



Community Development Authority Board of Directors

Whitewater Municipal Building Community Room,
312 West Whitewater St., Whitewater, WI 53190
*In Person and Virtual

Tuesday, April 08, 2025 - 6:00 PM

MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Board Member Majkrzak at 6:00 p.m.

ROLL CALL

PRESENT

Board Member Jon Kachel
Board Member Neil Hicks
Board Member Greg Majkrzak
Board Member Christ Christon

LATE

Board Member Joseph Kromholz arrived at 6:02 pm.

ABSENT

Board Member Thayer Coburn

Board Member Kelsey Price

Motion to waive the 72-hour notice required by the City of Whitewater Transparency Ordinance made by Board Member Christon, seconded by Board Member Kachel. Passed by voice vote.

Motion to use the questions provided in the board packet for discussion in Open Session, with the option of moving into Closed Session if there are questions appropriate for Closed Session. Motion made by Board Member Majkrzak, Seconded by Board Member Kachel.

Voting Yea: Board Member Kachel, Board Member Kromholz, Board Member Hicks, Board Member Majkrzak, Board Member Christon

DISCUSSION/REPORTS/CONSIDERATIONS

1. Discussion on Economic Development Director Exit Interview- **Economic Development Director.**

Questions were read by Board Member Christon (unless otherwise noted) and *answered* by Taylor Zeinert, outgoing Economic Development Director.

**What aspects of the Economic Development Director role did you find most fulfilling?
What aspects were most challenging?**

Most fulfilling: You get to actually see the change that you make: the homes being built; the food truck fest come to life; and the policies and procedures that you put forth actually being used.

Most challenging: Whitewater has so much potential in so many different areas and there are hurdles to each of those different options that hold Whitewater back.

Did you feel adequately supported by city leadership and your colleagues (including committees/boards) to achieve your objectives? Why or why not?

One thing to point out is that this position does not just work for the CDA, but for five other distinct boards and commissions. Because of that caseload it is hard to be an expert in each area. However, this is not something that the CDA can change. Additionally, the City of Whitewater is extremely supportive when it comes to further education.

Board Member Christon asked for clarification regarding the number of boards and commissions served by this position.

This position currently serves the following in addition to the CDA: Landmarks, Parks, Public Art Commission, Plan and Architectural Review Commission, Tech Park Advisory, and Chamber and Tourism boards, and this is not an inclusive list. This has been pointed out to Human Resources for consideration they seek candidates for the position.

Were there any specific policies or practices, particularly those related to rental landlords or economic development, that you found hindered your work?

Whitewater is a unique community that has 70% rental properties. As the community continues to grow there will always be people who will be upset by change. This is not necessarily intimidating personally, but makes it hard to attract developers when they hear themes repeated such: as lack of transparency, we don't want this type of development, etc. It is hard to convince them to build here. While it is important for community members to bring questions and concerns to the appropriate governing body, that is only effective if they voice their concerns in the appropriate venue.

How did the political influence of rental landlords impact your ability to implement community development initiatives?

See previous answer.

Considering the city's unique demographic (70% university students, 30% locals), were there challenges in balancing the needs of these groups? If so, what could be improved?

Although it's not in this job title, there is a need for true community development here that is not being met. This includes making sure there are things to do on the weekend, for students, and reasons for people to come here because there is this gap is here. Food Truck Fest and Wine Walk are great events that don't fall under this job description but need to be done.

Board Member Kachel asked for clarification on her official title.

The position title is Economic Development Director. When I took on the role of EDD, the City added Neighborhood Services under this title. So in addition to economic development, the position also oversees planning and zoning, code enforcement, building inspection and all the staff that goes with that.

Board Member Christon asked how many of these duties were actually assigned to the position and how much of it was based on her outgoing personality and interests that led her to take them on.

The community engagement aspects are not in the job description but something I chose to take on. My approach to economic development is grounded in best practices which include more than building house. It requires creating a community that all people want to be a part of.

How did the leadership style of the new City Manager influence your work, either positively or negatively?

The City Manager believes strongly in continuing education and has supported any classes I wanted to take.

Were there communication or management practices that you believe could be improved to better support the Economic Development Direction position?

The CDA has expectations and the City Manager also has a set of expectations and sometimes they do not align. Both groups have the best intentions. The person in this role must navigate these spaces. This pertains to economic development, community events, etc. It is a skill someone in this role has to have.

What factors contributed most to your decision to leave, and what would have encouraged you to stay longer?

