

**CITY OF PALOS HEIGHTS**  
Business/ Economic Advisory Committee  
Meeting Minutes  
September 17, 2018

**Call to Order**

Chairman Grossart called the meeting of the Business/Economic Advisory Committee to order at 12:00 Noon at the Palos Heights Recreation Center. Present were: Bob Grossart, Jean Gnap, Rick Powell, Lori Mazeika, Dr. Chuck Polcaster, Paul Muehlnickel, Barb Bergamo, Alderman Jeff Key, Ken Busse, and Recording Secretary Pat Sheppard. Also present were Professor John Wightkin, Tom Iwema, and Ryan Hesslau from Trinity Christian College, and Anthony Caciopo with the Regional News.

Chairman Grossart welcomed Jean Gnap back from a medical leave.

**Approval of Minutes**

Chairman Grossart moved to approve the minutes of the August 20, 2018 meeting, seconded by Barb Bergamo. On a unanimous voice vote, the motion carried.

**Trinity Presentation: Fusion59**

Chairman Grossart introduced John Wightkin, Chair of the Business Program at Trinity Christian College. Professor Wightkin's presentation was on the startup activities of a new initiative called Fusion59, which is a regional innovation hub/incubator at Trinity. The purpose of an incubator is to offer a working place and an opportunity for young/new entrepreneurs to connect and collaborate to startup a business or venture. He proposed the opportunity for the City of Palos Heights to get involved and possibly partner with Trinity to create an eco-system that could help drive economic growth, help drive startups, and help support small businesses which is the engine of economic development. A successful incubator would put Palos Heights on the map. Currently there were incubators in downtown Chicago, on the north side and as far west as Naperville, but there were none in the south suburban area, which prompted this initiative. Professor Wightkin said that Trinity was one of seven university partners in the incubator called 1871 which is a technology and entrepreneurship center located in downtown Chicago. 1871 has the largest amount of startups in the world under one roof. Trinity is in the midst of that ecosystem and gets exposure which has been a great opportunity for students to pursue their education beyond Trinity's campus. Professor Wightkin said the plan is to eventually move the incubator from the library to another building adjacent to the campus to allow more room for growth. He introduced the two (2) former students, Tom Iwema and Ryan Hesslau, who were the co-directors of Fusion59 and mentors to students. As seniors the year before, they were part of the early stages of the incubator. Tom is the owner and president of IKG Property Maintenance, specializing in commercial painting contracting and environmental abatement. Ryan is the founder and executive director of Forever U, a youth empowerment organization, as well as the founder of Above the Waves, which provides communication and technology counseling for high schools and universities. Professor Wightkin said that concluded the presentation and opened up the floor to questions from the committee. The committee asked the students to expand on their experience thus far and where they hoped to be in the future.

## **2018 Holidays in the Heights**

Chairman Grossart gave the following update for the event:

- There were 8 businesses signed up for the merchant program = \$800
- 51 vendors were signed up for the Kris Kringle Market = \$3,750
- 1 sponsor for the ice sculpture - \$700

He was very pleased with how the plans were going and commended the committee members.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

- Parking Concerns. No update, still pending litigation.
- City Parking Lot. Unresolved were two issues: Does the City want to install sidewalks connecting to 123<sup>rd</sup> Street, and 2.) an EMB sign in this area to advertise city events.
- Occupancy Goals. The report was presented at the August meeting. Still open was how will the city use the report to make improvements. Findings showed that the city has the ability to attract businesses but loses them. He thought the new regional incubator hub at Trinity Christian College may help in this area.
- Open Air Pavilion. Rick Powell said students at TCC will conduct a survey under the supervision of Professor Wightkin. Upon his request, Rick was sent the Statement of Work which outlines the study they will be conducting. He thought the Statement of Work was well done. Rick had met with the team of six students who had begun to gather information. The students will be talking with key stakeholders the first week of October. When the study is completed, the students will present their results to an advisory committee and then to the BEAC. Discussion ensued on the economic benefits of a pavilion and funding sources.
- Trinity's Regional Startup Hub. Chairman Grossart asked the committee what they thought of Professor Wightkin's presentation and how this could committee could help the hub grow. Barb Bergamo thought the presentation was good, but she did not believe they were at the level yet of needing help until they moved into another building/space as mentioned. Chairman Grossart thought maybe it would be a good idea for he and Rick Powell to meet with Professor Wightkin to find out how/when the BEAC could be of help. Rick agreed that the hub was in its very early stages. He thought offering moral support at this point was good.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:55 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Patricia M. Sheppard  
Recording Secretary