

SPECIAL MEETING
COMMITTEE ON ADMINISTRATION/INFORMATION SYSTEMS
August 5, 2025 at 6:00 PM

Chairman Long called the meeting to order.

The Clerk calls the roll.

Present: Aldermen Long, Levasseur, Thomas, E. Sapienza, Fajardo

Messrs.: J. Nazaka

1. Communication from Jodie Nazaka, Economic Development Director, regarding proposed criteria for the Community Revitalization Tax Relief Incentive Program (RSA 79-E) for applications within the Central Business Service District.

Chairman Long stated I know the full Board is going to get a presentation on this later this evening. I reviewed what her recommendations are and don't have any issues. Does anyone have any concerns or questions?

Alderman Levasseur asked have the property owners been notified that there will be changes. Are they going to be notified at any point?

Jodie Nazaka, Economic Development Director, replied we can certainly notify them. There is one application that the Board approved a year or so ago at 959 Elm Street where Campo Restaurant is. It was approved under the condition that a set of property owners were going to buy and renovate it. They backed out of that deal and there is a new group of owners renovating that. It is my understanding that their intent is to reapply. Under the current freeze, they wouldn't be allowed to. I have communicated with their counsel to let them know that there will be a freeze. Property owners that would be concerned or interested in this I have been in communication with but I would be happy to do a broad announcement letting people know. I do have some clarifying information on some of the recommendations I put forward. One was requiring that the rehabilitation cost exceed 200% and the state has it set at 15%. I did a quick calculation of what the average renovation cost has been on some of the projects and would be happy to share that with you. So 252 Willow Street is The Factory on Willow and that was done in 2020. The renovation cost was at 658% of the pre-renovation value. 1217 Elm Street, which is known as the Raxx Lemay building was in 2022 and was at 335% of the pre-renovation value. 73 Hanover Street was in 2021 and 412%. 75 Canal was at 1,158% of pre-renovation. For the most part, projects do exceed the 200%. There are a few that haven't. One was 150 Dow Street, which was a unique case. That was the former location of Dyn and it was to convert the interior for a clean lab space for bio manufacturing jobs. The other one was your recent approval of 944 Elm Street, which was a smaller project and that was at 56%. It is still higher than the state's 15% but the 200% seemed like a good number. It is lower than the average we have seen over the last five years which is at 693% but still significantly higher than what the state is requiring.

Alderman Levasseur asked would you have recommended the two that did not reach the 200% requirement anyway and would the Board still have been allowed to vote for them.

Ms. Nazaka replied they were both great projects. I think the smaller one at 944 Elm Street is less impactful, although still a great project that will have a good impact on the downtown. When you look at it in comparison to some of the more impactful projects which I will share at the presentation, the impact it has to the taxable value and what the city is giving up...what do the aldermen want to see when granting this kind of incentive? Yes, I would still have recommended them. This doesn't mean that these projects have to meet all of these public benefits but it does help to set some more defined criteria when we are reviewing them.

Chairman Long stated so what is helpful is prior to someone submitting a request they know that they have to follow these because a lot of times they don't know. They come in here and we ask them questions. With this, we will have it in writing. Now anyone who is not at 200%, would they still be able to appeal for a 79-E to the full Board?

Ms. Nazaka responded I think if they met all of the other criteria we would still push it forward to the aldermen for review. I would make the aldermen aware and it would be up to you to make that determination.

Chairman Long asked and the Elm Street project we just approved was at 56% and the state wants 15%.

Ms. Nazaka answered the state set a threshold at 15% or \$75,000. The state allows municipalities to set higher and stricter criteria.

Alderman E. Sapienza asked so this would be more restrictive than what we have today correct.

Ms. Nazaka replied correct.

Alderman E. Sapienza asked does this jive with state law and we wouldn't run into any problems with it.

Ms. Nazaka responded yes it does and we won't have any problems. I think I put in the letter that we are using this tool as an incentive to help redevelop our downtown and our RDV district, which is the redevelopment district, and it has been doing a tremendous amount of good work. I am excited to share the presentation with the full Board later tonight so you can see the impact that this has had but we are at a position in this city where a lot of this development is coming to us. This tool is still a great tool for the state, the Live Free or Die state. We don't have a lot of programs where we can offer these types of incentives so 79-E is a great tool for us. I think the city is in a great position that tightening up our criteria will help us get some projects that maybe will have a little more economic impact in the long run. Some of the projects that have really had significant improvement on the downtown like 75 Canal was taking a handful of underutilized lighted mill buildings in the middle of downtown and turning them into a

multi-million mixed use apartment complex. 875 Elm Street across the street here was the same kind of idea. Really encouraging bigger and better projects is a good direction for the city.

Alderman Fajardo stated I just wanted to say that it may be more restrictive than what we were doing before but I could also argue that it is more user friendly and people will know before they decide to apply where they stand relative to what this Board is looking for. I think it saves everybody time and energy. Hopefully, developers will see that as not exclusively developer unfriendly but actually the opposite and trying to make it easier to work with us.

Ms. Nazaka responded that is extremely true. We have this posted on the city website but we do not actively promote the use of this program. Again, you will see later on during the presentation that the aldermen have approved 23 projects since inception which was 2008. Since my time as the Economic Development Director, we do not actively promote the program. People know about it because of the success stories we have had in the city.

Alderman E. Sapienza asked how many again.

Ms. Nazaka answered 23 since 2008.

*On motion of **Alderman E. Sapienza**, duly seconded by **Alderman Fajardo**, it was voted to approve the new criteria for the 79-E applications.*

Ms. Nazaka stated with this there will likely be some amendments to the application that I believe will also have to come forward to the committee so you can expect that soon.

TABLED ITEM

2. Conflict of interest proposal submitted by Alderman Terrio.
(Note: Tabled on June 4, 2024.)

This item remained on the agenda.

*There being no further business, on motion of **Alderman E. Sapienza**, duly seconded by **Alderman Levasseur**, it was voted to adjourn.*

A True Record. Attest.



Clerk of Committee