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**CITY OF MT. VERNON, ILLINOIS
CITY COUNCIL WORKSHOP MEETING
Tuesday, September 24, 2024**

The Mt. Vernon City Council called a Workshop Meeting for Tuesday, September 24, 2024 at 4:00 p.m. at City Hall, 1100 Main Street, Council Chamber Room, 2nd Floor, Mt. Vernon, Illinois.

Mayor John Lewis opened the meeting.

ROLL CALL

Roll call showed present: Council Member Joe Gliosci, Council Member Donte Moore, Council Member Mike Young, and Mayor John Lewis. Absent: Council Member Ray Botch.

Also present: City Manager Mary Ellen Bechtel, Assistant City Manager Nathan McKenna, Administrative Assistant Kendra Donoho, Deputy City Clerk Becky Barbour, Vice President of Downtown Mt. Vernon Development Corporation (DMDC) Rex Cusumano, Executive Director of Jefferson County Development Corporation Tony Iriti, Assistant Executive Director of Jefferson County Development Corporation Brian Harland, DMDC President Monte Jo Clark, Public Works Director Matt Fauss, City Engineer Brad Ruble, Administrative Assistant Tracie Meyer, and City Nuisance Code Enforcement Inspector D'Anna Dailey.

VISITORS/CITIZEN'S REQUESTS/ADDRESSES FROM THE AUDIENCE

Mayor John Lewis stated that with consent of council, he suggests that the Council bypass the visitors/citizen's requests and go straight to discussion and anyone in the audience can speak or ask questions at any time during the discussion. Council members were in agreement. Mayor Lewis then turned the meeting over to City Manager Mary Ellen Bechtel.

DISCUSSION

City Manager Mary Ellen Bechtel spoke to the Council and community members regarding the City's investment in the downtown area and ways to improve that area. There have been previous discussions regarding drinking alcohol outside in the downtown area. Mayor Lewis spoke to Rex Cusumano, DMDC, to look into this idea further. DMDC did an extensive survey of the downtown merchants and have responded with a proposal to the Council. The proposal is for a Designated Outdoor Refreshment Area (DORA). City Manager Bechtel introduced Rex Cusumano to present that information and answer questions. Mr. Cusumano spoke to the Council and others present about the DORA program. He stated that the committee members reached out to other communities regarding the plan they implemented

and how it works in their community. The main idea is to create a destination to bring more foot traffic downtown and help businesses. There are 7 businesses in the proposed DORA district. These would include La Fuente, American Legion, Dee Bees, Joe's Pizza, Granada, Elks and Humphreys. These restaurants/bars would have disposable drink cups that could be purchased at their business. The cups would be for one drink only and a person could take the drink outside and go into the shops, over to the park area, etc. Downtown businesses would be able to control whether or not a drink could be brought into their establishment by placing a sign in their door – either beverage allowed or not allowed. There would be set times, the suggestion is 11:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. There would be a zone where DORA cups are allowed, and these areas would have signs showing those areas. Council Member Donte Moore stated he had talked to several people in the community, and they are excited about this. Mr. Cusumano stated he had not had any negative responses.

Mayor Lewis stated he appreciated DMDC taking charge of this and talking to the businesses and researching other communities. Council Member Young added he has been a big proponent of this idea for many years. He has been in several communities that have this option available in their downtown areas and it brings many people to the area. Cusumano added that the main objective in this is to bring people downtown. Council Member Gliosci stated he thinks this is a good idea and if it works well, businesses might stay open later and it also might bring in more businesses to the downtown area.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

No Executive Session was held.

ADJOURNMENT

Council Member Mike Young motioned to adjourn. Seconded by Council Member Joe Gliosci. Yeas: Gliosci, Moore, Young, and Lewis. Absent: Botch.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:38 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Becky Barbour
Deputy City Clerk