plan. He gave an overview of the Go To 2040 Plan. He said the Plan was broken up into four categories.

The first category addressed livable communities. Communities where you can walk to places rather than drive and he said that La Grange Park incorporated this idea already. He said the Village's parks were mixed in, retail is mixed within the community and it is easy to get around. The second category he mentioned was human capital which is dealing with issues of employment, education of the workforce, places to go to work and so on. Then, he said, the third category was efficiency and government. He said that was his favorite section because it dealt with helping local government to work together to be more efficient and to get the message across that La Grange Park is not alone – that other communities are dealing with the same issues and it is his job to connect us to these other communities to help us find answers.

He said the last issue was regional mobility. The region needs to be accessible. He said those are the four basic pieces in the Go To 2040 Plan. He said the entire Plan is available on the website. He went on to explain that there are tools for mapping and

that the most significant tool is that CMAP is a clearing house for much of the data collected throughout the region which makes it a great resource (i.e. employment data). He stated that for now he would be the Village's contact person at CMAP. He said he was currently involved with about 20 to 25 communities around Chicago – not in the City of Chicago.

He said that economic development is the thought that we (the Village) is operating the community as a business. He said the Village had already taken significant steps with the rewriting of the Zoning Code and updating the Comprehensive Plan. He said many communities have no Comprehensive Plan and they are working with 25 year old Ordinances. He said the Community has a lot of very positive, beautiful assets so it's simply a matter of determining what direction the Village wants to take. Are we looking to grow? To change? To retain or a bit of each? He said he was pleased to see that the Committee is looking at retention. He talked about the Village's strengths and weaknesses and what the business community has and doesn't have. He said that he was not necessarily referring to La Grange Park because La Grange Park's borders are false. He said the Village's market was much bigger and much more different than that.

He said the trick is to capitalize on the strengths and not compete with things that we can't have or are already being provided too close (you wouldn't open a dry cleaner right next to a dry cleaner). Nor would we open a dry cleaner in a Village that doesn't have suits. Just things to think about for the Economic Development Program. He tied this thought in with the services that Ms. Karaisz was just explaining – a great way to start creating an inventory, to start a communication process with our existing businesses. He said it's very important in the economic development process to know who your businesses are, where they are really owned, where the franchise is really coming from. He went on to talk about the databases that CMAP has available and the different ways to break it down and study it.

He said there might be a case for the Committee to work with the neighboring communities to do an overall analysis of the region, the sub-region, and determine what the market is and figure out what the different niches that each community provides and then embellish upon that – efficiency in government. Then, he said there is market. He said there are walkable markets, drivable markets and those that are reached by some other transit means.

He said he was involved with several economic commissions in the region and some were staff supported but most were volunteer-supported where the business members or representatives were brought in to sit down in order to obtain direct feedback. He said you wind up with a community that's working together to do good, to do the work of the Committee.

He said that Dunn & Bradstreet would probably be willing to come out and talk to the Committee. He also talked about mapping the commercial district through a company CMAP uses. He told the Committee that he felt they were headed in the right direction by looking at retention as a priority and the communication necessary to see that this happens. He then opened it up for questions. There followed discussion but he said

the main idea was to identify or create areas which would be done through streetscape. He said the Banner Program will help and he said the very basic start would be to get businesses to fill flowerpots – it's a start, but it changes the tone.

Mr. Ungerleider said that the Committee needs to find ways to connect. One way would be to have the inventory of vacancies. He talked about the challenge ahead. He said the first thing he tells every community is to get their zoning ordinance and comp plan up-to-date and that La Grange Park has already done that. The information gained from this is that you know the character of the community and the codes are in place. He talked about incentivizing improvements but of course that takes dollars to implement.

Interim Manager Cedillo summarized by stating that the Committee is on the right track. She said that what she was hearing from Mr. Ungerleider is that the Committee is looking to see what kind of resources were available to a community as it considers how its businesses would grow, how its community would change with the times, how a community development program needed to go within a municipality. She talked about the revitalization plan that was done regarding 31st Street. Mr. Ungerleider said you could use that as a good excuse to have the next meeting and ask people to come in and say okay this is the corridor study we did, and here are some of the topics used and some of the things that we were looking at doing at the time, and then you reopen the conversation with specific questions or strategy to reawaken the study.

Mr. Ungerleider said he would have someone from Go To 2040 come out and do a presentation to the group and then branch off from there with economic development discussions. At this point Interim Manager Cedillo asked if he could talk a bit about the Technical Assistance Program. Mr. Ungerleider explained the program

Interim Manager Cedillo thanked Mr. Ungerleider for his time and expressed gratitude for the services that CMAP had provided to the Village thus far. He extended an open invitation to come to visit CMAP at Willis Tower. A question was asked of Mr. Ungerleider regarding traffic studies and he spoke about that issue and said he would send the numbers to the Village the first week in August.

NEXT MEETING DATE

The Committee agreed to meet again on Thursday, August 18, 2011, at 7:00 p.m.

With no further business to come before the Committee, Committee Chairman Topps declared the meeting adjourned at 9:10 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted

Andrea L. Bagley
Deputy Village Clerk