

Diane Stoddard

From: Marlene Merrill [MAMERRI@kckps.org]
Sent: Wednesday, April 30, 2008 2:04 PM
To: dcirkuss@ci.lawrence.ks.us; Diane Stoddard
Cc: dhighberger@ci.lawrence.ks.us; mamyx@ci.lawrence.ks.us; mdever@ci.lawrence.ks.us; rchestnut@ci.lawrence.ks.us; shack@lawrencechamber.com; lrobinson@usd497.org; rweseman@usd497.org
Subject: TIF and TDD policy proposals

Hi everyone!

I had opportunity to read the TIF and TDD information sent to Linda Robinson, school board president. I have a few comments to make that likely apply more to the administrative procedures for the policy than the TIF or TDD policies themselves. The wording of each policy seems to keep transparent the city's goals to expand or improve upon business in the community while yet providing an easy path for business to develop using public funds (e.g. delayed property taxes, sales taxes). As a policy statement I think it is clearly written. My one suggestion would be to specify in policy the amount of profit that investors in the project will receive; since it is public money used to fund the project it would seem that owners/investors should accept a profit of no more than 15%. Anything over that should be used to pay back taxpayers sooner.

The devil is always in the details. So how will the public perceive the intent of the policy and its effects. Likely it means that the public will have higher taxes because a certain portion of existing taxes will be used to pay for these projects. I think it is important that the city and schools be accountable and provide evidence of the benefits. I appreciated the listing of the criteria that would demonstrate a "substantial and significant public benefit". The question is How substantial a benefit would need to be demonstrated to be significant? To demonstrate to the community that you are evaluating benefits and not just guessing or putting in words that sound good, it is important to define exactly how these criteria will be measured and to also define in advance "what substantial benefit" means.

In the regulations, there should be the mechanism to collect baseline information. e.g. what are the current property valuation, how many people live/work in that TIF district now, how many homes displaced, average salary now, amount sales.... these are some ideas of what to collect. The regulations should include specific, attainable, measurable, time-defined listing of the criteria used to evaluate success of the TIF and/or TDD projects. In the policy the criteria listed include: increase in property valuation, increase in number/type of jobs, increase in economic sufficiency, demonstration of community wide importance, changes in public infrastructure. These are reasonable criteria. I suggest that the details of how you will assess the criteria are important to have "up front" when the policy is voted upon by the city commission... the who will collect evidence, what will be collected, when it will be collected, and how it will be shared with the community.

Thank you for sharing your work with the school board. I appreciated the opportunity to comment and hope my comments are helpful to you.

Marlene Merrill, Ph.D.
 Lawrence Board of Education member
mamerrill@sunflower.com
mmerrill@usd497.org