

ATLANTIC CITY EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

Tuesday, January 19, 2021

Zoom Conference Call

1) REMARKS FROM DCA CHIEF OF STAFF AND ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER KIM HOLMES ON BEHALF OF LT. GOVERNOR SHEILA OLIVER

- a) Wished members of the Atlantic City Executive Council a Happy New Year.
- b) Referenced an editorial published in the Press of Atlantic City on New Year's weekend that stated "Never have so many forces been lined up in support of Atlantic City's government, businesses and residents." Editorial listed nine projects or initiatives in Atlantic City to be positive about in 2021. Editorial noted there were even more projects being worked on in the city and concluded that despite the pandemic, "we're optimistic that so much support from so many quarters will make this a very constructive year for Atlantic City."
- c) Chief of Staff Holmes said most of these positive developments are directly attributable to the members of the Atlantic City Executive Council and the organizations they represent.
- d) Nice to start the new year with some positive recognition that Atlantic City is heading in the right direction.
- e) Said one example that the city is moving in the right direction is on the agenda today – the Atlantic City Housing Authority.
- f) HUD awarded the Housing Authority a Choice Neighborhoods Planning Grant for the Stanley Holmes Village neighborhood.
 - i. Grant will help the Housing Authority create an improvement plan for not only Stanley Holmes Village, but the surrounding Westside neighborhood.
 - ii. Grant is important because it starts the process of improving living conditions in a section of the city that is ripe for revitalization.
 - iii. Credited Atlantic City Housing Authority Executive Director Tom Hannon and his team with the vision to apply for the planning grant.
- g) HUD is also contributing to Atlantic City through its EnVision Center initiative, which provides a hub where people can access support in economic empowerment, educational advancement, health, and leadership development.
 - i. EnVision Center opened in the city last year and right before Christmas, HUD held a ribbon cutting for a much larger center, which is located on the former Atlantic Club Casino property on Pacific Avenue.
 - ii. At the EnVision Center, people are able to get workforce training for jobs like contact tracing, PPE distribution, and cybersecurity.
 - iii. The center is also partnering with the Atlantic City Housing Authority, local non-profits, schools, and Atlantic Cape Community College to provide greater access to online learning, GED certifications, and higher education programs.
- h) EnVision Center will have an impact on Atlantic City this year and the years to come as will the New Jersey Economic Recovery Act of 2020 that Governor Murphy signed into law on January 7.

- i. Economic recovery and growth law will help address some of the longstanding equity issues faced by the most distressed communities in our state.
- ii. For example, as part of this law a Food Desert Relief Program is being established to help expand equal access to food in our underserved communities. This is an extremely important issue in Atlantic City.
- iii. The Brownfields Redevelopment Incentive Program created by this law will help clean up contaminated sites, of which Atlantic City has a few, to bring them back to their full potential usage. Revitalizing these sites is not only good for the economy, but it is helping clean up decades of misuse and abuse in our most disadvantaged neighborhoods.
- iv. The Main Street Recovery Finance Program that is included in this law will provide one-time grants, loans, loan guarantees, and technical assistance to small and micro businesses and community development financial institutions.
- i) Informed Executive Council that Jacquelyn Suarez is the new Director of the Division of Local Government Services. Her first day in the position was January 11th.
 - i. Ms. Suarez most recently served as associate counsel in the Office of Counsel to the Governor where one of her areas of focus was DCA.
 - ii. Prior to that she was DCA's point person for all communication with the State Legislature, including the Department's official position on legislation and legislative inquiries.
 - iii. She is extremely knowledgeable with the work and priorities of DCA and the Division of Local Government Services.
- j) Said the Murphy Administration and health care professionals are working very hard to combat the global pandemic.
- k) Broad vaccinations efforts are underway in New Jersey to help protect citizens from this virus.
- l) Urged people to wear a mask, social distance, avoid gatherings whenever possible, and wash hands with soap and water.
- m) Praying for a peaceful presidential inauguration tomorrow in the nation's capital.

