

February 2020  
Ward 3 Residents,

I have had a couple of questions about Monday night's vote regarding the Belmont Promenade development. My goal is always to be transparent and I am always happy to discuss anything before meetings or explain reasons for my vote after meetings. I would much rather that than have anyone assume something negative they read online is necessarily true.

I have already cast many votes as a Councilman. The Belmont Promenade vote on Monday was only the 2nd time the council split votes since I started, so I get that there might be questions. Following the 4-4 vote, the Mayor then broke the tie in favor so the project will move forward with all incentives in place once we vote one more time in March.

On Monday we were voting to approve changes to the previous plan which includes more retail square footage and fewer apartments and re-affirm extremely generous incentives for this developer. Note: There have been multiple, multiple revisions over many, many years with no actual construction ever started to date.

So why did I vote "no" on 1 of the incentives?

Simple answer: I ran all last year as a fiscal conservative who wants to make sure we make financially responsible decisions within our city. I also said that I want to encourage development, restaurants and businesses in Shawnee in a way that is responsible for taxpayers. In this instance, there are 2 parts to the Belmont Promenade incentive package:

1.) Approve the latest plan changes and a 20-year TIF giving back the 1% sales tax the city would typically get... and instead giving it to the developer for the next 20 years. I voted in favor of that. Many people are against any public financing for private development, but I have said that there are times that TIF money makes sense in order to help a project. I am also fine with the most recent revisions to the plan.

2.) The 2nd item for consideration was moving forward for public discussion the additional CID (community improvement district) which will levy an additional 1.6% sales tax on patrons of that development for the next 20 years. Again, the entire 1.6% goes to the developer... for 20 years. I had stated many times at debates and throughout my election that I did not feel CID's were fair to taxpayers because they are a hidden tax that no one knows they are paying. In this case, the final sales tax you will pay when you buy something in this development will be well over 10%!. CID's are less common. However, I have said that I will be willing to consider CID's individually depending on the project's value to the community and the amount of the CID. In this case, the proposed CID is 1.6% which is an unusually large amount (typically IF a CID is approved they are around 1%). As a result of my consistently stated position and the fact that this was such a large proposed CID, I voted no on this part of the incentives for the developer.

Again, the Mayor appropriately chose to break the vote and it will go forward with all these incentives in place. There are other factors that also played into my decision and I don't want to get into the weeds, but one is the fact that this project has now dragged on since 2014 with no dirt moved despite the extremely generous incentives which had been granted repeatedly to the developer. Instead, the developer has continually changed plans and asked for additional incentives. In my opinion, this development group needs a push in order to follow through on what they have repeatedly promised the City they will do. Hopefully this closer vote will push them to move the project forward as promised this time and break ground so that corner can be properly developed.

All developers should know that Shawnee is a welcoming community where they will get fair consideration for their proposed projects. We do want and need more restaurants, particularly in Western Shawnee. The extent of incentives and the expectation for Developers to hold up their end of the bargain will always be negotiated and expected.

My number is 913-608-2724. I always welcome your feedback, and honestly I may make bad votes from time to time and may need to be explained the alternative position. Please know that I am doing my best to serve and reflect what I believe the majority of citizens in Ward 3 would want. The citizens I spoke to from Ward 3 that were there on Monday (regarding another issue) told me afterward they agreed with my vote after hearing the discussion.

Respectfully,

Kurt