

MEETING MINUTES
JANUARY 4, 2024
FARMINGTON HILLS
GRAND RIVER CORRIDOR IMPROVEMENT AUTHORITY
JON GRANT COMMUNITY CENTER
29260 GRAND RIVER AVENUE
FARMINGTON HILLS, MI 48336

CALLED TO ORDER BY: MAYOR THERESA RICH AT 8:08 AM

MEMBERS PRESENT: RICH, SMITH, MANN, NEWLIN

MEMBERS ABSENT: ALKHAFAJI

OTHERS PRESENT: Gary Mekjian, City Manager, Cristia Brockway, Economic Development Director, Jerry Price, Corewell Health DEI Advisor, Abizer Rasheed, Member of Dawoodi Bohra

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

Motion by Smith, support by Newlin, to approve the agenda as submitted.
Unanimously carried.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Motion by Newlin, support by Mann to approve the June 1, 2023 meeting minutes as submitted.
Unanimously carried.

APPROVAL OF THE GRAND RIVER SITE IMPROVEMENT GRANT POLICY AND GRANT AGREEMENT

Motion by Newlin, supported by Mann to approve the site improvement grant policy with the amendment of removing item five (5) under “Eligibility” and to replace it with “Applications will be reviewed on a case-by-case evaluation based on business plan”. And to approve the grant agreement as submitted.

Cristia Brockway described the need for the policy and its functions. Mayor Theresa Rich, Bill Smith, and Mary Newlin discussed item five, under “eligibility”, as the previous wording described that a tenant of property within the district must have at least five years remaining on their lease agreement. Because of newer tenant arrangements and shorter lease agreements, it was determined that the board would vet each application based on the applicant’s need for the grant and the time the business plans to remain within the corridor.

Mrs. Brockway described the uses of the grant, that there is still an active grant at Next Mile, and how the funds could be beneficial for tired business frontages that have not been updated since their construction.

BUSINESS:

Cristia Brockway discussed the need for board members and board participation. As the Tax Increment Finance (TIF) continues to pool, there becomes a greater chance of using the funds for public purposes and corridor improvements. Simple investment ideas along the corridor could include, but not limited to, light banners, crosswalk striping, discussions and collaboration with the Michigan Department of

Transportation (MDOT) to make improvements within the median, and hanging baskets. Bill Smith made a comment that hanging baskets may not be feasible now, to which Mrs. Brockway agreed, but could be feasible in the future.

There was discussion of the Master Plan Update and the current Grand River Corridor Plan in regard to what is feasible to allow economic growth and business changes. Some points within the Corridor Plan do not match up with the current, or upcoming Master Plan. If the City were to place investment within the corridor in city-owned areas or public right of way, those advancements might slowly begin to influence interest from surrounding business residents and investors to make their own improvements.

Jas Mann commented that for there to be some changes within the corridor to allow for new use, some improvements must be made by the public body. Additionally, zoning flexibility or zoning clarity has been discussed amongst developers and business owners to assist them in understanding what type of business changes are possible in the future.

Further into conversation, it was heard that Farmington Hills has some of the greatest amount apartment complexes in Oakland County. Mayor Rich asked Mrs. Brockway to follow up on this comment to find its legitimacy, if any.

The members of the board also discussed that the way Grand River exists today has been the way it has existed for years. It is very difficult for retail to survive due to the divided highway, speed of traffic, and M-5 dividing the corridor into almost two separate communities. There was agreement that there should be attention paid to the assets within the existing corridor, continue to capitalize on those, and invest in non-private areas to spark investment.

Member Mary Newlin suggested that at a separate Corridor Improvement meeting there be a presentation describing the existing narrow lots along Grand River, their difficulties/why these parcels might be difficult to work with, what properties might be City owned, where the businesses are in the corridor, what type of property do businesses sit on, and where investments are possible. Mayor Rich suggested the board take that meeting suggestion mobile, for a bus tour, to see the corridor while these questions receive their answers.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS:

None.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Abizer Rasheed requested that there be a discussion on what the mission truly is for the Corridor Improvement Authority and what constitutes as “improvements”. He described that he would like to understand what the goals are for the CIA and their plans for positive impact nearby.

Jerry Price added to the discussion that workforce housing is going to be vital to consider along major corridors within the City.

ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting was adjourned at 9:18 a.m. by Mayor Theresa Rich.

Minutes drafted by: Cristia Brockway