



**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY**  
City Hall—Shared Vision Room, 3989 Central Ave NE  
Monday, April 07, 2025  
5:00 PM

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**MINUTES**

The meeting was called to order at 5:00 pm by President James

**CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL**

Members present: Connie Buesgens; Laurel Deneen; Rachel James; Justice Spriggs; Amada Márquez-Simula (5:50 pm.) Marlaine Szurek; Lamin Dibba

Members absent: Amada Márquez-Simula

Staff Present: Mitchell Forney, Community Development Director; Aaron Chirpich, City Manager; Sarah LaVoie, Administrative Assistant; Emilie Voight, Community Development Coordinator; Brenna Jansen, Community Development Intern

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

**CONSENT AGENDA**

1. Approve the minutes of the Special EDA Meeting of February 24, 2025.
2. Approve the minutes of the Regular EDA Meeting of March 03, 2025.
3. Approve financial reports and payment of bills for February 2025 – Resolution No. 2025-08.

*Motion by Deneen, seconded by Spriggs, to approve the Consent Agenda as presented. All ayes of present. MOTION PASSED.*

**RESOLUTION NO. 2025-08**

**A RESOLUTION OF THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY OF COLUMBIA HEIGHTS, MINNESOTA, APPROVING THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE MONTH OF FEBRUARY 2025 AND THE PAYMENT OF THE BILLS FOR THE MONTH OF FEBRUARY 2025.**

**WHEREAS**, the Columbia Heights Economic Development Authority (the “EDA”) is required by Minnesota Statutes Section 469.096, Subd. 9, to prepare a detailed financial statement which shows all receipts and disbursements, their nature, the money on hand, the purposes to which the money on hand is to be applied, the EDA's credits and assets and its outstanding liabilities; and

**WHEREAS**, said Statute also requires the EDA to examine the statement and treasurer's vouchers or bills and if correct, to approve them by resolution and enter the resolution in its records; and

**WHEREAS**, the financial statements for the month of February 2025 have been reviewed by the EDA Commission; and

**WHEREAS**, the EDA has examined the financial statements and finds them to be acceptable as to both form and accuracy; and

**WHEREAS**, the EDA Commission has other means to verify the intent of Section 469.096, Subd. 9, including but not limited to Comprehensive Annual Financial Reports, Annual City approved Budgets, Audits and similar documentation; and

**WHEREAS**, financial statements are held by the City's Finance Department in a method outlined by the State of Minnesota's Records Retention Schedule,

**NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** by the Board of Commissioners of the Columbia Heights Economic Development Authority that it has examined the referenced financial statements including the check history, and they are found to be correct, as to form and content; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** the financial statements are acknowledged and received and the check history as presented in writing is approved for payment out of proper funds; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** this resolution is made as part of the permanent records of the Columbia Heights Economic Development Authority

Passed this 7th day of April, 2025

Offered by: Laurel Deneen

Seconded by: Justice Spriggs

Roll Call: All ayes of present. MOTION PASSED.

President

Attest:

Secretary:

#### **BUSINESS ITEMS**

**4. Façade Improvement Grant Report for IBNM Properties, LLC, located at 513 40th Ave NE.**

Jansen reported the report pertains to IBNM Properties LLC's 2025 Façade Improvement Grant application for window replacement at 511 and 513 40th Ave NE. In 2019, building owner ORB LLC received a façade improvement grant that funded the replacement of four windows at 509 40th Ave NE, which is the same building as the current application. Sometime after that project was completed, IBNM Properties LLC assumed ownership of the building. They now seek a façade improvement grant to replace four windows in units 511 and 513 of the same building, which were broken in an act of vandalism.

Jansen stated Diva's Salon and Roman Cafe are located at 511 and 513 40th Ave NE, where the windows will be replaced. The applicant is applying for grant funds to replace these four windows. Photos of the damaged windows are included in the packet. The applicant also expressed interest in the possibility of installing security cameras through the program. Community Development Staff recommends funding the window replacement project in full as the project will improve the safety and appearance of the property.

Jansen explained the applicant provided two bids for the window replacement. RAS Glass LLC estimated the job at \$4,295. City Wide Glass only included three windows in their estimate, but the applicant would have four windows replaced. Including the fourth window in that estimate would bring the cost to \$3,706.52. This qualifies the applicant for a grant amount of \$2,147.50. This is the first Façade Improvement Grant to be brought forth in 2025. If approved, the EDA will have \$47,852.50 remaining in the program's budget.

