TODAY'S NEWS

Job incentives to help diamond sellers add 45 pacts in Doral

By Susan Dynare

County commissioners last week unanimously approved $27,000 in job incentives over six years for a manufacturing company that sells a range of diamond steels and other jewelry to jewelers 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 $157,500 in financial benefits afforded under Florida's Qualified Target Industry (QTI) Tax Refund program, of which 80% ($126,000) would come from the state and the remaining 20% ($51,500) from the county’s general fund in the region 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 vertically integrated manufacturer that sells both branded and generic diamond jewelry and wants to increase its capacity by 25,000 square feet. The manufacturer's location is currently confidential but will be in the Miami Free Trade Zone, according to Mayor Jack Osterholz. Alternative locations for the project are New York and Anchorage, Alaska.

The application states Confidential Project Starz's promised 45 new jobs would have an average annual salary of $55,000, which Mr. Osterholz said is at least 15% 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 $15,000, 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 $3,500.

According to a memo Mr. Osterholz 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 county's general fund tax revenue, a net positive fiscal impact of $17,904.

Additionally, Mr. Osterholz said, based on the promised 45 new jobs and annual salary for each, the project will generate $14,360.52 in indirect 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 Robinson

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 chief pages 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 issues, from downtown 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 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 futurelegislation@miamigov.com.

Comments are to be accepted through the period indicated for each ordinance or proposal. Once the 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 touted transparency, initiated a plan so the public can see what's coming down the road. allow an added 2.5 million square feet of offices, 758,000 square feet of retail, 2,090 hotel rooms, 18,000 residential units, 250,000 square feet of industrial space, 150,000 square feet of institutional space and 2,000 attraction seats.

The Planning and Zoning Department and the Planning, Zoning and Appeals Board recommended 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 for 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 Transit Zone property to satisfy some of the parking requirements of a 16 Urban Core Transit Zones or T3 Urban Center Transit 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. 29.

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