CITY OF FREEPORT
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

430 North Brazosport, Freeport, TX
Tuesday, March 12, 2024 at 6:00 p.m.

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

FEDC BOARD MEMBERS: Quorum Present

Directors:

Josh Mitchell	President
Sandra Loeza	Vice-President
Ken Tyner	Treasurer
Shonda Marshall	

Robert Johnson: Executive Director
Lance Petty: City Manager
Paige Baily: EDC Attorney
Rachael Cohen: EDC Staff

I. Call to Order

Josh Mitchell called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m. A quorum was present.

II. Invocation and Pledge

Ken Tyner led the invocation and Shondra Marshall led the pledge.

III. Citizens Comments

Melanie Oldham discussed her appreciation for the EDC Director and his dedication, requested a delay on the decision for 208 until after the Vision meeting held March 26th. Remarked on improvements for marketing strategies, such as the water bill, which was not done with the previous event. Requested for future bid requests, to get references from all sources, with concern to resident's that make a living off the services requested, such as trades and mowing.

IV. Consent Agenda

1. **Approve Meeting Minutes for February 13, 2024**
2. **Approve Financials**

Shondra Marshall made a motion to approve the consent agenda. Ken Tyner seconded.
MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

V. Discussion and Action Items

1. **Discuss and take possible action on Mi Pueblito Grant Application.**

   Robert spoke for the owners of Mi Pueblito, as they were not present. All permits have been received and are in the file. However, they had started part of the project. This was witnessed by Robert Johnson. The wood fence and dumpster area work were done prematurely, due to safety concerns for those using the area, such as cooks.

   Sandra noted another quote previously submitted a couple of months ago listed the work for roughly $10,000. The wood went up by roughly $4,000 and the drive-thru went up by roughly $6,000, highlighting the importance of getting updated quotes.

   Sandra noted some corrections needed to some aspects of the contract that had cause for concern. Page 20 has an area that looks white out and has a possible date correction. The Notary area shows the name of the notary, but unable to make out who the name is, and missing a notary stamp. Robert commented on the following page with another Notary backup that included the stamp. The first notary listed is Ms. Kaytee Ellis. The new and current notary sign is from Kelli Yates.

   Josh Mitchell commented that in regards to the fence, the repairs already completed to the fence and concrete areas were understandable and agreeable to approving the full amount since the difference is negligible. Ms. Loeza, Mr. Tyner, and Ms. Marshall agreed.

   Josh Mitchell called for the motion to approve with Ken Tyner seconding the motion at 6:19 p.m. **MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

2. **Discuss and take possible action on Tracy's Tavern Grant Application**

   Ms. Tracey Peters presented information on the continued review of the grant application for improvements, focusing on the roof. All information has been submitted for the grant application.

   The roof will consist of a full tear-off. The contractor will only replace what is needed for inspection and to pass windstorm. This location is under contract, but owner is financing. The City of Freeport denied the first bid, along with windstorm.

   Ken Tyner requested information on how long the building has been unoccupied. Ms. Tracey Peterson remarked the property was purchased in June of 2015. It was empty for about a month and a half, then it went into remodel. In June, the establishment will be open nine years.

3. **Discuss UTSA Center for Urban & Regional Planning Research study**

Ana Silbas presented the UTSA research study, discussing the project's components and financial aspects. This is a three-part project. As of January 2024, Ana and Robert Johnson have met with Ian Caine, Associate Professor, Architecture Director, UTSA Center for Urban and Regional Planning Research. A site visit was performed to prepare for the Community Visioning Session on March 26, 2024, from 5:30 – 7:30 p.m.

Ana and Robert will meet further on March 19, 2024, to keep updates. The FEDC has already paid the bill of $30,000 to UTSA that was requested previously.

Josh Mitchell expressed how important this is for the City of Freeport to make the UTSA study a priority.

Shondra Marshall raised concerns featuring the walking tour focused on the downtown area's sidewalks and lighting, inquiring on whether there would be replacement sidewalks for the UTSA, noting that the TIRZ projects were on hold due to unresolved funding responsibilities. In response, Ms. Silbas confirmed the forthcoming report would assess the infrastructure and explore various options, further highlighting the importance of completing the proposed plan prior to proceeding with any investments.

The Board thanked Ms. Silbas for her updates and information on this progress and encouraged residents to attend.

4. **Discuss and take possible action on City request for Riverfest Fireworks.**

Lance Petty, the City Manager for the City of Freeport, submitted the request for a assistance in payment for the Riverfest Fireworks. The request was for $11,750 to the company, Celestial Displays. Any funds unspent on the fireworks would be used to cover entertainment and other entertainment aspects. This event is set to take place during the last weekend in April.

Ken Tyner set the motion to approve the request from the City of Freeport. Sandra Loeza approved this request. **MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

5. **Discuss and take possible action regarding demolition of 208 W. Park Avenue.**

James Turbeville presented information concerning the demolition of 208 W. Park Avenue. Sections of the damages near White's Café are causing concern for risking potential collapse. Immediate bracing and a walkthrough for salvage were suggested. Weather conditions may exacerbate the damage, emphasizing the need for action before the hurricane season. The owner of White's Café was sick, leading to a rescheduling of a crucial review for March 26th or 27th. Issues with a sticking key to open White's Café were also reported.