Questions/Comments from Members:

Deneen noted that the Resolution mentioned the City monitoring the surveillance cameras and asked if the approval of the Resolution would include funding for the cameras or if it would come back as a second motion. Jansen replied that it would come back as a second motion.

James asked if there was a limit in the program of how many times one property or one owner could apply to the program. Jansen replied that she did not believe there was a limit. Previous applicants have received multiple grants. Forney added that there are no limitations in the program guidelines to limit how many times a property or owner could apply to the program.

*Motion by Szurek, seconded by Deneen, to waive the reading of Resolution No. 2025-09, there being ample copies available to the public. All ayes of present. MOTION PASSED.*

*Motion by Szurek, seconded by Deneen, to approve Resolution No. 2025-09, a Resolution of the Columbia Heights Economic Development Authority, approving the form and substance of the Façade Improvement Grant Agreement, and approving authority staff and officials to take all actions necessary to enter the authority into a Façade Improvement Grant Agreement with IBNM Properties, LLC.. All ayes of present. MOTION PASSED.*

**RESOLUTION NO. 2025-09**

**A RESOLUTION OF THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY OF COLUMBIA HEIGHTS, MINNESOTA, APPROVING THE FORM AND SUBSTANCE OF THE FAÇADE IMPROVEMENT GRANT AGREEMENT, AND APPROVING AUTHORITY STAFF AND OFFICIALS TO TAKE ALL ACTIONS NECESSARY TO ENTER THE AUTHORITY INTO A FAÇADE IMPROVEMENT GRANT AGREEMENT WITH IBNM PROPERTIES LLC.**

**WHEREAS**, the City of Columbia Heights (the "City") and the Columbia Heights Economic Development Authority (the "Authority") have collaborated to create a certain Façade Improvement Grant Program (the "Program"); and

**WHEREAS**, pursuant to guidelines established for the Program, the Authority is to award and administer a series of grants to eligible commercial property owners and/or tenants for the purposes of revitalizing existing store fronts, increasing business vitality and economic performance, and decreasing criminal activity along Central Avenue Northeast, in the City's Business districts, pursuant to a Façade Improvement Grant Agreement with various property owners and/or tenants; and

**WHEREAS**, pursuant to the Program, the City is to coordinate a surveillance camera monitoring program by placing surveillance cameras on some of the storefronts that are part of the Program for the purposes of improving public safety in and around the Central Business District; and

**WHEREAS**, the Authority has thoroughly reviewed copies of the proposed form of the Grant Agreement.

**NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that, after appropriate examination and due consideration, the Authority

1. approves the form and substance of the grant agreement, and approves the Authority entering into the agreement with IBNM Properties LLC.
2. that the City Manager, as the Executive Director of the Authority, is hereby authorized, empowered, and directed for and on behalf of the Authority to enter into the grant agreement.
3. that the City Manager, as the Executive Director of the Authority, is hereby authorized and directed to execute and take such action as they deem necessary and appropriate to carry out the purpose of the foregoing resolution.

**ORDER OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY**

Passed this 7th day of April, 2025

Offered by: Marlaine Szurek

Seconded by: Laurel Deneen

Roll Call: All ayes of present. MOTION PASSED.

President

Attest:

Secretary:

**5. 700 40th Ave NE Fire Suppression Grant Application (Barack Realty, LLC).**

Voight reported in 2022, the EDA created the Fire Suppression Grant Program to assist local businesses with the expenses incurred when installing fire suppression systems within commercial buildings. Many of the commercial properties in Columbia Heights do not have fire suppression systems. Certain businesses and certain changes of use require the addition of fire suppression systems to existing buildings. In 2023, the EDA amended the program's guidelines to expand the

maximum grant award, to increase the geographic boundary for eligible properties, and to include industrial properties as eligible businesses. In 2024, the EDA added licensed nonresidential-based childcare facilities to the eligible business types. Since the program's creation, there have been three grant recipients.

Voight stated per the program guidelines, the program reimburses businesses, tenants, or property owners for eligible improvements up to fifty percent (50%) of the total project cost, for a maximum reimbursement of \$30,000. The owner of 700 40th Ave NE has submitted an application for this grant program. The existing structure is being remodeled and converted to an office use. Per Minnesota State Statutes 1306.0020 MUNICIPAL OPTION, Subp. 2, this change of use requires the installation of a fire suppression system in the building.

