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**PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING**

**MINUTES**

**Date:** March 9, 2022

**Time:** 8:30 am

Members Present Chair: Councilmember Danielle Jurinsky, Vice Chair: Councilmember Dustin Zvonek, Councilmember Angela Lawson

Others Present Mayor Pro Tem Francoise Bergan, Councilmember Steve Sundberg Adrian Botham, Aja Tibbs, Andrea Amonick, Ariana Muca, Becky Hogan, Bob Gaiser, Bob Oliva, Brad Pierce, Brandon Cammarata, Brian Rulla, Bruce Dalton, Cathy DeWolf, Chad Argentar, Chance Horiuchi - On Havana Street, Cindy Colip, Dan Osoba, Daniel Brotzman, Daniel Krzyzanowski, Daniel Money, Darcy Dodd, David Schoonmaker, Debbie Bickmire, Diana Rael, Elena Vasconez, Gayle Jetchick, Heather Lamboy, Jennifer Orozco, Jacob Cox, Jason Batchelor, Jeannine Rustad, Jeffrey Moore, Jessica Prosser, Jonathan Woodward, Karen Hancock, Kelly Bish, Kevin Hougen, Kim Kreimeyer, Laura Perry, Margie Sobey, Marisa Noble, Mark Witkiewicz, Marvina Redding, Melissa Rogers, Melvin Bush, Michelle Gardner, Mindy Parnes, Morgan Cullen, Rachel Allen, Rachel Gruber - Denver Airport, Rachid Rabbaa, Sarah Wile, Scott Berg, Steve Rodriguez, Sunny Banka, Susan Chapel, Tod Kuntzelman, Tom Blevins, Trevor Vaughn, Victor Rachael

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

**2. APPROVAL OF FEBRUARY 9, 2022 DRAFT MINUTES–COUNCIL MEMBER JURINSKY**

**2.a** The minutes were approved.

**3. GENERAL BUSINESS**

**3.a 2021 Development Review Annual Report Update**

*Summary of Issue and Discussion:*

Tod Kuntzelman, Development Process Improvement Manager / Jacob Cox, Manager of Development Assistance / Cindy Colip, Public Works Director / Jeannine Rustad, Director of Planning & Development Services / Rachel Allen, City Attorney

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The presentation attached to the agenda packet was the Annual Report for activities conducted during 2020. The presentation and memo are arranged under three main headings:

- Development Review Fund
- Development Review Workload/Performance Measures/ Staffing
- Development Review Process
  - CM Jurinsky stated the Planning Department and Public Works Engineering Division with a 77% on time rate would give them a C grade. Jason Batchelor responded that this is part of the issue wherein they were 23% unpredictable. A factor that affected this is the workload.
  - CM Zvonek asked for clarification regarding the timeframe. Jason stated that a handbook is published that determines the timeframes for submittals. Simple submittals would have an eight-week approval while complex submittals would have a 12 to 16-week approval. The publishing of this timeframe would allow for consistent and predictable service.
  - CM Lawson asked if predictability was affected by not factoring in the amount of growth that the city is going to have. Jason agreed with this and said that he is happy that development activity remained high. Another issue that they face is on the staffing side. They have hired outside engineering firms to help with reviews in some cases. Prior to 2015, staff would wait for budget time and ask for full-time employee (FTE) before adding them. If there was a need, they would add contract employees and convert them to FTE in the budget. When development activities are moving, they would be competing with the private sector and would be going to the same work pool. This then put the city at a competitive disadvantage of not being able to offer a full-time position with benefits, although unfunded. What staff did to address this was to add 15 authorized and budgeted positions. Once workload increases and an FTE is needed, they will come to the Council to ask for authorization to pull down positions then hire them as FTE and come back in a future supplemental or budget meeting to fund them.
  - CM Zvonek asked if the published timelines are consistent with industry standards. Jason stated that a fee comparison with other surrounding jurisdictions and turnaround timelines can be added to a review. CM Zvonek agreed that would be helpful.
  - CM Zvonek asked for clarification regarding ODA being reported as 99% on time when scheduling takes several weeks. He suggested factoring in the overall time it takes for a person to get through the process. Jason stated that they are currently scheduling four to five weeks for pre-application. The challenge is that the same staff doing reviews on projects are also ones doing reviews on pre-application meetings. He added that four to five weeks is the standard. It would take one to two weeks to prepare for the pre-application meeting and to be able to give meaningful feedback on site-specific requests. Typically, pre-application meetings were scheduled for two to three weeks out but have since been increased to four to five weeks

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because of the workload and issue with the number of reviewers. Jacob Cox added that pre-pandemic, they were able to accomplish meetings in a four to five-week timeframe and remote meetings have allowed them to maintain this timeframe. They are looking at ad hoc ways through taking staff to do targeted meetings within a couple of weeks of request when a project does not need a full pre-application review.

