

**MINUTES**  
**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE**  
**THURSDAY, JANUARY 16, 2014 - 7:00 AM**  
**JORDAN ROOM, MATTHEWS TOWN HALL**

**PRESENT:** Paul Babinski, Tim Chevront\*, Russ Gill, Commissioner John Higdon (appointed member), Paul Jamison, Tim Jones, Greg Klein, Bev Martin\*, Roger Martin\*, Steve Thomson, Chamber Executive Director Tina Whitley (ex-Officio); Assistant Town Manager Jamie Justice; Town Clerk Lori Canapinno

**ABSENT:** Mark Harrison

**CALL TO ORDER**

Mr. Jamison called the meeting to order at 7:02 am.

**INVOCATION**

Mr. Chevront rendered an invocation.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Motion by Mr. Jones to approve the minutes of the November 21, 2013 regular meeting. Seconded by Ms. Martin and unanimously approved.

**ELECT 2014 CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR**

After opening the floor for nominations, Mr. Jones nominated Paul Jamison for Chair. Mr. Jamison nominated Tim Jones for Vice Chair.

Motion by Mr. Klein to approve Paul Jamison as Chair and Tim Jones as Vice Chair. Seconded by Mr. Thomson and unanimously approved.

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

**DOWNTOWN FAÇADE GRANT PROGRAM: GRANT UPDATES AND PROGRAM CHANGES**

Mr. Justice advised the two recent approvals are in progress. The work on the Reid House was completed for approximately \$15,000. The grant was approved for \$3,500 based on the actual costs. The work on the Plaxco house is still underway, and upon completion the expected grant amount will be \$2,500.

Possible eligibility changes were discussed at the last meeting but were not resolved due to a lack of quorum. The discussion then revolved around the Committee's desire to avoid allowing applicants to receive funding from the Town in multiple ways each year, such as receiving funds via both a Façade Enhancement Grant and a Tourism Grant. Mr. Justice proposed language in the Façade Grant application to indicate that a property that has received any other Town funds in the last 3 years is not eligible for a Façade Grant.

There was some discussion of that time period, with the consensus agreeing to a three year limitation.

Motion by Mr. Thomson to recommend to the Board of Commissioners to add the following verbiage to the Downtown Matthews Façade Enhancement Grant program eligibility guidelines: *A property that has received any other Town funds in the last 3 years is not eligible.* Seconded by Mr. Klein and unanimously approved.

#### **FOUR TOWN ALLIANCE UPDATE**

Mr. Justice summarized the short history of the alliance between Matthews, Mint Hill, Stallings and Indian Trail. The bylaws have recently been approved by two towns and the others will vote on them soon. Each town will appoint their town manager, one elected official and one citizen to the Board. Town Manager Hazen Blodgett, Commissioner John Ross and resident/business owner/former Commissioner John Urban have been appointed to represent Matthews in the alliance. The intent is for one of those appointees to make reports directly to EDAC, and a later agenda item, if approved, will recommend a change to EDAC bylaws to add an ex-officio position for an alliance representative.

The tentative schedule calls for the first meeting with all appointees in February. There is a grant available from an economic development consultant that offers \$25,000 worth of staff consulting time. This will be discussed by the alliance members to determine if it's worth pursuing.

Mr. Justice noted that at this time there are many unknown factors, including the effect of the alliance on EDAC and others.

#### **DOWNTOWN ORGANIZATION RECOMMENDATION**

Mr. Justice summarized the history of the work on the possible downtown organization, the goal of which would be to enhance the economic development of the downtown area to benefit the entire community. The steering committee has been meeting since early 2013 and has recommended moving forward with a request to the Board of Commissioners to approve a downtown organization. The intent is for this organization to receive Town support in the form of staffing assistance and funding for the first few years until the organization can support itself and eventually form its own self-sustaining nonprofit organization.

The organization would focus on a four point approach: organization, promotion, design and economic structure. This is the approach used by the official Main Street Program, although this organization would not seek official Main Street status. The intent is to form the group and ask for funding in the form of a town appropriation - currently suggested to be \$20,000 – for projects as yet undetermined. A presentation could be made at the February 24<sup>th</sup> Board of Commissioners meeting with further discussion at the Board level during the Planning Conference. Ideally the Board will endorse the organization. If so, more people will be brought to the table to start putting substantive ideas together in the spring, with the Board making budgetary decisions after that. Mr. Jamison explained there was strong positive feedback at the public meeting held in December.

There was some discussion about the difference between this and various existing organizations such as the Chamber and the new four town alliance. Mr. Justice noted that other organizations are focused on the entire town while this would be focused solely on the downtown area, which will then enhance the rest of the town with increased economic development, visitor spending and vibrancy.

Mr. Jones questioned the viability of this organization since similar efforts stagnated in the past. Mr. Justice explained this group will be a broader effort and more inclusive than previous merchant-only groups. The joining criteria will be based on geography.