Voight explained the applicant has provided two quotes from licensed fire protection contractors: Summit Fire Protection, quoted at \$129,385.00, and Infinity Fire Protection, quoted at \$89,990.00. These quotes have been included in the meeting packet. In the 2023 budgeting process, the EDA allocated \$60,000 to the program to award two grants, but these funds were not expended because there were no applicants in 2024. In the 2024 budgeting process, the EDA allocated \$60,000 to the program for 2025.

Voight mentioned Staff recommend approval of the application at the maximum reimbursement allowance of \$30,000. As demonstrated by the quotes provided by the applicant, the price of adding fire suppression systems is cost-prohibitive for small businesses. Installation of the required fire suppression system in the structure will help modernize the building and ensure it can be used in a safe manner by future tenants.

Questions/Comments from Members:

Spriggs asked if the unused money would go back into the fund 408. Voight replied that the money is still technically assigned to the program. Therefore, there could be more applicants who receive it this year because the money is waiting in the account. Forney clarified that the money goes into the 408 fund. The money can be, but does not have to be, spent on the program.

Szurek mentioned that the scope of work was not provided by Infinity Fire and expressed her concern regarding the work quality. Voight replied that the quotes must come from licensed fire protection contractors. The plan was submitted as part of the grant application and permit application process and was prepared by Infinity Fire. She added that the information that was provided in the plan was sufficiently detailed to obtain the required fire permit.

Voight noted that she was unaware of any current code violations on the property. Staff have been in touch with the individuals doing the building conversion about the plans to proceed in a safe and appropriately permitted manner.

Dibba asked if the City historically just went by the basic requirement that the contractor must be licensed in fire suppression, or if there are additional qualifications that are looked into to ensure the quality of work. Forney replied that the EDA has two bids in order to ensure that the

contractors are not overbidding on a project. Typically, the lowest bidder is chosen, but the applicant can pick the higher bid if it believes the quality of work will be greater. He explained that the Fire Department and the building official are involved in the fire suppression grant process. The City ensures that the fire suppression system runs and operates according to City Code. The façade grant program looks at the workmanship more than the fire suppression grant program, since the fire suppression grant program is more concerned with whether the system functions appropriately or not.

Voight explained that the fire suppression installation is required because the building is undergoing a change of use. If the use were to remain the same as the previous use, there would likely be no requirement triggering the installation of a new fire suppression system. She added that she heard and understood the concern about having quality work being completed and emphasized the importance of making buildings safer.

*Motion by Spriggs, seconded by Buesgens, to waive the reading of Resolution No. 2025-10, there being ample copies available to the public. All ayes of present. MOTION PASSED.*

*Motion by Spriggs, seconded by Buesgens, to adopt Resolution No. 2025-10, a Resolution of the Economic Development Authority of Columbia Heights, Minnesota, approving the form and substance of the Fire Suppression Grant Agreement, and approving authority staff and officials to take all actions necessary to enter the authority into the Fire Suppression Grant Agreement with Barack Realty, LLC. All ayes of present. MOTION PASSED.*

#### **RESOLUTION NO. 2025-10**

**A RESOLUTION OF THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY OF COLUMBIA HEIGHTS, MINNESOTA, APPROVING THE FORM AND SUBSTANCE OF THE FIRE SUPPRESSION GRANT AGREEMENT, AND APPROVING AUTHORITY STAFF AND OFFICIALS TO TAKE ALL ACTIONS NECESSARY TO ENTER THE AUTHORITY INTO THE FIRE SUPPRESSION GRANT AGREEMENT WITH BARACK REALTY, LLC.**

**WHEREAS**, the City of Columbia Heights (the “City”) and the Columbia Heights Economic Development Authority (the “Authority”) have collaborated to create a certain Fire Suppression Grant Program (the “Program”); and

**WHEREAS**, pursuant to guidelines established for the Program, the Authority is to award and administer a series of grants to eligible commercial or industrial property owners and/or tenants for the purposes of revitalizing, rehabilitating, and restoring buildings, and increasing business vitality, economic performance, and public safety; and

**WHEREAS**, the Authority has thoroughly reviewed copies of the proposed form of the Grant Agreement.

**NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that, after appropriate examination and due consideration, the Authority:

1. approves the form and substance of the grant agreement and approves the Authority entering

into the agreement with Barack Realty, LLC.

2. that the City Manager, as the Executive Director of the Authority, is hereby authorized, empowered and directed for and on behalf of the Authority to enter into the grant agreement.
3. that the City Manager, as the Executive Director of the Authority, is hereby authorized and directed to execute and take such action as they deem necessary and appropriate to carry out the purpose of the foregoing resolution.