2) REMARKS FROM ATLANTIC CITY INITIATIVES PROJECT OFFICE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MIKE EPPS

- a) Said he hopes state and nation can move past the pandemic this year and Executive Council can begin to meet again in person, which is more productive than meeting over Zoom.
- b) The Atlantic City Initiatives Project Office would like to get started with arts program and mural program in the city. Met with DCA Chief of Staff Holmes and Atlantic City Business Administrator Anthony Swan to talk about starting the arts program for youth in the city. Looking forward to working with the Atlantic City chapter of the Boys and Girls Club to move some of these things forward.

3) REMARKS FROM ATLANTIC CITY INITIATIVES PROJECT OFFICE DEPUTY DIRECTOR INDIA STILL

- a) Said she will continue working with the Atlantic City cohort of the South Jersey STEM & Innovation Partnership (SJSIP).
- b) The first issue of the new Atlantic City/SJSIP newsletter was published on December 17 and went out to Executive Council members last week.

- c) Said the STEM community asset map is in the works and the goal is to show some of the community asset map work in March, which is STEM month in New Jersey.
- d) Stated will be knee deep in STEM activities for Atlantic City in 2021.

4) REMARKS FROM ATLANTIC CITY INITIATIVES PROJECT OFFICE COMMUNITY OUTREACH COORDINATOR ELIJAH LANGFORD

- a) Said he is working with Deputy Director India Still on the STEM & Innovation Partnership with a particular focus on developing STEM projects in the Atlantic City school district.
- b) It is the first time STEM projects of this caliber have happened in Atlantic City schools.

5) REMARKS FROM ATLANTIC CITY HOUSING AUTHORITY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TOM HANNON

- a) Said the Atlantic City Housing Authority received a two-year HUD planning grant. The Housing Authority received \$450,000, which is the maximum grant amount.
- b) Will use the planning grant for Stanley Holmes Village and Westside neighborhood, which is eight (8) city blocks on the city's west side.
 - i. The neighborhood is off the beaten path and tends not to be looked at for redevelopment.
 - ii. Neighborhood goes from Arctic Avenue to Tennessee Avenue, follow Route 30 up to but not inclusive of Venice Park and back around to Bacharach Boulevard.
- c) Housing Authority is working with Barbara Wooley-Dillon, the city planning director, and her team, which is working on a transportation project in that neighborhood.
- d) In addition to creating the plan, one-third of the grant (about \$150,000) will be used to create two early-activity community projects.
 - i. One project is a community garden (\$50,000).
 - ii. The other is a rehabilitation of 1600 Arctic Avenue, a building that will be a permanent home for an African American Heritage Museum, as well as space for a multimedia studio for the city's children and young adults that will be overseen by Atlantic Cape Community College (\$100,000). The multimedia studio is part of the City's effort to renew the renowned history of "Ky. and the Curb."
 - iii. The rehab of 1600 Arctic Avenue has been mentioned by Atlantic City Mayor Marty Small several times, including in last year's State of the City address.
- e) Noted new affordable housing development in the inlet – the first in 30 years – as well as a health building as well. Will be the new home for some Stanley Holmes Village families who will be relocated there. Housing Authority hopes to break ground this summer and finish in 2022.
- f) Said many Stanley Holmes Village housing will be demolished and families relocated into better housing. Over 1,000 people presently live in Stanley Holmes Village.
- g) Said the Housing Authority took the lead on applying for the HUD planning grant, but stated the grant may not have been possible without the Atlantic City Executive Council because the Housing Authority received so many letters of support from Executive Council members. Without those letters, the Housing Authority may not have been approved for the grant.
- h) Said the whole project is projected to be an eight-year project.