- CM Bergan asked if the revenue fees include water fees, park fees, and capital impact fees. Jason clarified that the revenue fees are for the development review and do not include additional fees such as water connection fees, parkland dedication fees, school fees, or capital impact fees. These fees go to their designated funds.
- CM Bergan asked for clarification regarding fees per review in case of multiple reviews. Jason stated that there is one fee for the three reviews within the process. This includes the initial, second, and third or final submittal. However, within the process, there are a lot of other fees. They are working to consolidate this into one fee upfront.
- CM Sundberg asked if there is a process or a system to identify long overdue or stalled items and prioritize them. Jason responded that there is currently no systematized way to check on this. There are instances wherein the department has returned comments and the applicant was not able to bring it back for review within two to three weeks and did not resubmit. Jason added that it may also vary per review group on how they manage and get visibility on timeframes. Tod Kuntzelman added that each workgroup manages their to-do lists and knows what and when items are due. Once plans are returned after comments and request updates, there is little visibility to staff to know when updates on plans will be returned by the customer.
- Mayor Pro Tem Bergan asked if there are tracking reports for larger developments. Jason stated that they have done internal tracking reports for large projects since they have more pieces moving simultaneously. Jacob Cox added that there are broad trackers for larger projects and that the department also plans to capture smaller projects. He added that weekly meetings with staff identify long-languishing items and staff would reach out to ask if the developers need a meeting or a workshop.
- CM Lawson asked if there could be a development of a communication plan to address follow-up measures. Jason stated that they are working on a new workflow management system that would send out automatic emails regarding timeframe and due dates on resubmittals to the consultants, project owners, and developers. This would increase transparency and visibility to all parties. CM Lawson added that this would also hold both sides accountable. Tod responded that with the development and implementation of Accela, there will be a single tracker and increase the visibility for projects.
- CM Lawson asked when Accela will be functional. Tod stated that they are currently working on the development stack and have gone live with smaller

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workgroups such as Marijuana and Fire. They will include everything from concept to certificate of occupancy (CO). They are currently working on six sprints and starting to see records being completed. He added that the department is looking towards the end of the year.

Outcome:

Information Only

Follow-up Action:

N/A

3.b. **Semi-Annual Retail Sales Tax Generation Update and Retail Business Opening Update**

Summary of Issue and Discussion:

Bob Oliva, Retail/Commercial Supervisor Planning & Development Services / Daniel L. Money, Senior Assistant City Attorney

Bob Oliva presented a review of Aurora retail statistics from the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of 2021. Home improvement sales did well during the earlier part of COVID but started to fall off in the summer as the COVID situation got better. The residential market is currently seeing a trend of individuals improving their homes to get them out on the market because of \$100,000 to \$200,000 premiums over the asking price due to lack of housing supply, which gave the Home Improvement sector a huge boost for the later part of the year. Discount stores with grocery, such as Walmart and Target, have trends that continue to go up since they never closed. Walmart's stock is trading higher multiple than Amazon, Google, or Apple since they pivoted faster online compared to everyone else in the brick and mortar business. The discount stores without grocery such as TJ Maxx, are making a big comeback after being shut down due to COVID; 30% to 40% increases off strong comps compared to 2020. Grocery-only is giving back some of the business that they gained from not being closed due to COVID. There has also been a market shift due to supply chain issues. Department stores did well with back to school but are still struggling. They still currently have store closings, and nobody is opening new department stores. Apparel did well for back-to-school, Thanksgiving, and Christmas. It went down when Omicron hit at the end of December and into January. However, apparel is making a comeback through online.

In previous years, Covid allowed fast food to do well in generating sales tax but has gone down recently. Fast-Casual and QSR struggled coming out of the fall in 2021 and dropped further when Omicron hit. The fine dining business also struggled, but since much of their business is celebratory, they saw a 65% increase in December, but since decreased for January, which is a normal pre-Covid trend. Online-only continues to increase and is seen as the current trend.