Passed this 7th day of April, 2025

Offered by: Justice Spriggs

Seconded by: Connie Buesgens

Roll Call: All ayes of present. MOTION PASSED.

President

Attest:

Secretary:

#### 6. **2025 Outstanding Business of the Year Award.**

Voight reported in November of 2022, the EDA approved the establishment of the Outstanding Business of the Year Award. This award recognizes local businesses for noteworthy accomplishments, contributions to the community, and significant community service efforts.

Voight noted the award criteria include: being a long-standing business within the City of Columbia Heights and reaching a milestone year; completing a major business expansion, remodel, exterior renovations, landscaping improvements, or a relocation to a new facility within the City; implementing environmentally friendly or sustainability-related initiatives or improvements; making a major contribution or contributions to the community; and/or performing other accomplishments or contributions worthy of recognition. The EDA reserves the right to make no selection if the nominations do not meet the standard of recognition.

Voight stated that this year, the EDA received four nominations for the following local businesses (in alphabetical order): Hairatage, The Central Mix, The Golden Nuts, and Yummy Bites. Nominations were submitted by community members residing in Columbia Heights. The nominations have been included in the meeting packet. If selected as the 2025 Business of the Year, the winning business will be honored by the presentation of a plaque during a City Council meeting, by marketing of the achievement at City events and on City reader board signs, and by being spotlighted in a recognition article posted on the City's website and in its newsletter.

Questions/Comments from Members:

Deneen mentioned she was excited to see Hairatage nominated because they have been around for a long time. She added that the haircuts are affordable, and the prices have not risen since Covid. The community knows Hairatage well, and the owner is well known and active in the community. The 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Hairatage is coming up. She added that The Golden Nuts is a staple in the community and also stood out as a possible option.

Buesgens noted she likes all of the businesses. Hairatage has been a long-standing business. She mentioned she did not know how the contribution to the community compared to the other businesses. She stated her top contender would be Hairatage since it has been there the longest, and the other businesses are newer to the community. She added that her second choice would be The Golden Nuts.

Szurek stated she was impressed by Hairatage and would like to give the award to someone who has been in the community for a while. She added that her second choice would be The Central Mix because she knows the owners, and they have been in the community for a long time. She noted she would like to see more from the other two businesses before they are considered, since they are newer to the City.

Spriggs agreed with the previous comments and added that it is an accomplishment that Hairatage made it through Covid and is still affordable, and deserves recognition.

Dibba agreed with voting for Hairatage. James agreed with the previous comments.

*Motion by Buesgens, seconded by Deneen, to approve Hairatage as the 2025 Columbia Heights Business of the Year. All ayes of present. MOTION PASSED.*

## **7. 2025 EDA Expenditures Discussion**

Forney reported Community Development wanted to bring forth a comprehensive discussion regarding expenditures for 2025. For 2025, the EDA has budgeted \$375,000 for Fund 204 and \$425,000 for Fund 408. Fund 204 is an operating fund that was increased to provide greater flexibility for the EDA's initiatives. This fund will retain a budgeted fund balance of \$310,000, with an additional \$65,000 transferred to Fund 408 for expenditure.

Forney mentioned Fund 408's 2025 budget included the following expenditures:

- \$5,000 for the Home Energy Squad Program (This expenditure was removed in 2025 after Xcel Energy took on the 50% buy down for the Home Energy Squad Program.)
- \$50,000 for the Façade Improvement Grant Program
- \$60,000 for the Fire Suppression Grant Program
- \$200,000 for the Commercial Revitalization Program

Forney stated that with the additional \$65,000 from Fund 204 and the \$5,000 no longer allocated to HES, Fund 408 has \$180,000 available for allocation in 2025. Staff seeks guidance from the EDA on how to allocate these funds. Tonight's discussion does not encompass all revenue sources (e.g., ACHRA levy,

pooled TIF funds, etc.), but it aims to establish a plan for expenditure early in the year. Listed below are initiatives highlighted during EDA goal-setting sessions that may require funding:

- Shift additional funding from Fund 408 to the local housing trust fund in order to increase the amount of affordable housing resources available.
- Set aside funds to be utilized in conjunction with pooled TIF funds in preparation for purchasing and redeveloping a blighted single-family home in partnership with Habitat for Humanity.
- Set money aside to pursue possible future loan or grant programs, for example, a business remodel 2% loan program, a front door rehabilitation loan program, or a single-family home rehabilitation program.

Forney explained that Staff recommends amending existing grant programs and utilizing additional funds to expand them. Increasing funding for the Commercial Revitalization Program from \$200,000 to \$300,000 would allow the City to continue purchasing approximately one property per year, as rising market costs have made \$200,000 insufficient for property acquisition and demolition. Staff also suggests expanding this program to support a broader range of properties. Additionally, Staff recommends increasing the Façade Improvement Grant from \$50,000 to \$80,000 and expanding its eligibility to include interior improvements, permanent landscaping, and larger grant amounts for businesses in the Central Business District. A discussion on including funding for façade improvement camera installation is up for discussion next. This \$30,000 increase could be utilized to add cameras in 2025. Staff also recommend that the Fire Suppression Grant Program be increased from \$60,000 to \$100,000, with an individual grant cap increase to \$50,000, and expanding grant eligibility to all commercial properties within the city to encourage broader participation. Moreover, allocating \$10,000 for a public art initiative could enhance the Central Business District through either a commissioned public art piece or a business-based public art grant. Staff are not currently seeking feedback on the proposed edits to the current grant program guidelines, but thought the possible future changes may add context to the budget conversation.

#### Questions/Comments from Members:

James noted that the Agenda Packet says that Staff are not currently seeking feedback on the proposed edits to the current grant program guidelines because they are seeking feedback on the budget.

Buesgens stated that she liked that Staff are expanding the grant programs and that there would be exterior improvements. She asked for clarification on the proposed rehabilitation loan. Forney replied that the front door rehabilitation loan program would be used to rehabilitate single-family homes. Buesgens mentioned an idea of having funds in the façade improvement program, where businesses could use funds for their thresholds in 2028 after the Central Ave project. She added that next year, the Federal small business loan program would be cut, and it could be a time when the City could provide small business loans.

Deneen asked how much murals usually cost. Buesgens replied that it can range. Deneen wondered if \$10,000 would be enough to cover the cost for a high-quality artist to provide art on Central Avenue. Szurek replied that it is a start, but it would not be enough. James added that in a couple of years, there would be enough funds. Buesgens noted she would like to see a kinetic art

piece.

Voight added that there would need to be ongoing maintenance of the art piece and that this will be discussed in a future conversation on public art.

James stated she liked seeing the funds go up for the commercial revitalization program due to the market value of homes currently.

#### **8. Façade Improvement Grant Cameras Discussion.**

Voight reported the EDA's façade improvement grant program involves collaboration with the Columbia Heights Police Department (CHPD) to install City-owned surveillance cameras on the outside of grantee businesses. The goal of this part of the grant program is to reduce the incident rate of criminal activity while increasing business vitality and economic performance. Typically, cameras are not installed one-by-one on grantee properties but are instead installed in a batch once several grantees have expressed interest in cameras.

Voight mentioned in 2024, the EDA approved ten façade improvement grant applications. Seven of these grantees expressed interest in the installation of surveillance cameras on their properties. So far in 2025, Staff have received one application for a façade improvement grant. The business owner who submitted this application has also indicated that they would be interested in cameras.

Voight stated the EDA budgeted \$50,000 for façade improvement grants in 2025 and has the authority to use all or a portion of these funds for the installation of cameras instead of for direct disbursement to grantees. In the past, the Commission has waited to install cameras until the end of the year in order to assess how much of the annual program budget remained after the direct disbursements to grantees. Another option the EDA could consider would be preemptively setting aside part of the 2025 program budget for camera installation. For reference, at the end of 2024, only \$3,248 remained from the initial \$50,000 program budget.

Voight noted because no cameras were installed in 2024 and because several grantees have expressed interest, Staff recommend that the EDA discuss and come to an agreement tonight on how to budget for camera installation in 2025. Once the EDA has provided direction on this item, Staff will liaise with CHPD to evaluate which grantee properties might be candidates for cameras and will then obtain quotes from camera installers. Per the program guidelines, in order to install cameras, grantees will be required to enter into lease agreements with the EDA.

#### Questions/Comments from Members:

Dibba asked how many cameras had been installed in the five businesses in 2022-2023. Forney replied that all the cameras require a DVR in order for the police to be able to pull the footage. There is talk that a fiber line would be coming through the City, which would mean the camera program may no longer require the expensive DVR. In 2022-2023, three cameras were installed at the Heights Cyclery and one DVR. Five cameras and one DVR were installed at Lowell's Auto. Three cameras and one DVR were installed at Heights VFW. Two cameras and one DVR were installed at Matt's auto. Two cameras and one DRV were installed at Five Dollar Pizza. There were 15 total

cameras installed.

