

SYCAMORE CITY COUNCIL
AGENDA
May 7, 2007

CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE MEETINGS

No Meetings Are Scheduled

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Regular City Council Meeting
7:00 P.M.

- 1. CALL TO ORDER**
- 2. SWEARING-IN OF ELECTED OFFICIALS**
- 3. INVOCATION**
- 4. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**
- 5. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**
- 6. AUDIENCE TO VISITORS**
- 7. CONSENT AGENDA**
 - A. Approval of the Minutes for the Regular City Council Meeting of April 16, 2007.
 - B. Payment of the Bills for May 7, 2007.
- 8. PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS, COMMUNICATIONS, AND BILLS.**
 - A. Swearing-in of new Fire lieutenants Jack Spartz and Tom Pritchett.
- 9. REPORTS OF OFFICERS**
- 10. REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES**
- 11. PUBLIC HEARINGS--None**

12. **ORDINANCES**

A. Ordinance No. 2007.01—An Ordinance Approving a Grant of \$10,000 to the DeKalb County Economic Development Corporation for Services to Citizens of the City of Sycamore, Illinois. First and Second Reading.

For over a decade, the City Council’s budget has included three grant allocations. Ordinances 2007.01, 2007.02 and 2007.03 cover these grants and may be taken in omnibus fashion. For a longer period--about eighteen years--the City Council budget (701-8399) has extended a grant to the DeKalb County Economic Development Corporation (DCEDC) to help defray organizational expenses. The grant has been accompanied by an organizational agreement (attached) setting out the reciprocal obligations of the City and DCEDC.

The proposed grant underwrites the DCEDC staff’s responses to cold calls and other inquiries concerning industrial space in Sycamore. An additional value of Sycamore’s support for the organization is access to the County’s best network of economic development officials, and a respected clearinghouse for development information. The City seats on the organization’s executive committee and Board assure us of a more timely and thorough access to such information. The attached agreement requires prompt follow-up on industrial leads, the maintenance of a database on Sycamore’s industrial sites and buildings, and regular reporting to the staff and Council.

In FY05, the allocation was increased for the first time since the late 1980s from \$7,000 to \$10,000 reflecting an average annual inflationary increase of 2.67%. DCEDC received increases from the County of DeKalb and the City of DeKalb in FY07, and received \$2,000 in additional Sycamore support as part of the Council’s “Community Development Grant” program in FY07. The attached ordinance extends a grant of \$10,000. DCEDC will be applying for additional assistance as part of the Council’s FY08 Community Development Grant program.

City Council approval is recommended.

B. Ordinance No. 2007.02—An Ordinance Approving a Grant of \$1,000 to the DeKalb County Community Foundation for Services to the Citizens of the City of Sycamore, Illinois. First and Second Reading.

The City Council budget (701-8399) has also historically funded a \$1,000 allocation to the DeKalb County Community Foundation to help defray organizational expenses over the past twelve years. This grant and others from local taxing bodies and private contributors helps offset the operational liabilities of the foundation and in turn optimizes the funds available for helping county agencies and new initiatives in the general welfare. Among the Sycamore agencies or groups that have been served in recent years are Opportunity House, CASA, Sycamore Child Care, VAC, Discover Sycamore, the Sycamore Chamber, the Sycamore Historical Society, the Midwest Museum, and the Sycamore Firefighters Preservation Company.

City Council approval is recommended.

C. Ordinance No. 2007.03—An Ordinance Approving a Grant of \$17,000 to the Voluntary Action Center for Services to Citizens of the City of Sycamore, Illinois. First and Second Reading.

Ordinance 2007.03 pertains to the annual allocation for services rendered to the City of Sycamore by the Voluntary Action Center (VAC). Specifically, the grant helps defray organizational expenses associated with TransVAC, which provides about 17,000 trips per year for Sycamore residents; MedVac, which provides about 300-400 trips per year to regional hospitals and other care facilities; and the Meals on Wheels program which provides about 18,000 meals for senior citizens and disabled persons in Sycamore. Only about 12% of the TransVac services and 3% of the Meals on Wheels services are offset by the proposed grant. Other VAC funding sources include state and federal grants, foundation grants, private donations, and user fees.

In FY07, the City awarded \$17,000 plus a \$3,500 Community Development Grant to VAC. The attached ordinance would extend a grant of \$17,000. VAC will be applying for additional assistance as part of the Council's FY08 Community Development Grant program.

City Council approval is recommended.

13. RESOLUTIONS--None

14. CONSIDERATIONS

A. Consideration of an Administration Recommendation to Extend the Deadline for the Completion of the FY07 Downtown Façade Grant Projects.

As the Council has probably noticed, the 2006 façade grant projects at the Sycamore Winery and at Paulsen's/Cooper Jewelry which were awarded on August 21, 2006 have not been completed. In both cases, delays beyond the control of the owners prevented the work from occurring in the fall, and weather has affected scheduling so far this spring. The monies which were to be allocated before May 1 will automatically "roll over" into the Downtown Revolving Fund (Fund 13) reserve.

The City Manager recommends a final deadline of August 1 for the completion of both projects, with the additional condition that the grant awards shall not increase on account of inflationary material or labor charges. The actual grant awards from Fund 13 in 2006 were as follows:

- \$4,500: 322 West State Street (Sycamore Winery);
- \$15,500: 239, 245, 249 & 303 West State Street (Paulsen's/Cooper Jewelry).
This grant was augmented by additional monies from the Sales Tax Distributive Fund (Fund 22: \$22,745).

Swedberg & Associates has the contract to perform the window replacement on the Paulsen/Cooper Jewelry buildings. Steve Swedberg will present his firm's plan for work on the building in the coming months and will be joined by Robert Fink and Roger Janakus of the Door & Window Store.

