



**August 11, 2023 Meeting
MINUTES**

**Decatur City Hall
City Commission Meeting Room
509 North McDonough Street**

Members Present: Noah Peeters (Acting Chair), Darren Comer, David Harry, Tony Leung, and Lisa Turner

Members Absent: Linda Curry, Conor McNally

Call to Order. Mr. Peeters confirmed a quorum and called the meeting to order at 8:03 a.m.

Unfinished Business.

Approval of Minutes of July 14, 2023 meeting.

On a motion by Mr. Leung, and seconded by Mr. Harry, the minutes were approved as presented.

Agenda Action Items.

Consideration of a resolution to support an application by Michael Clifford, applicant on behalf of Vision Hospitality Group, property owner, for special exceptions to increase building height from 80 ft. (max.) to 82 ft. (proposed); to reduce the streetscape landscape zone for purposes of a drop off lane; and to allow 100% off-site parking in adjacent parking decks for the development of a hotel at 213 Swanton Way in Downtown Decatur.

Ms. Threadgill read the resolution for consideration and noted that there have been a number of meetings and reviews of the plans by City staff to be able to present the plans to the authority today.

Mr. Clifford, project architect, and Bobby Knowles, representative of Vision Hospitality Group presented their development project of a new 7-story, dual-brand Hilton hotel of 241 guest rooms. Mr. Clifford stated that the two brands are Tempo and Homewood Suites. He stated the development seeks to incorporate a retail space on the ground floor at the corner of Ponce de Leon Place and Swanton Way, in addition to hotel lobby, meeting space, and similar ground floor hotel functions. He stated that Bluestone Café is the selected retail and is a successful concept in other urban markets.

He stated that the exception to the building height is due to the 8 ft. grade change across the site, between Commerce Drive and Ponce de Leon Place.

In response to a question by Mr. Peeters, Mr. Clifford responded that despite having a dual-brand hotel, it will have one lobby and main entrance. The dual brands each have different levels of food service, and room sizes.

In response to questions by Ms. Turner, Mr. Clifford stated that Homewood Suites provides in-suite kitchenettes and is intended to serve guests that stay for longer periods due to work travel or training. Tempo would have 122 rooms and Homewood Suites would have 102 rooms. The exterior

architecture of the hotel varies according to the branded hotel rooms. The dual-brand hotel will have elevators to serve each brand. The guestrooms would have a 9 ft. ceiling height, and is primarily driven by the mechanical, electrical, plumbing that is run through the 8' hallway ceilings and then into each of the rooms.

In response to questions by Mr. Comer, Mr. Clifford stated that the off-site parking would be provided at the parking decks of the Task Force for Global Health and 1 West Court Square, each serving office uses and within 300 ft. of the hotel. The drop-off lane is intended for guests and has the length to accommodate three to four vehicles. The hotel also plans to provide 24 hour valet service. He stated that in similar markets with a higher level of public transportation, less than 50% of guests drive vehicles and most would use MARTA transit. Bluestone Lane Café is a casual restaurant based out of Australia and has partnered with the Tempo brand in similar urban markets. The façade materials will have stone veneer at the base, brick at the middle floors, and metal bands to differentiate the architecture.

In response to questions by Ms. Turner, Mr. Clifford stated that the windows will be aluminum fixed windows. The adjacent building occupied by Colordrunk would remain, as it is located on the adjacent parcel. The development seeks to consolidate sanitation services of both properties into one dumpster area, enclosed. He stated that the streetscapes along Commerce Drive would remain unchanged per City engineer review due to the PATH cycle track. Pending approval, the project would start June 2024 and would take 18 mos. to construct.

In response to questions by Mr. Leung, Mr. Clifford stated that there will be three ground floor entrances, one of which is primarily for the elevator to the rooftop access. The awning of the café will wrap around the corner to cover an outdoor seating area. The proposed pool will be in shade.

