

MINUTES
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
THURSDAY, JANUARY 21, 2010
7:00 AM
JORDAN ROOM, MATTHEWS TOWN HALL

PRESENT: Chairman Paul Jamison; Vice Chairman Jim Johnson; Members Paul Babinski, Rachel Garcia, Jennefer Garrity, Greg Klein, Bev Martin, John Urban, Tina Whitley; Assistant Town Manager Jamie Justice; Deputy Town Clerk Lori Canapinno

ABSENT: Bill Rhyne, Dennis Toler

ALSO PRESENT: Assistant to the Manager/Communications Director Annette Privette-Keller; Louis Smith, Microecture of North Carolina, PLLC

CALL TO ORDER: Chairman Jamison called the meeting to order at 7:05 am.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES: Ms. Martin motioned to approve the minutes of the November 19, 2009 meeting. Mr. Klein seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

Appointments: Chair and Vice Chair

Ms. Martin moved to reappoint Paul Jamison and Jim Johnson as Chair and Vice-Chair, respectively. Ms. Whitley seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Subcommittees

Chairman Jamison noted that the town has received several applications for the open EDAC position. Group consensus was that those who are not chosen to serve on the committee will be asked to join one of the subcommittees so they may still share their expertise. The Board of Commissioners is expected to appoint one individual during the February 8th meeting. The goal is to get the remaining candidates on a subcommittee before the economic development summit in March.

Business Incubator program

The Board of Commissioners approved the first step - surveying. Mr. Justice is waiting for a contract from the SBTDC before moving forward. The idea of using an email survey was discussed but there aren't enough viable email addresses to make that work. Ms. Whitley suggested using the Chamber of Commerce email list. Mr. Justice said it should get going by the first week of February.

Economic Development Summit

Chairman Jamison said more than two hours may be needed for the summit. Mr. Urban suggested extending the summit time period or paring down the breakout sessions. He suggested ten or fifteen minutes for each subject without forming breakout sessions but rather letting the entire group comment en masse. Chairman Jamison agreed and said that fifteen minutes might not be enough time if the turnout is high. He said an additional hour may be necessary. Mr. Johnson said it shouldn't be too long and suggested keeping the summit at two

hours to leave attendees wanting more. Mr. Urban said three hours would be too long. He suggested hitting the highlights of what the subcommittees mean and letting people flesh out some big ideas and then come back to the table and expand on those ideas. Some people just can't or aren't willing to attend a three hour meeting.

Ms. Whitley asked if Planning Director Kathi Ingrish would be there as a resource to discuss any planning and zoning-related issues that might come up. Mr. Justice said it would make sense to have her there to discuss the UDO as well as answer questions that might arise.

Chairman Jamison said everyone should have a chance to speak. He does like the idea of breakout sessions so people can move to different sessions if they wish. He suggested that two summits might be helpful – one in the spring and one in the fall. EDAC will learn if this is necessary and learn lessons from the first summit.

Each subcommittee will be asked to come up with a few questions and/or points of discussion for the summit. Subcommittee chairs will meet with Chairman Jamison next week to refine those points of discussion before bringing them back to the entire group.

Mr. Urban suggested focusing on specific things EDAC is looking to gain public input about, like projects that need to be completed such as the UDO and Downtown Master Plan guidelines. It would allow for another avenue of public discussion and get these things off the table prior to a fall summit. Chairman Jamison agreed and said signage and traffic are issues that always need to be addressed.

Chairman Jamison asked for volunteers to help Annette Privette-Keller with the marketing of the summit. Ms. Whitley and Chairman Jamison volunteered their services.

Mr. Justice will continue to work to determine the date of the event.

There was some discussion of the setup of the event. Ms. Martin suggested a panel style discussion instead of breakout groups – perhaps ten minutes for the talk and five minutes for questions. It may help resolve some of the timing issues and would allow each attendee to hear everything that is being presented. Mr. Babinski suggested having a clerk document the proceedings.

There was additional discussion on the potential audience. It does not have to be limited to only Matthews businesses. Mr. Justice noted that the size constraints of the location will dictate the invitation list but that the summit could be marketed to multiple groups. Chairman Jamison suggested a registration process to would help calculate attendee numbers.

The group discussed coordinating the summit with the annual Taste & Trade show at CPCC. