

Job incentives to help diamond sellers add 45 posts in Doral

By SUSAN DANSEYAR

County commissioners last week unanimously approved \$27,000 in job incentives over six years for a manufacturing company that sells a range of diamonds and wants to expand operations in Doral by increasing its facility's capacity and adding 45 new jobs.

Named Confidential Project Starz by the Beacon Council, Miami-Dade's economic development organization, the company applied for \$135,000 in financial benefits afforded under Florida's Qualified Target Industry (QTI) Tax Refund program, of which 80% (\$108,000) would come from the state and the remaining

20% (\$27,000) from the county's general fund as the required local match. Funding would begin in fiscal year 2018-2019, given that the promised number of new jobs are created with an average annual salary of \$55,000.

The July 27 application, filed with the commission by the Beacon Council, describes the New York-headquartered company as a vertically integrated manufacturer that sells both branded and generic diamond jewelry and wants to increase its facility by 25,000 square feet. The manufacturer's location is currently confidential but will be in the Miami Free Trade Zone, according to Deputy Mayor Jack Osterholt. Altern-

ative locations for the project are New York and Anchorage, Alaska.

The application states Confidential Project Starz's promised 45 new jobs would pay an average annual salary of \$55,000, which Mr. Osterholt said is at least 115% of the average wage in Miami-Dade County. Although not a requirement of the tax refund agreement with the state or local match, the employee benefits for each new job would be \$10,000, according to documents the Beacon Council submitted.

Confidential Project Starz currently faces a pending lawsuit alleging employment discrimination.

The application states nine indirect

jobs will be created, it will take three years to create the 45 new jobs, and the maximum tax refund per direct job is \$3,000.

According to a memo Mr. Osterholt wrote to commissioners, based on the capital investment of \$2 million in new real property, the project will generate \$44,904 over a six-year period in countywide general fund tax revenue, a net positive fiscal impact of \$17,904.

Additionally, Mr. Osterholt said, based on the promised 45 new jobs and annual salary for each, the project will generate \$14,860,521 in direct and indirect wages over the six years it's eligible for the QTI tax refund award.

Miami seeks public's input before city tackles lawmaking

By JOHN CHARLES ROBBINS

Transparency is one of Ken Russell's favorite words. The freshman Miami commissioner has been pushing through legislation nearly from the start that's designed to throw as much light on government as possible and get public input on all topics related to the tax dollars and how their city operates.

Beginning this month, one of Mr. Russell's changes has altered the look of the commission's agendas. Printed on the final pages are proposals for the commission to consider under the general heading "Future Legislation."

The first bundle of proposals covers a variety of items, from growth and development downtown to rules about parking.

Each item is published and affords the public a chance to comment in writing on the ideas via a special email address. The administration is also working on a website or link from the city's official website listing all proposals.

When the new feature debuted, Mr. Russell said he was happy to see its quick implementation, commending the administration.

The Future Legislation feature is "so the public can see what's coming down the road," said Mr. Russell.

This public input period usually comes before the commission first hears the item.

Under this change, any amendment to the city code or text amendment to the zoning ordinance sponsored or co-sponsored by the administration must be published at least 60 days before the commission's first reading for public comment in the Future Legislation section of the agenda.

All public comments are to be emailed to futurelegislation@miamigov.com.

Comments are to be accepted through the period indicated for each ordinance or proposal. Once the comment period closes, the public comments will be included as supporting documentation to legislation.

The public comment period is to re-open for 15 days after the proposed amendment is published after its first reading.

The new section of the



Miami City Commissioner Ken Russell, who touts transparency, initiated a plan "so the public can see what's coming down the road."

agenda notes that persons who don't want their email address made public can contact the administration by phone.

In the first batch of proposals is one to amend the city's Downtown Development of Regional Impact or DRI designation by authorizing an Increment III Development Order. A DRI is designed to allow controlled growth and must be approved by the city's Downtown Development Authority and ultimately the city commission.

This month the Downtown Development Authority deferred a vote on the matter after a couple of members wanted more time to review the change. The matter was also posted under the Future Legislation section of the commission's most recent agenda; the public comment period runs through Nov. 12.

A Planning and Zoning Department analysis of the proposed change reads in part: "Increment III of the Downtown DRI is proposed for adoption by the City Commission in November 2016. A downtown Miami, activated by a thriving commercial sector, bustling nightlife, and charming, walkable, multi-family neighborhoods is a vision realized. There is still room to grow, and Increment III is proposed for adoption to facilitate this growth."

The development ceiling proposed for Increment III would

allow a T3 Sub-Urban Transect Zones property to satisfy some of the parking requirements of a T6 Urban Core Transect Zones or T5 Urban Center Transect Zones property, through the exception process, presuming certain criteria are met. The public comment period is through Oct. 29.

The Planning and Zoning Department and the Planning, Zoning and Appeals Board recommend approval of the ordinance.

Another proposal headed to the city commission would add the definition of "Microbrewery" to the zoning code. It will also amend the code to establish regulations for microbreweries, to be permitted as Alcohol Service Establishments, only in Cultural Specialty Districts. The public comment period ends Oct. 29.

Another proposal would define and regulate "Crew Quarters" in the zoning code and permit them through the warrant process. The comment period is through Oct. 29.

And there's a proposal to

allow a T3 Sub-Urban Transect Zones property to satisfy some of the parking requirements of a T6 Urban Core Transect Zones or T5 Urban Center Transect Zones property, through the exception process, presuming certain criteria are met. The public comment period is through Oct. 29.

Two items had already gone through first reading by the commission, but were posted as Future Legislation for further public comment before the final reading. That comment period expired Sept. 14.

One of the two would establish a city Art in Public Places Program. The other would revise minimum and maximum lot area and widths for T4 (General Urban Transect Zones), T5, and T6 transect zones in order to encourage appropriate development based on density and intensity regulations.

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