In response to questions by Mr. Comer, Mr. Clifford stated that the dumpster area will be enclosed with an 8 ft. solid wall with decorative gate facing Ponce de Leon Place, and would have vegetative screening on the courtyard side.

In response to questions by Mr. Harry, Mr. Clifford stated that there will be balconies at the corner of Commerce and Swanton Way that are associated with Homewood Suites. He stated that the uppermost floor is setback 15-20 feet from the Ponce de Leon Place façade to accommodate the rooftop patio, as well as reduce the façade height well below the 80 ft. height limit. The base of the hotel would have low lying shrubs.

Mr. Comer suggested that since the drop off area would modify the landscape zone of the streetscapes, every effort should be made to maximize the plantings, adding additional street trees if deemed appropriate by the City arborist.

Mr. Peeters added that if additional trees are not possible, that the tree wells be made larger to support the tree roots.

On a motion by Mr. Harry, seconded by Mr. Leung, a resolution to support special exceptions to increase building height from 80 ft. (max.) to 82 ft. (proposed); to reduce the streetscape landscape zone for purposes of a drop off lane; and to allow 100% off-site parking in adjacent parking decks for the development of a hotel at 213 Swanton Way in Downtown Decatur was unanimously approved.

Reports and Other Business.

The Decatur Business Association Strategic Plan. Mr. Sean Crotty, owner of Kelly's Market and DBA president elect presented the organization's new strategic plan.

In response Ms. Turner's question about the financial stability of the DBA, Mr. Crotty responded that the board reviewed the financials and noticed there were a lot of service fees that they were paying, and they terminated their accounting firm relationship and brought the accounting in-house. He stated that they renegotiated their credit card processing fees, and stopped putting money into holding events. He stated they have done a couple of sponsorships, and have reduced event sponsorships to \$500. He stated that even with it being tight they do have funds to accomplish the things in the plan right now.

Ms. Threadgill stated that the DDA did support the development of the DBA Strategic Plan through funding the plan. She stated having a strong DBA and business community supports economic development through business retention and recruitment of new businesses.

Mr. Crotty stated that the DBA may come back to the DDA for some additional support to assist with business trainings which are a part of the DBA Strategic Plan.

Mr. Peeters stated that there may be opportunity to have some crossover in programming and be able to collaborate with the DBA.

Mr. Comer added that the DBA having an education component, and not just networking will entice more businesses to get involved.

In response to a question by Mr. Harry, Mr. Crotty responded that there is a shortage of restaurant participation and it has been due to the fact that the DBA's structure was not conducive to restaurant participation, and the make-up has been retail and office type businesses. They want to work better on industry specific involvement.

In response to questions by Ms. Turner, Mr. Crotty stated there is a membership directory on the DBA website and that members can join or renew online. There is also an individual membership option for non-business community members.

In response to questions by Mr. Comer, Ms. Threadgill stated that it may not meet city policy to include DBA membership information in a business license renewal reminder. Ms. Baylis stated that a reminder for renewal of membership is sent via email each year.

Ms. Turner stated that it would be good for the DBA presentation to be made at the Retail and Restaurant meeting. Ms. Baylis stated that Mr. Crotty will be speaking at the next meeting in September.

Mr. Peeter thanked Mr. Crotty for the presentation and stated that it was thoughtful work put into the plan.

Mr. Peeter stated that the next regular scheduled meeting is Friday, September 8th. Ms. Threadgill reminded the board of the July conversation of having the board retreat in September. She asked if the group present is open to making the September meeting the date for the board retreat. Those present said that it was a good date for them. She stated that she would confirm with the board when details are available.

Adjourn.

On a motion by Ms. Turner, seconded by Mr. Harry, the meeting was adjourned at 9:41 a.m.
Consistent with the requirements of O.C.G.A. §50-14-1(e)(2)(B) these minutes were approved at the next scheduled meeting on August 11, 2023 and made part of the record.

Angela Threadgill, Executive Director

