

**Downtown Evanston Executive Committee Meeting**  
**Wednesday, March 11, 2021, 9am**  
**Zoom Meeting**

**Attendees**

Andrew McDonald, *Chair*  
Mike Smylie, *Vice Chair*  
Renata Gherghiceanu, *Treasurer*  
Marilyn Faklis Ruiz, *Secretary*  
Ranee Berliant  
Eric Krzystofiak

**Guests**

Sat Nagar, City of Evanston  
Jodi Mariano, Teska Associates  
Tim Gustafson, Epstein  
Amy Morton, Found  
Rachel Billow, La Cocinita  
Paul Zalmezak

**Staff**

Annie Coakley  
Laura Brown

**Presentation about Chicago Avenue Multi-Modal Enhancement Project**

- Tim presented the project team, stakeholders, timeline and overall goals and asked for comments/questions.
- Amy Morton
  - Double bike lane is problematic – people drive on it so not very safe
  - Shared an idea for a transitional period (through summer)
    - Change double bike lane to seating area; parking on west side of Chicago Avenue only
    - In ground planters are very large; take up space on Chicago Avenue where already is pressed for space
  - Restaurants need more outside dining options
  - 6 ft clearance is limiting for restaurants → Chicago has a 3-4ft clearance
  - When installed new bike lanes the ramps for bikes, wheelchairs were removed =
- Paul Zalmezak commented that City and DTE will work on crafting a unified message for what restaurants need in downtown Evanston for outdoor dining
- Rachel Billow
  - Asked City if it was okay to remove bushes in front of restaurant for outdoor seating but was denied due to beautification requirements along Chicago Avenue
  - La Cocinita has a second location in New Orleans where there is a parklet program which provides blockades for outdoor seating
  - Opted not to open for indoor dining and does not have outdoor dining (can only have 4 ppl seated due to space limitations) so sales reflect when other restaurants can offer outdoor dining
- Mike Smylie
  - Third party delivery – where will cars queue up for pick-up/delivery?
  - Designated pick-up areas in downtown?
  - Everything is very weather dependent
- Sat Nagar asked about trees
  - Amy responded not to add them from a business perspective – the trees provide shade but take up valuable space and block signage
  - Jodi Mariano commented:
    - It's about selecting the right tree for the right space

- Beautification efforts in the 80s were more focused on attracting people to downtown – now it is vibrant, more businesses, more people so there is a shift in what is needed
  - Tim summarized that it overall a goal is to achieve a shaded shopping and dining district that is pro-business and offers flexible spaces for businesses to utilize and for people to enjoy
- Eric commented on importance of bike lanes; connecting Chicago to Evanston and encouraging people to explore Evanston by bike
- Andrew commented about shifting the view of Chicago Avenue for drivers, too. He is always is encouraged to use side streets through driving direction apps. Craft a message or create campaign with benefits of using Chicago Avenue
- Tim asked about deliveries – access to restaurants on Chicago and potential interference with bike lanes
  - Not in downtown, more south of Grove – Jewel, Binny's, Trader Joes, etc.
- Mike commented that there are some sidewalks in other cities with coils under their sidewalks for snowmelt and warmth for diners
- Tim commented that this is the first of many meetings. Very valuable feedback from this group and will follow up with next steps and meeting dates.

## **Executive Committee Meeting**

### **Approval of Meeting Minutes**

Andrew called for approval of meeting minutes from February 11 meeting. Mike moved to approve; Marilyn seconded; Board approved meeting minutes.

### **Treasurers Report: Renata Gherghiceanu**

- Taxes due on March 2 but with 90-day extension payments trickling in. Annie getting regular updates from City of Evanston staff.
- DTE will submit invoice to City of Evanston in early April.
- DTE has a balance of \$240K for line of credit at Byline; extending 6 months to see how tax payments come in.
- Annie/Laura working on sponsorship for Thursday Night Market
- Annie working on Business Interruption Grant (BIG) – applying because not sure DTE will receive all of the SSA funding.

### **Staff Reports: Annie Coakley**

#### Economic Development

- Covid-19 Task Force
  - Evanston receiving \$46 million from CARES Act
  - Task Force working on Recovery document and program recommendations for which City could direct some of the funds to economic development
- Evanston Gift Card – launching the gift card at the end of March; on-boarding new businesses

#### Marketing & Events

- Annie discussed shifting marketing dollars from consumer outreach to attract new businesses to downtown to help fill vacancies. Will present at upcoming marketing committee meeting but want to make sure Board is okay with this shift.
- Thursday Night Market – monthly market with DTE retailers and Evanston artists/makers and light entertainment

#### Organizational

- Kick off the strategic planning at the annual meeting on May 13
- Annie researching YWCA equity trainings for Executive Committee.

Meeting adjourned at 10:30am