

Rolfs, Daniel

From: Schmidt, Chris
Sent: Tuesday, February 04, 2014 11:32 AM
To: Olver, Aaron; Gromacki, Joseph; Rolfs, Daniel
Subject: FW: Revise proposed TIF changes in line with community values

FYI

From: Susan Pastor <skpastor@sbcglobal.net>
Sent: Tuesday, February 4, 2014 10:13 AM
To: Weier, Anita; Rummel, Marsha; Ahrens, David; Phair, Matthew; Skidmore, Paul; Resnick, Scott; Bidar-Sielaff, Shiva
Cc: All Alders; Mayor
Subject: Revise proposed TIF changes in line with community values

Much appreciation to the Common Council Organizational Committee for taking up the issue of proposed changes to the city's TIF policy. I look forward to elaborating on these points in person this afternoon, but also do want to provide a written record.

I strongly believe it is up to you to restore public oversight to a process through which that oversight has been limited, but to which lobbyists have had ample, and disproportionate access. Beginning in June, I attended every evening of the TIF Policy Review Ad Hoc Committee, but when the committee began meeting during the weekday, I -- and other citizens, were unable to be there without using vacation or comp time at work (which I did to attend the final meeting).

Please consider the following:

1. If you cannot create incentives to use union labor in development, create a disincentive for bad labor practices, and work with labor to establish what those would be. I don't think, for example, that we want to be subsidizing an employer or corporation that is in the process of being cited by the NLRB. Make bad labor practices a feature of "ineligible development."
2. Make documented polluters ineligible for TIF. Require strict erosion control policies. Use environmental justice principles.
3. Eliminate the "jobs project gap waiver", which encourages corporations to play the "job-creation shell game." You need only see the introduction "Why Interstate Job Piracy is Wasteful and Unfair" of the January 2013 report linked below.

<http://www.goodjobsfirst.org/sites/default/files/docs/pdf/shellgame.pdf>

Throughout the Committee process, it was evident that beliefs of a certain segment of the business community, represented for example by lobbyists from the Chamber, were driving the proposed changes. Staff were able to demonstrate how the myths associated with the changes -- for example, that we are "losing out" to the suburbs are patently untrue -- but this lobby succeeding in getting changes written in, first and foremost that the purpose of TIF is to grow the property tax base. This cannot be done equitably, and it is unfortunate that the city's equity impact review is not in place, without attention to the potential negative impact such as gentrification.

The proposed changes contain a good evolution in policy with regard to affordable housing, and I am extremely grateful for the staff expertise and creativity that led to this language.

At the same time, I urge you to hold a broad community conversation about this policy rather than approving it with minor changes, and especially to study it for its impact on equity and as an expression of our collective values. On at least two occasions, a school board member asked the committee to talk with the school district about the financial implications of proposed changes. To my knowledge, that conversation has not happened, and it needs to happen.

4. Eliminate "speculative TIDS", which engender sprawl and are the most costly form of TIF-enhanced development to the overlying tax districts, particularly schools.
5. Eliminate the language about "catalytic effect", which amounts to "anything goes" and is not measurable. Restore a point system for evaluating eligible development, which much more significantly establishes accountability.
6. Restore language from the 2009 policy on addressing blight, jobs in high need areas and affordable housing as foundational to the purpose of TIF.
7. Explore what has been done in other communities with community benefits, rather than eliminating this language.

Thanks very much for your consideration. I implore you not to rubber-stamp this policy without close examination and without taking due time. Economic decisions are not "just" economic. They are profoundly reflective of our values as a community, and each thing in which we invest comes at an opportunity cost.

Sincerely,
Sue Pastor
2502 Green Ridge Drive