\*Mr. Martin arrived

Ms. Whitley suggested starting the new organization under the leadership of the Chamber. The funding could be used for an additional staff member who could focus on downtown issues. She suggested that dues or an entrance fee of sorts could be used to generate additional funding. She noted there are several organizations already seeking funds from a small sponsorship pool and it might make things more difficult to have another organization added to the requests. She cautioned against the dilution of all types of things including funding sources, special events and marketing. Mr. Justice said working under the auspices of the Chamber is one possible option for the organization. The group will have to figure out exactly how it should proceed after the organization has been approved by the Board.

Mr. Thomson asked if the stakeholders have shown the inclination to run the organization on their own. Mr. Justice clarified that the current stakeholders will be joined by more people. A number of respondents to the online survey and attendees at the December public meeting said they'd be interested in becoming more involved. Targeted advertisements will likely draw in others as well. Mr. Jamison said this group could become a subcommittee of EDAC if there was not enough drive to move it forward on its own. Mr. Justice said another possibility is that the organization folds due to lack of interest. Mr. Klein noted the downtown boundaries have expanded and now include new organizations, businesses, property owners, residents and other interested parties. There may be a bigger vested interest with these new parties than in the past.

Mr. Higdon said he would like to see more examples of what the proposed \$20,000 budget would be used for and said the rest of the Board would need that information as well.

Mr. Jamison summarized this is a step that needs to be taken to see if this is a viable idea or not. There were a lot of ideas and excitement expressed at the stakeholder meetings and the public meeting but by necessity that energy has been tempered by the need to present it to the Board of Commissioners to see if it's going to be approved.

Mr. Babinski said if the Chamber does get involved then there should be a dedicated Chamber downtown group. He suggested funding could be issued in the form of a grant rather than a dedicated line item so that the future organization is pushed to find its own funding on its own in a timely manner. He also noted that when many people heard the phrase "Matthews' downtown" they think only of the intersection of John and Trade Streets. He suggested using the phrase "greater downtown" to help remind people that the downtown covers a much larger geographic area.

Mr. Justice displayed information from Garner, NC's downtown organization and explained these strategies are a great template for Matthews. There is information on the four point approach as discussed earlier and their strategies serve as action items. Matthews needs to figure out what needs to be accomplished and then go from there and this is a useful guide.

Mr. Justice explained the options: the first is to make a recommendation to the Board of Commissioners now with a directive to the stakeholder group to prepare more detailed information regarding what the group can do in the next six to twelve months for the presentation to the Board in February. If EDAC is not comfortable moving forward with a recommendation to the Board now, then the second option would be to ask the stakeholder group to work on fleshing out specifics to be brought back to EDAC at the March meeting for review, with EDAC then making a recommendation to the Board after that. The final option is to drop the matter entirely.

Mr. Jamison suggested getting interested EDAC members to discuss this further before moving forward with a recommendation. Perhaps four or five questions could be developed listing possible examples of what the downtown organization could be doing in the future, which would be sent to not just the stakeholders but also those interested parties from the survey and public meeting. They could offer feedback on the ideas. The email could also include a basic presentation similar to what will be given to the Board. This could also serve as a little test to gauge the interest level of those parties via response rate to the email. Then the presentation could go forward in late February with this additional information to present to the Board. Mr. Higdon suggested giving the Board the names of those who attended meetings as a way to show there is actual interest from the public.

By consensus it was determined that EDAC will not make a recommendation to the Board until after they meet further to flesh out more details. Several EDAC members will formulate the information and disseminate it out to the group for feedback. Mr. Jamison would like to call a special meeting to discuss the results of the feedback. In the meantime he will meet with any interested EDAC member to formulate the questions to send out to the group. Mr. Jones, Ms. Whitley, Mr. Thomson, Mr. Martin and Mr. Gill will meet with Mr. Jamison on that sometime in the near future to discuss the questions.

#### **BRAINSTORMING AND PRIORITIZATION FOR 2014**

Mr. Jones discussed some ideas he and Mr. Jamison came up with, including beautification awards, visits to businesses and more detailed GIS/economic data. Mr. Jones said he thinks it's worthwhile to continue the Mayor's Breakfast but perhaps it should be held just once per year. The summit could be the same – once instead of twice per year.

Mr. Thomson suggested changing the breakfasts to allow for other elected officials to attend, not just the Mayor. That might help bridge the perceived gap between business owners and the Board. Mr. Martin suggested the addition of a casual evening meeting, perhaps before a Monday night Board meeting.

\*Mr. Chevront departed

Mr. Higdon questioned the item calling for an updated Warren report. Mr. Justice explained the town looked into updating the original 2007 document for around \$15,000, but then the alliance discussion started and the idea was dropped. It could still have merit in the future.

Ms. Whitley wants more focus on the sportsplex and future surrounding development. It needs a convention center with a meeting room for at least 400 people. Mr. Jamison said that's why he is recommending getting a GIS analyst in – they could identify the best uses for property based on various types of data. He thinks this would be a great thing for the alliance to do but Ms. Whitley believes the other towns wouldn't be interested since it's a Mecklenburg County project located in the Town of Matthews. Mr. Jamison said it would be a useful analysis even if the alliance wasn't involved.