B. Consideration of Two Tourism Grant Applications for FY2008.

On April 16 the City Council deferred a decision on the proposed tourism grants for the Midwest Museum of Natural History and the Sycamore Historical Society and Museum. The grant applications were initially reviewed by the City Council on February 19. On April 2, special open houses were arranged prior to the regular Council meeting to allow an opportunity for Council members to view the collections of the two museums, get acquainted with the board members of each museum, and listen to a brief presentation of each museum's goals, as they may relate to the attraction of visitors to the City of Sycamore. Information which was shared with the Council at the April 2 open houses is attached for the Council's reference.

In each case, the grant assistance could be applied either to operational or capital spending objectives. The Midwest Museum of Natural History would prefer to apply any grant assistance to the enhancement of its appealing displays. The Sycamore Historical Society and Museum has requested grant assistance to retain the services of its very able director, Michelle Donahoe.

Background: The Sycamore Historical Society and Museum

The Sycamore Historical Society and Museum was established in 1999. Its mission is to "collect, preserve, study, interpret and exhibit significant materials relating to Sycamore and the surrounding area, and to provide related educational services for the purpose of increasing and enriching public knowledge of Sycamore for its members, supporters, visitors, students and researchers." The Museum was located in the former Sycamore Municipal Hospital at 211 W. Elm Street from 2000 until 2006, when it was relocated to the lower level of the Sycamore Center. The Museum is actively searching for a new permanent home.

In 2005, the Society hired an executive director, Michelle Donahoe, who is a professional with a masters degree in public history from Loyola University. Ms. Donahoe works part-time. The Society has volunteers who give tours, maintain the collection, lead fund-raising activities, and promote the museum.

The Society requests \$10,000 to continue to support a modest stipend for its executive director.

Background: The Midwest Museum of Natural History

The Midwest Museum of Natural History was chartered in 2002 and opened at 425 West State Street on February 7, 2005. The Museum's home is the former Community Center. The Museum board commissioned a museum plan in the spring of 2002 under the direction of Rich Faron of Museum Explorer which came to \$20,000. The plans for the renovation and conversion of the center were completed by Durrant Architects late in 2002 at a cost of \$49,860 and the renovation work was completed in 2003-2004 for a cost of \$1,220,000 by TASC Contracting of Dixon, Illinois. The City of Sycamore contributed the following toward the building's renovation in that period:

Source	Amount
Sales Tax Distributive Fund	\$300,000
Hotel/Motel Tax Fund	\$50,000
Hotel/Motel Tax Fund (roof, soffit, gutters, etc.)	\$153,747
Total	\$503,747

The mission of the Museum is to “encourage an appreciation of the world’s diverse natural environment and human culture through exhibits and interactive learning experiences for children and adults. Such experiences will guide visitors in understanding the importance of preservation as it relates to the natural world.”

The Museum has one full-time executive director, Chris Brodnicki, and six part-time paid staff. As with the Sycamore Historical Society and Museum, the MMNH has a board of directors and a corps of volunteers who give tours, maintain the collection, lead fund-raising activities and promote the museum. The museum has also benefited from local corporate sponsorships.

The Museum has prepared attendance figures for 2005 and 2006 which are attached. From its opening in February 2005 to December 2006, the Museum served 19,561 visitors. In 2006 the Museum began a marketing survey to ascertain the hometowns of its visitors, as well as their purpose in visiting Sycamore. A blank form is attached, along with some of the quarterly reports from the director to the museum board.

The background also includes the names of special and ongoing workshops, lecture series, and events which have attracted visitors to Sycamore, and entertained local residents. The May 19 visit of the world-renowned wildlife expert Jack Hanna reflects the museum’s growing stature and regional appeal. Local and regional media coverage of the museum’s many events has been abundant and has enhanced Sycamore’s reputation as a weekend destination in particular.

The Museum initially requested \$10,000 for capital purposes to help retire the balance of a local loan that was secured in 2004 to complete the renovation project at 425 West State Street. However, after visiting with the Council on April 2, the Museum board appreciates the Council’s preference for tangible steps that are more directly related to visitor attraction. Accordingly, the board has revised its request to focus on the Museum’s wall mounts featuring a variety of North American birds that will be familiar to museum visitors.

Recommendation

At the staff level, we have investigated what other communities do to support their museums. Certainly, Sycamore is not alone in its interest in museums. By way of reference, the Illinois Association of Museums estimates that over 400 Illinois communities account for more than 850 museums. This does not include the variety of county museums and museums run by state associations and scientific agencies in the state. Many museums are in historic buildings converted for the special purpose of exhibiting something about a person, a family, an institution, or a community. These Illinois museums are tourist

attractions and a source of community pride, and they have positive ripple effects on local businesses. They owe their enduring appeal to the intellectual curiosity of their respective communities. They typically offer educational programs for young and old alike. Most are small (less than 4,000 square feet) and more than half have modest operating budgets of less than \$50,000 per year.

More Illinois museums are run by not-for-profit entities than not. Whether public or private, these not-for-profits rely on community support for their success. Financially speaking, this takes the form of annual museum memberships, donations, and some tax support. Most receive some form of tax support, which is most often property tax support.

No local property or sales taxes are proposed as a source of operating funds for either Sycamore museum. Hotel/Motel taxes are proposed and their source is the visitors who come to our City.

The City Manager recommends the Council's support for these home-grown and popular museums because they have established themselves as centers for learning and visitor attraction. Funding for both grants has been set aside in the Hotel/Motel Tax Fund in FY08 (09-8343). The grants would more readily contribute to downtown vitality than an equal or greater amount devoted to façade improvements in FY08.

14. OTHER NEW BUSINESS

15. APPOINTMENTS

16. ADJOURNMENT