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With the recovery from COVID, Bob indicated that he is hopeful for restaurants and retail businesses. However, the war in Ukraine might derail some things. The shift to online is becoming more permanent as seen from the shopping trends of the Gen Z population. Retailers can pivot to online, but the restaurant's option is delivery, which eats into their profits. Retailers and restaurants are still struggling to get employees due to an increase in labor costs. Issues such as supply chain distribution, war, inflation, and an increase in gas prices are also affecting the merchant community. Construction is also constrained by high labor and material costs with lumber prices going up. Despite these, small businesses continue to gain strength.

Restaurants are dealing with the rising costs of labor, food, rents, utilities, and taxes. Reports stated that unemployment insurance has gone up 300%. Due to these increases, restaurants are looking at a difficult recovery. With supply chain issues, they are also thinking of changing their menus, such as Wingstop taking on its Thighstop concept to get away from the skyrocketing costs of chicken wings.

The National Restaurant News stated that there's a dangerous number of restaurants that are at the end of their line. Staffing may require one-time bonuses and salary increases; 46% of restaurants did not receive restaurant revitalization funds and 30% are getting negative reviews since prices have gone up. COVID also accelerated trends towards automation such as robot trays to eliminate runners. Subscription models are also popping up such as a subscription for free delivery or subscription to high margin items such as bottomless fries. Restaurants are looking to entertainment to draw customers, such as performance bartenders, singing waitstaff, and costumes as ways to get people in. Reward cards are also seen as an upward trend. Restaurant operators have a hard time with online delivery as some may just break even or lose money because the cost of delivery, while the delivery is not presented as the same quality as dine-in."

- CM Jurinsky stated that this presentation should have also been presented at the ARPA fund meeting. She added that Council has approved \$2 million to start building kitchens and help open restaurants. CM Jurinsky commented that the city would then be faced with vacant restaurants if they could not be filled. She added that it would be more beneficial to help already existing restaurants. However, she did not get enough votes for this. She added that restaurants are getting bad reviews because of slow service and raised prices. She asked Bob to reach out to her on small businesses experiencing these issues. She added that she has also covered shifts in her establishments the past week. Bob Oliva echoes this and said that small businesses are putting in 120-hour workweeks.
- CM Zvonek asked for clarification regarding the unemployment trust fund going bankrupt. He added that with gas prices going up, people would stop eating out. Bob stated that a light manufacturer shared that their unemployment insurance went up over 300%.
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- CM Jurinsky stated that unemployment claims during the pandemic were automatically approved and employers did not get a chance to rebut claims. Once unemployment claims for \$600 dollars were made available, employees started quitting. Restaurant owners then started to get letters that the unemployment funds were bankrupt.
- Mayor Pro Tem Bergan asked if Bob would be able to give a presentation on what the department can do in terms of bringing business to the city. Bob agreed to this proposal.
- CM Lawson asked if delivery services such as Postmates, DoorDash, and Grubhub are impacting restaurants significantly. Bob Oliva explained that these delivery services are charging a fee and taking a percentage of the sale of restaurants and ultimately reducing their margins. Restaurants were forced into delivery since people were not coming in. Some restaurants could not offer the delivery service when their product does not show well after some time or does not reconstitute well in a microwave.
- CM Lawson added that those delivery services offer subscriptions, and that people are no longer going out and supporting restaurants. Bob commented that they hope that people could go out and support retail and restaurants. Although they get sales tax dollars from online sales, retailers and restaurants might not survive without foot traffic going into stores.

Outcome:

Information Only

Follow-up Action:

Information Only

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**4. MISCELLANEOUS MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION****4. a. Aurora Economic Development Council**

- Jonathan Woodward:

In the last four weeks they've had two site visits. Companies are looking at Aurora's land for industrial projects. There is interest from data centers for land and power, light manufacturing industries, and electric vehicle companies for the production and service site. The AEDC attended a site selector conference in California to build relationships with and promote the city to site selectors who are contracted by large companies throughout the US and Europe. Based on the conference, it was said that speed to market is crucial. There are companies looking for 50 to 100-acre sites, which Aurora has in abundance. There is also a pivot to labor and workforce initiatives, looking at what office workers want as amenities and facilities. Companies want to know how and where to get talent. AEDC is working with education groups to connect them to different industries. This allows industries to tell schools what they need and how they can change curriculum and expose students to different industries.