6) GENERAL DISCUSSION/GOOD OF THE ORDER

- a) Steve Perskie, policy advisor to Mayor Small, remarked on a New York Time article that included a biography of Pete Buttigieg, who is nominated to be U.S. Secretary of Transportation. The biography noted his transportation work while he was mayor of South Bend, Indiana. Mr. Perskie said that reading about what Buttigieg did in South Bend got him thinking about Atlantic City's vision to rebuild the boardwalk and revitalize Atlantic and Pacific avenues. Such revitalization of the city's major transportation arteries can plant the seeds for new businesses, new housing and new commercial enterprises.
- b) Anthony Swan, the Atlantic City business administrator, said he is excited about the Atlantic City Housing Authority's work to redevelop Stanley Holmes Village and the Westside neighborhood.
 - i. He said if you leave your neighborhood and come back after 15 years and nothing has improved, that's a problem. That is what makes the Housing Authority plan good news
 - ii. Talked about the recent S&P and Moody's reports on City of Atlantic City finances. Said the City is one of few municipalities in the state that received an outlook that was upgraded to positive.
 - iii. Said this will hopefully be the year the city begins moving forward projects on city-owned land, not just holding property auctions.
 - iv. Working on the city budget process right now; right now, looking at a flat budget or municipal tax decrease.
 - v. Said approximately 100 firefighters and 350 police officers in the city have signed up to receive the COVID-19 vaccination. Vaccinations are happening right now at the Atlantic City Convention Center, which the State has designated as a mega vaccination site.
 - vi. Asked Tom Hannon, the housing authority executive director, to provide the City with information about the Stanley Holmes Village/Westside neighborhood plan to get the information out to the public.
- c) Bert Lopez, president of the Hispanic Alliance of Atlantic County, thanked the CRDA for supporting the Alliance's Three Kings celebration during the holiday season. Despite the pandemic, approximately 600 children were helped during the celebration. He said events like these are excellent ways of collaborating and keeping traditions alive in the city. He said the Hispanic Alliance is hoping to hold the Atlantic City Latino Festival in the fall of 2021 and would enjoy CRDA support for that.
- d) Matt Doherty, executive director of CRDA, said that once life returns to more normalcy after the pandemic, CRDA wants to support festivals to showcase the city's diversity and bring fun back to the neighborhoods for the people who live in Atlantic City.
- e) Mike Epps, the ACIPO executive director, said ACIPO is looking forward to helping as well.
- f) Carol Ruffo, president of the Chelsea Neighborhood Association, remarked that the Atlantic City Historic Preservation Commission recently met.
 - i. The Arctic and Indiana Avenue firehouse rehabilitation in the Westside neighborhood is proceeding. The firehouse will be completely redone. The rehab fits in with the Westside neighborhood revitalization.

- ii. She said that Atlantic City Fire Chief Scott Evans said at the historic commission meeting that he feels confident Boardwalk Hall will be protected from damage when Trump Plaza is demolished.
- g) Steve Perskie, policy advisor to Mayor Small, said the mayor will hold a press conference on Thursday to talk about the Trump Plaza implosion and will announce the date in February of the implosion.
- h) Brian Jackson, chief operating officer of the Stockton University Atlantic City campus, said that January 30th will be the 17th MLK Day of Service at Stockton in honor of Martin Luther King Jr. He invited the public to participate online for virtual projects. Stockton will have six to nine virtual service projects.
- i) Anthony Swan, the City's business administrator, suggested Mr. Jackson share the MLK Day of Service information with Patrick Quinlan, the City's IT director, to get it posted on the City of Atlantic City website.
- j) CRDA Executive Director Matt Doherty said:
 - i. CRDA is very mindful of protecting Boardwalk Hall from the Trump Plaza implosion. He said CRDA is ensuring that Boardwalk Hall will look the same after the implosion.
 - ii. CRDA and Atlantic City Electric each contributed \$50,000 for an initiative to provide small grants to businesses in the city to help them recover from damages sustained during the civil unrest in late May in Atlantic City. He said that so far only two businesses applied. CRDA is looking to ask Atlantic City Electric if they can expand the initiative to include small grants of \$1,000 to \$2,000 for businesses impacted by COVID-19.
 - iii. CRDA has made a \$1.5 million allocation to food banks for the entire year of 2021 because even as the state, city and Atlantic County comes out of the pandemic, the food needs of the Atlantic City community will be very high.
- k) Barbara Woolley-Dillon, the city planning director, thanked CRDA for help with GIS mapping, which is helping the city tremendously with planning projects, such as park projects.