Dibba mentioned that it is a worthy investment and provides security in the community. He asked if there was data on the impact of the cameras that have already been installed. Forney replied that there are no statistics, but he could speak with the Police Department to get data. On the first day the cameras were installed, someone who was tagging businesses with graffiti was caught. The cameras were also used to solve a murder in the City.

Deneen asked what was involved with the lease agreements. Forney replied in order to make the lease agreement official, the City pays the business \$10 to establish the agreement. The business pays for the electricity to run the DRV. The City pays for the installation, the cameras, and anything else associated with it. The lease agreement ultimately states that if their employee damages a camera, they are responsible for the replacement of it, and that the City has access to the DVR at any time. The EDA could consider doing more than \$10 so that the businesses are not paying as much for the electricity.

Szurek asked if the cameras were motion-activated. Forney replied that they are running all the time.

Buesgens asked how much the DRV costs. Voight replied about \$2,000.

Buesgens asked if the façade improvement grant cameras could be on a case-by-case basis. Forney replied that the EDA could do that, or they could wait until the end of the year to see how much money has already been expended. Buesgens mentioned that she would like to see a case-by-case basis because she would not want to send away a business that would want a camera.

Deneen noted that the EDA should wait to hear about the fiber option, since it could significantly cut costs, since a DVR would not be needed. Chirpich noted that the fiber option would not be available for another three years. Deneen noted she would not want to spend \$10,000 on something that would only be good for a year.

Spriggs asked what the cost would be in 2025 since there has been inflation since 2022. He added that \$40,000 may only cover two businesses instead of five. He asked if there could be a cost comparison between 2025 and 2022.

James mentioned she believed the EDA should get more information and then discuss the item more in the future.

Buesgens asked if the camera outside City Hall would be replaced since the quality of the camera was poor. Chirpich replied that there are no immediate plans to replace it.

#### **BUSINESS UPDATES**

Voight updated the EDA that the application for the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency Local Housing Trust Fund Grant dollars was submitted last month and Staff expect to hear back from them in June.

Staff are working on a proposal for the NOAH program and will present the proposal to the EDA at an upcoming meeting.

Forney noted that Columbia Heights Rental approached the City because they are looking to retire from the business. As part of the development of the library parcel, they received an easement agreement for 25 feet around the building. The City has a first right of refusal on the parcel. If the owners decide to sell the entire business, and they get a bona fide offer, the EDA or the City could take the offer and purchase the property. The owners have approached Staff to talk about the purchase. They are asking for \$1.6 million for the parcel. Staff are currently working with the City's Attorney to get a better idea of the options. Forney wondered if the EDA was interested in the purchase of the property. It would open redevelopment opportunities on the corner in conjunction with the library parcel. Chirpich added that the time frame for sale is one to two years. He mentioned that he thought it was a great redevelopment site.

Deneen asked what the hope would be for the site. Chirpich replied that it would not be a good site for a coffee shop and that there are additional challenges in the area. He noted that Staff had discussed ideas such as a restaurant.

Buesgens noted that the price the owners are looking at is not too far "out of the ball park" since it is on Central Avenue. Forney noted that the City paid \$750,000 for the two properties across the street. Buesgens asked if a portion of the money would come from the County for redevelopment. Forney replied that Staff are in discussion about that. The EDA would likely need to use some of its funds.

Forney mentioned that the City has been contacted by the University of St. Thomas about the Community Entrepreneurship Program. The program does cohorts in women- and BIPOC-owned businesses to teach them how to be entrepreneurs and everything they need to know to grow a business. They reached out to the City because they cannot find a place in Anoka County to run the program near a transit line. The City has investigated using Murzyn Hall to host the meetings. However, there is a fee to provide staffing. He asked if the EDA was interested in supporting this and potentially partnering with the County to cover the staffing fees.

James asked what time the cohort met and the number of people in attendance. Forney replied that it would be 30 people and would start in September and go for six weeks on Saturdays. James noted that Murzyn Hall is not a very transit-friendly location. Forney agreed and mentioned that the program leaders investigated a couple of locations and thought Murzyn Hall would be the best. He added that Staff would work with the legal side of things to make sure it would work.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

*Motion by Deneen, seconded by Buesgens, to adjourn the meeting at 6:04 pm. All ayes. MOTION PASSED.*

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sarah LaVoie". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

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Sarah LaVoie, Recording Secretary