**APPROVED****4.b. Havana Business Improvement District**

- Chance Horiuchi:

Many businesses in the corridor are hiring. Restaurants are being connected to CCCA and school districts to build relationships for training opportunities and internships. The Havana Business Improvement District (BID) had 23.8 million in sales tax revenue for 2021. This exceeded the sales tax for 2019 and 2020 by 12 to 14%. The city budget office and finance office shared that part of this is due to inflation. The other part is that 60 new businesses joined the Havana BID in 2021, and many parcels were redeveloped. Havana BID contributed 10% to the entire city's revenue and budget.

Business updates:

1. Cast Iron will be opening in June in the Thai Basil Building.
2. BB.Q has been delayed due to development and Tri-County Health Licenses for inspection. They are looking to open by the end of the month.
3. A Korean furniture store and an event center are being developed at the Havana Exchange Shopping Center.
4. StevO's Pizza will be closing and relocating to New Mexico.
5. Bicycle Village will be merging with Epic Mountain Gear.

There are giveaways being held through Havana BID. Havana Exchange is working with Bonfire Events to bring a farmers' market to Havana Street with international vendors in the summer. This was originally Aurora Global Market and is being rebranded as Havana Global Market. This will be held every Saturday from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the previous Bicycle Village area parking lot. Vendors are encouraged to join and sell their goods.

**4.c. Aurora Chamber of Commerce**

- Kevin Hougen:

For unemployment insurance, \$1.5 billion was borrowed from the federal government back in August 2020 due to reserves being exhausted. The governor is predicting \$700 million of ARPA funds will be used to pay back the unemployment insurance, but \$700 million is still needed to fulfill the backup. Governor Polis has \$10 billion discretionary dollars to use for unemployment insurance as well. A 13% increase in payroll expenses is predicted if the unemployment insurance trust fund is not replenished. Kevin was invited by General Jay Raymond to be on his team, so he will be going back to Washington every month regarding keeping the Space Command in Colorado. The base commander and senior leadership are back in Washington as well.

The Aurora Chamber of Commerce is working with the Community College of Aurora (CCA) for a daycare center. They have received a \$700,000 grant for affordable daycare centers and are looking at citywide banks or former facilities on Colfax for this. They are in the process of a \$500,000 workforce development grant for aviation and aerospace. Over 200 people attended the last job fair and there will be four more job fairs coming forward.

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On March 30<sup>th</sup>, Colonel Jackson will be presenting at the State of the Base. April 7<sup>th</sup> will be the Chambers Awards Banquet with a western theme. On May 13<sup>th</sup>, Phil

Washington who is a former Sergeant Major will be speaking at the Annual Armed Forces Luncheon.

- CM Jurinsky requested Kevin to get more information regarding the discretionary funds for the unemployment payouts. She thanked Kevin for the updates.

**4.d. Planning Commission**

- Melvin Bush:

At tonight's Planning Commission meeting the Wendler case, a master plan amendment with adjustments, will be heard. They have 13 cases to be heard on March 23, 2022. Melvin welcomed people to attend the Planning Commission's meetings.

**4.e. Oil and Gas Committee**

- Brad Pierce:

The Oil and Gas Advisory Committee meeting was rescheduled for March 31<sup>st</sup> from 4 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. In April, the report for the first quarter activities will be available. Dr. Mordecai Brownlee, the Community College of Aurora (CCA) President, is scheduled to testify at the U.S. House Small Business Subcommittee on Innovation, Entrepreneurship, and Workforce Development.

**4.f. Business Advisory Board**

- Chance Horiuchi:

The Business Advisory Board is working on the BAB awards. More details will be presented in the next meeting.

**4.g. Retail**

- Bob Oliva:

Refer to 3b.

**4.h. Small Business**

- Elena Vasquez:

The Small Business Development Center (SBDC) is working and supporting childcare centers and restaurants. They have seen a big wave of people wanting to start businesses, and the SBDC has been doing startup classes for these interested individuals. They are helping childcare providers with grant applications and assisting unlicensed childcare providers to get licensed and receive financial support. A six-week home-based childcare program was conducted with 37 providers registered and 30 who attended the entire course.