Mr. Jones said that type of review fell under the umbrella of economic development planning. Mr. Thompson said the town has an enormous economic engine but nobody's tapped it yet. People don't even know about the sportsplex exists yet. If people living in Matthews don't even know what it is then we can't expect anyone else to. If nothing else EDAC could focus on this one thing – someone needs to step. Ms. Whitley said she has requested that the town print a hotel and restaurant guide but was turned down. Mr. Justice explained that is because the sportsplex is owned by Mecklenburg County and they are in the process of producing that type of guide. Ms. Whitley said it hasn't happened yet so she stepped up and put one together herself, but that it should be a job for EDAC. Matthews isn't getting any recognition because it's a County project. Mr. Justice suggested seeing if a meeting could be arranged with the County to discuss these issues. He also asked if EDAC was interested in

seeing the small area plan that was produced several years ago for that area. It's dated compared to today's market but perhaps it would help to hear what has already been discussed.

Mr. Jamison said Mecklenburg County is just focused on the sportsplex and EDAC is focused on what the sportsplex can do for Matthews. Ms. Whitley said Matthews needs to promote it and the surrounding development. Mr. Justice reminded the group that the town doesn't own any of the entertainment district property and can't make the development happen. Ms. Whitley said she wants to market the town to the people using the sportsplex, not necessarily to the developers at this time. Mr. Klein said the town could do both. Mr. Thomson said it might be useful for the potential developers to be aware that there is an active party within the town structure that is interested in removing any perceived friction regarding zoning and planning approvals, it might hasten the developers' interest. Mr. Justice explained that the two property owners have already engaged a development partner and that representative has been having discussions with the town for a while. Like everything else it takes time. The town is limited in what it can do since the property owners have already engaged their development partner. There are some issues related to the County and Phase II development that play a role in this as well.

Mr. Justice will provide more information regarding the process, issues and challenges at the next EDAC meeting.

Mr. Martin asked for a discussion item to be added to future EDAC meetings: information on projects in the works. This could be a quick review of upcoming Planning items and other projects that may come up in the near future.

Mr. Martin suggested a future summit item: a roundtable discussion with two or three well-respected developers regarding how they see Matthews and what the Town needs to do to get from point A to point B. Their knowledge, clout and financial connections could offer great insight for Matthews. Mr. Jamison noted a recent Chamber meeting in which NC Economic Development Board Chair John Lassiter spoke about a person in their organization who looks at places where there are obstacles to economic development and figures out how to remove them, called the Office of the Repealer.

\*Ms. Martin departed

Since time was running short this discussion was curtailed. This will be discussed again at the next meeting.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **EDAC BYLAW CHANGES**

Mr. Justice explained the discussion from last meeting to move the regular meeting time from 7:00 am to 7:30 am, and the desire to add an ex-officio position, which would be filled by a representative from the four town alliance in order to discuss issues relating to the alliance directly with EDAC.

Motion by Mr. Jones to change the regular meeting time to 7:30 am. Seconded by Mr. Martin.

Mr. Gill questioned the change, noting that this meeting started at 7:00 and is running long. He suggested future meetings would also run over. Mr. Klein suggested ordering the agenda to place items requiring votes at the top. Discussion ensued, and by general consensus it was determined that the meeting time will remain at 7:00.

Motion by Mr. Babinski to add an ex-officio member from the four town alliance group. Seconded by Mr. Martin and unanimously approved.

## **EDAC PARTICIPATION REQUIREMENT**

Mr. Justice noted the inability to conduct business with no quorum and reminded members that regular attendance is necessary. If someone is unable to attend they should inform staff as soon as possible.

## **MATTHEWS CHAMBER BUSINESS EXPO**

By general consensus EDAC agreed to attend the 2014 Business Expo. A table will cost \$150. If anyone is interested in covering the table they should contact Mr. Justice.

## **BUSINESS SUMMIT PLANNING**

The next summit is scheduled for May 9<sup>th</sup> with North Carolina Commerce Secretary Sharon Decker. EDAC members are needed to plan the event. Mr. Jamison, Mr. Jones, Mr. Martin and Mr. Gill volunteered to work on the summit.

## **STAFF REPORT**

*UDO*: The Unified Development Ordinance was approved with an effective date of April 1, 2014. The document is available on the Planning section of the town's website.

*Urban3 tax revenue analysis*: this was presented to the Board of Commissioners and will be discussed further at the Planning Conference.

## **MISCELLANEOUS**

The Erickson property is back in action. Very preliminary discussions are taking place now. More information will be dispersed when it becomes available.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

Motion by Mr. Thomson to adjourn. Seconded by Mr. Martin and unanimously approved. The meeting adjourned at 8:42 am.

Respectfully submitted,

Lori Canapinno  
Town Clerk