

Some aldermen expressed doubts with some of the promises being made.

"I've lived in Brookfield close to 30 years and that northeast corner of the city hasn't changed a lot during that period," Alderman Scott Berg said. "Why should I believe that there will be this renaissance prompted by this particular project?"

Alderman Christopher Blackburn also was skeptical, comparing the proposal to the city's third TIF district located around Brookfield Square, which he said hadn't produced the level of development that was promised.

"There's a long list of projects there that were never built," he said.

Alderman Jeff McCarthy argued the opposite side, noting the worst-case scenario that he heard from Milwaukee Tool CFO Ty Staviski last month.

"I specifically asked him in that meeting, if this does not go, are there other opportunities in Brookfield that you're considering and he said, 'No,'" McCarthy said. "I want you to stop and think about what happens when that's an empty building and all those jobs go away and all those hotel rooms go to another community. They are a good employer. I think we need to think about not only the growth, but on the flip side, what happens in this area if the best employer in the city goes away?"

On the topic of the job creation, Blackburn noted a belief that jobs in Brookfield does not necessarily equate to equal benefits for Brookfield.

"The city does not have a shortage of jobs and if the primary reason for this is to locate jobs, which most likely will accrue to people outside of Brookfield, but be paid for by tax payers, I don't think it's appropriate," Blackburn said.

Alderman Bill Camell also expressed doubts regarding the proposal and posed a series of questions to city of Brookfield director of community development Dan Ert regarding the level of risk to the city in taking on the \$8.4 million in bonds that would be used to pay for the \$6 million grant over a 15-year term.

"When the development agreement comes before the plan commission and common council, the staff is suggesting that Milwaukee Tool is guaranteeing that the debt will be retired in 15 years," Ert said. "That means, even if Milwaukee Tool, for whatever reason, vacates the premises, anyone who assumes ownership of the property would be responsible for the terms and conditions of that development agreement."

Public hearing scheduled

The evening's proceedings regarding the TIF proposal concluded with the council voting by a 12 - 2 tally to schedule a public hearing on the subject with Aldermen Blackburn and Jerry Mellone accounting for the dissenting votes.

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Brookfield council debates Milwaukee Tool financing



By Geoff Bruce
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Mayor Steve Ponto, city of Brookfield aldermen, plan commissioners and members of the public were privy to a number of different perspectives Tuesday night regarding a proposal for the city to provide \$6 million in financial aid to Milwaukee Tool.

Last month, Milwaukee Tool announced plans for a \$33 million expansion of its corporate headquarters located on Lisbon Road. As part of that process, the company has asked for assistance from the city in the form of a tax incremental financing district.

On Tuesday, both the city's common council and its plan commission spent nearly 2 hours listening to more details on the proposal and discussing its pros and cons. In the end, the council decided on public hearing.

Officials pitch proposal

Milwaukee Tool president of power tools Shane Moll said that in addition to recent growth that Milwaukee Tool has experienced, the company is setting its sights high in the years to come.

"We have a long way to go. We have very strong aspirations to continue this growth," Moll said. "Our aspiration is, by the year 2020, to achieve \$5 billion in sales."

One of the most-discussed affects of the Milwaukee Tool expansion proposal is that the company has stated an intent to create up to 500 new jobs at its Brookfield campus in the next 5 years.

Moll also noted that since 2009, the Brookfield campus has added 413 jobs.

"The biggest challenge that we have is people. People is what got us to the position that we're in today; we're extremely excited about not only the trajectory that has got us here, but the jobs that we're going to be able to add as we move forward," Moll said.

In addition to the jobs that would be created by Milwaukee Tool's expansion, a number of speakers took note of the potential impact that the project could have on the surrounding area and the 124th Street Corridor.

The city has enlisted the services of Gruen Gruen + Associates to offer perspective on the economic impact and viability of the proposal.

"The basic concept is that the regional economy is linked. A change such as investment and construction of expanded operation will generate a ripple or multiplier effect," Gruen principal Debra Jeans said.