Concerns were raised about the potential increase in costs by $4,000 due to the deteriorating condition of the building. The integrity of the building is compromised, necessitating additional expenditures for demolition and potentially revealing further damages upon removal of items. The buildings were reported to support each other, making the damage assessment crucial. The solidity of Building 210 was mentioned, but the extent of damage to White's Café remains uncertain until further inspection. The walls, not designed to stand alone, present a significant risk.

Shondra Marshall asked questions of any expressed interest in taking the building and rehabilitating, renovating, or otherwise, other than the EDC.

Gardner Campbell arrived at the podium and stated his opinion on the construction site. He noted there are double walls but the main concern was the EDC's involvement in remodeling systems. This site is gone and needs to be replaced. While there is a minor gap, Gardner Campbell would love to see bids for private individuals with a clawback to occupancy. There were previous talks of a pocket park, but depending on how the meetings and decisions go, this will cause significant delays due to backflack. He suggested the Board set out time limits for bids, and to let others remodel the space, let them save 210 and 208.

Shondra Marshall asked if Engineers had seen the plans, to which Robert responded that one company, IAD Architects, produced a report that contemplated a tear-down and rebuild. They didn't specifically say it needed to be torn-down but it did call for an immediate demo. Ms. Marshall asked Turbeville Construction representatives if they were going back into White's Café to confirm the damages. James Turbeville confirmed the extra $4,000 is for bracing and manpower, assuming there is no damage to the Café, however, some costs are coming at cost instead of being charged.

Robert Johnson noted in the report of inspection notice from the City of Freeport Code Enforcement called for an immediate demo. However, at the last TIRZ, Main Street, and EDC meeting, Margaret McMahan expressed concerns with the plan. By waiting until we have the UTSA report later in March, possible additional problems that have raised the cost. James Turberville and Robert highlighted the critical state of the roof, which holds water and exacerbates damage to the building.

The necessity of demolition versus repair was debated, with various members expressing concerns over safety, historical value, and financial impact.

Sandra Loeza raised a question about the involvement of the Main Street Board and whether engineering assessments have recommended demolition or other actions. Concerns about City Council approval, lawsuits, and Main Street involvement were presented.

The Board Members all mentioned concerns about lawsuits due to negligence, emphasizing the need for a swift and safe resolution. The city council's approval and the community's reaction to potential demolition or preservation efforts were considered significant factors in decision-making. The board agreed on the necessity of immediate action to address the safety hazards and the importance of proper documentation and community consultation was underscored to ensure transparency and support.

A follow-up meeting was suggested to utilize decisions based on the café owner's engineering assessments. Ken Tyner remarked on the longevity of this discussion but opted to allow a delay for more input from missing board members. Stressing a decision of what is best for the FEDC and the City.

A motion was made by Sandra Loeza for the approval of an additional $4,000 for demolition preparations and seconded by Josh Mitchell.

6. Discuss and take possible action on the Mowing Contract

Robert Johnson discussed the two mowing bids and his efforts to reach out to the community for more. He outlined his marketing attempts such as social media, phone calls, and website postings. The Hispanic Chamber of Commerce put out a notice as well.

Ken Tyner opted to table this discussion until more members of the board were present, including the open board position being filled.

Josh Mitchell expressed extending the bid deadline until the next board meeting as well.

Gardner Campbell emphasized the importance to him concerning many of the areas listed in the bid. He expressed his displeasure with the current company with a comparison to the last thirteen years and that his rates would need to be raised to match the requirements to get the properties under code. Some of the lots he mentioned had no lawn services over the last seven months.

The Board all agreed to table this discussion until the vacant seats are filled at the next City Council meeting.

VI. Board and Executive Director Comments

1. Robert Johnson presented a briefing on ongoing projects. No firm commitments but spoke with seven businesses.
2. The Freeport EDC and City of Freeport have completed the move to the new location at 1201 North Avenue H. Only a few boxes remain unpacked

VII. Executive Session- Adjourn into Executive Session

It is now 7:19 p.m. and I hereby recess the regular session of the Freeport Economic Development Corporation meeting and do hereby convene into executive session in compliance with Texas Government Code: Section 551.071 (Consultation with Attorney), 551.072 (Deliberations about Real Property), Section 551.074 (Personnel Matters)

1. **Update on Pending Litigation: Realty World and A&T**
2. **Update on Music v. Freeport EDC**
3. **Tracy's Tavern Grant Application**
4. **210 and 212 W. Park Avenue Buildings**

Reconvene into an Open Session

Board President's statement:
It is now 7:44 p.m. and I hereby close the executive session of the Freeport Economic Development Corporation and do hereby reconvene the regular open session and take possible action on items mentioned in the executive session.

1. **Tracy's Tavern Grant Application**
   Josh Mitchell presented a motion to approve the grant for Tracy's Tavern. Sandra Loeza seconded the motion. **MOTION FAILED UNANIMOUSLY.**

VIII. Adjourn

Josh Mitchell requested a Motion to adjourn the board meeting. Sandra Loeza made the motion and the motion was seconded by Shondra Marshall. **MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Josh Mitchell adjourned the board meeting at 7:45 p.m.