

**Cuyahoga Falls City Council
Minutes of the Community Development Committee**

March 20, 2023

Members: Brian Ashton, Chair
Michael Brillhart
Adam Miller

Mr. Ashton called the meeting to order at 6:39 p.m. All members were present.

Legislation Discussed:

Temp. Ord. B-28

Discussion:

Temp. Ord. B-28

An ordinance approving and authorizing the Mayor to execute Community Development Block Grant agreements with Bruno Investments, LLC for an economic development project at the Blue Door Café & Bakery, and declaring an emergency.

Ms. Diana Colavecchio, Community Development Director, and Peggy Szalay, CDBG Entitlement Administrator, presented Temporary Ordinance B-28 to Council. The City receives Community Development Block Grant (“CDBG”) funds from the Department of Housing and Urban Development. CDBG funds can be utilized to assist with economic development projects that will create and/or maintain full-time employment opportunities for low-to-moderate income individuals. Bruno Investments, LLC, doing business as The Blue Door Café & Bakery currently located at 1970 State Road, desires to expand their existing business to include additional services, which will result in the creation of six permanent full-time jobs for low-to-moderate income individuals. Bruno Investments, LLC, has requested assistance in the form of a CDBG matching economic development grant in order to purchase necessary equipment and an economic development loan to assist with working capital for the expansion of services at their existing location.

The City desires to enter into CDBG economic development agreements with Bruno Investments, LLC, in an amount not to exceed \$50,000 for the purchase of necessary equipment and working capital in an amount not to exceed \$50,000 for the expansion of services at their existing location. The CDBG Loan and Grant Review Committee authorized the grant and loan. The City of Cuyahoga Falls wishes to enter into CDBG economic development agreements with Bruno Investments, LLC, in an amount not to exceed \$100,000.

The Mayor will be authorized to enter into a matching CDBG economic development grant agreement with Bruno Investments, LLC, in an amount not to exceed \$50,000, for the purchase of necessary equipment to be used at The Blue Door Café & 49 Bakery, located at 1970 State Road. The Mayor will be authorized to enter into a CDBG economic development loan agreement with Bruno Investments, LLC, in an amount not to exceed \$50,000 for necessary working capital for the expansion of services, at The Blue Door 53 Café & Bakery, located at 1970 State Road.

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The Director of Finance will be authorized to make payments from the CDBG Fund, Line Item Other Operations in an amount not to exceed \$100,000. The Mayor, Director of Finance, Director of Community Development, Director of Law, and any other public officials, individually or collectively as may be appropriate, will be authorized to prepare and execute such other documents, including contracts, and do all other things as necessary or incidental to carrying out the intent and requirements of the Community Development Block Grant Program and this ordinance.

Mr. Michael Bruno, owner of the Blue Door Café, stated that without the help from Cuyahoga Falls, they wouldn't be where they are now. They looked into making dinner and were lucky enough to hire Chef Alejandro “Alex” Najar as celebrity executive chef of the restaurant, as well as to do dinner service for them. It has been difficult to coordinate a bakery staff, brunch staff and, now, a dinner staff. With all these staff members trying to work at the building, a lot of costs have arisen. Some of the things they want to do with the funds is purchase a walk-in, renovate the dining room and put in a full bar, as well as spread out the seating to create a more-relaxed atmosphere. They have created five to ten new positions and will probably add at least five new positions once dinner service really starts to take off.

Chef Alex stated that he just appeared on Hell's Kitchen. He is a Barberton native. His family owns the River City Bar and Grill on Bailey Road. He used to work at the Blue Door back in 2013; now, it's come full circle to continue his career. For dinner service, they want to create an awesome experience with a wine and bar program.

Mr. Ashton stated that he had dinner there a couple of weeks ago. The artistic value that Chef Alex has added to the City cannot be understated. Not only does the Blue Door Café bring a culinary experience to the City, but they are a shining beacon of business by employing so many people.

Mr. Miller congratulated them on their success and thanked them for their continued commitment to Cuyahoga Falls and expanding the business. He and his wife look forward to participating in dinner service.

Ms. Nichols-Rhodes asked if they are they planning a rooftop dining area. Mr. Bruno stated that they originally thought it would be great to construct a balcony or a patio on top of the existing patio. They spoke to some architects and, in order to do that, they would have to install an elevator and two indoor staircases. What they intend to do in an additional phase is to encompass the patio and extend that. There is also a dead space currently near the entrance that is not being used. They want to extend the entrance to increase the dining capacity in the restaurant. Right now, the capacity of the restaurant is 60 to 70 diners. This would push that to around 100.

Ms. Loza stated that they are all fans. She is excited for the opportunity from CDBG to give the restaurant an opportunity to grow the business further. She cannot wait to see what they do.

Mrs. Spinner stated that her family has patronized their business for many years and are huge fans of everything that they have had there. She asked if they would remain open when making these updates and renovations. Mr. Bruno stated that they will be open during renovation.

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Mrs. Penta stated that the Blue Door is a gem in her ward, and she is truly happy that they are making a commitment to the City and looking forward to the domino effect that it will have on State Road.

Mr. James stated that he and his wife patronize their restaurant. He asked if they have home delivery, because when he is not feeling well, he really likes their tomato soup and grilled cheese sandwiches. If not, it might be something for the future.

Mr. Tom Sullivan, 447 Tallmadge Road, stated that when Mr. Bruno first started working there with the Leipply's, they were wondering how they were going to sell pastries out of a drive-through window. They showed them.

Mr. Brillhart moved to bring out Temp. Ord. B-28 with a favorable recommendation, second by Mr. Miller. Motion passed (3-0).

The meeting adjourned at 6:54 p.m.