I receive unsolicited job offers from time to time and was not actively seeking out positions. I was asked to apply for the Sheboygan position. Sheboygan has a lot going on including some great development and the community is pro-growth. They did offer a significant pay increase. It was just too good an opportunity to pass up.

What advice would you offer to your successor or to the city leadership to ensure greater retention and success in this position

The CDA as a group has made a lot of progress both as a board and with the things they have done community-wide. The City has the most momentum that it has had in a long time; build on that.

What advice do you have for city leadership in general, not specific to this position. *This board has done a really good job of asking questions and taking care of some lingering issues with outstanding loans and such. This allows space to take on new projects. It would be great to see them take on what to do with the Innovation Center. In general this is a time to make decisions that will help define the community's future.*

Board Member Kromholz asked how many hours per week were devoted to this position.

Generally 40-60 hours per week. The first week of the month has 4 night meetings. Other weeks may be a straight 40 hour week. Flex time is used whenever possible.

Board Member Kromholz asked specifically for ideas on what to do with the Innovation Center.

The building is essentially a glorified office building now, not an innovation center. While it may be good to have a couple anchor tenants with 10-year leases, this limits the amount of actual innovation going on. Consider doing graduation clauses if it is to move beyond just an office space.

There is momentum in this area with food and beverage production. Consider flipping some of the spaces so they can be utilized to support this movement toward food and beverage production.

Additionally, the CDA has a lot of funds, some that were used recklessly, based on the amount of time needed to clean up the records. People are going to start to come forward that want to invest in the community, Do the correct vetting, ask the correct questions, and take calculated risks. This group can make those investment decisions. Lastly, a significant amount of work has been done to promote Whitewater (bus tours, etc) to let developers know we exist. We are one of municipalities that owns the most land in Walworth County and maybe in Jefferson County as well. Because you own this land, you can help facilitate development that makes the best use of this asset.

Board Member Hicks asked about one thing that was not accomplished yet but wanted to accomplish.

Seeing the lot behind the high school get developed. Being able to build 150 single family homes would change the trajectory of the entire community. Keep up the momentum by continuing to do projects like this, that are renter or owner-occupied. "Retail follows roofs" and we have started to see this play out here.

Board Member Kachel asked, how was the job was described to you in writing vs what you have been doing the past year or so as EDD.

The majority of the duties are on the job description, the Public Art Committee was added. It was clear, I knew what I was getting into.

Board Member Kachel asked if any city employee or supervisor encouraged Taylor to look for another job. No.

Board Member Hicks asked if the salary was sufficient for a position that includes Economic Development and Neighborhood Services. Yes

Board Member Kachel asked if there is a similar position in surrounding counties, that is as encompassing as this position.

Watertown has a role similar to this one. In other communities (i.e. Fort Atkinson, Elkhorn, Delavan) the City Manager or City Administrator acts as the Economic Development Director as well.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

The CDA may enter into **CLOSED SESSION to RECONVENE in OPEN SESSION** for purposes of conducting an exit interview with the CDA Executive Director pursuant to Wis. Stat. Sec. 19.85(1)(c): Considering employment, promotion, compensation or performance evaluation data of any public employee over which the governmental body has jurisdiction or exercises responsibility.

Items to be discussed:

Exit Interview - Taylor Zeinert, CDA Executive Director

Board Member Christon made a motion to move into Closed Session at 6:39 p.m. Seconded by Board Member Kachel. Voting Yea: Board Member Kachel, Board Member Kromholz, Board Member Hicks, Board Member Christon

Voting Nay: Board Member Majkrzak

RECONVENE INTO OPEN SESSION

7:14 Reconvened into Open Session.

Motion to approve the agenda was overlooked earlier in the meeting. Motion to approve the agenda made by Board Member Majkrzak, Seconded by Board Member Hicks.

Voting Yea: Board Member Kachel, Board Member Kromholz, Board Member Hicks, Board Member Majkrzak, Board Member Christon

ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn at 7:15 p.m. made by Board Member Hicks, Seconded by Board Member Kachel.

Voting Yea: Board Member Kachel, Board Member Kromholz, Board Member Hicks, Board Member Majkrzak, Board Member Christon

A quorum of the Common Council may be present. This notice is given to inform the public that no formal action will be taken at this meeting.

Anyone requiring special arrangements is asked to call the Office of the City Manager / City Clerk (262-473-0102) at least 72 hours prior to the meeting.