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The Aurora Chamber of Commerce will present the Aurora SBDC team with the Business of the Year Award at the BAB banquet. Elena expressed her gratitude to Kevin and the Aurora Chamber of Commerce for this award.

**4.i. Visit Aurora**

- Bruce Dalton

Visit Aurora will have the 2022 Marketing Plan ready to be presented at the end of the month. A presentation will also be done on the newsletter focusing on visitor trends.

Kevin Hougen mentioned that the Geospatial Intelligence Conference will be held at the Gaylord Rockies Resort & Convention Center from April 24 to April 27, 2022, regarding the dark industry and challenges faced in Europe. He thanked Visit Aurora for their assistance in bringing this conference to Aurora and sponsoring the Geospatial Intelligence Program.

**4j. Additional Items from Chair Jurinsky**

CM Jurinsky stated that if the presenters don't have any updates or matters that they must bring to the Committee, they do not need to join the meeting. She asked Andrea Amonick to reach out to the organizations before setting the agenda to keep the agenda tight.

Andrea agreed and will indicate on the agenda which organizations have updates.

CM Jurinsky asked for more information regarding the funding for the Cerebral Brewing Company on Colfax. Andrea stated that the money is from the approved \$2 million restaurant program. She added that there will be a program that will be announced with the ARPA funds allocated to small business rescue programs which include money for small businesses, existing businesses, and newer businesses that started during the pandemic. This grant program will assist businesses with operating and other costs.

CM Jurinsky asked for the timeline to fund the Cerebral Brewing Company. Andrea stated the funds will be used as reimbursement for their building improvements which are not approved yet. The final grant would be presented to City Council. CM Jurinsky asked if Andrea could coordinate with Kadee Rodriguez to get the item on the City Council agenda. She stated that there might be a misunderstanding between city staff and Cerebral on this being a reimbursement program because Cerebral has said that they do not have funds to finish their complete buildout. She asked if a follow-up on this can be made. Andrea agreed and stated that they will work with Cerebral on the next steps. She added that Staff met with the company and informed them that they will be moving forward.

CM Jurinsky asked where the money approved for security grants for businesses is. Andrea responded that it will be part of the ARPA presentation coming to City Council towards the end of March discussing the application process, evaluations,

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and the reviewers. Jason Batchelor added that the presentation will be during Study Session on March 31<sup>st</sup> regarding the update on the ARPA funds including the security grant program. Once Council agrees, the program will be ready to implement by the end of the month. CM Jurinsky asked for a timeline on how long the businesses will receive money that they will apply for through the security grant. Jason stated that \$10,000.00 will be available, but this will not go a long way for improvements and construction. Staff is looking at doing outreach with different contractors to get economies of scale. There is also the concern of the police department doing the analysis for the evaluation process since they do not have a lot of resources. He added that the evaluation process is set to be throughout April and money will be available to the businesses in April or May. CM Jurinsky suggested making a plan B regarding the concerns with the police department since the officers doing security evaluations have been put back on patrol. She agreed with talking to contractors to get group rates to lower the costs of construction or improvements. She added that businesses in Colfax are in trouble with crime and she wants to see them get funding as soon as possible. J. Batchelor stated that they are looking at other options with the police department. There are also talks of doing a full analysis which will take more than 20 hours of work and will come up with \$500,000 of improvements that do not align with the available \$10,000. They are in talks with the police department about tailoring the analysis to fit the level of the grant.

CM Jurinsky added that there will be a Town Hall Meeting on March 16, 2022 at the Central Recreation Center at 6:30 headed by CM Sundberg on Metro Districts. Staff clarified that the Town Hall about Metro Districts will be on May 19<sup>th</sup> while the Town Hall on March 16<sup>th</sup> will be about speed and traffic. CM Jurinsky corrected this and encouraged the development community to attend CM Sundberg's meeting regarding Metro Districts.

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**5. CONFIRM NEXT MEETING DATE**

Tentatively scheduled for April 13, 2022, at 8:30 AM MT.

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**6. ADJOURNMENT**

APPROVED: Danielle Jurinsky

Danielle Jurinsky, Committee Chair

**Signature:** *Danielle Jurinsky*  
Danielle Jurinsky (May 9, 2022 18:59 MDT)

**Email:** [djurinsk@auroragov.org](mailto:djurinsk@auroragov.org)






# 03.09.22 PED Minutes APPROVED

Final Audit Report

2022-05-10

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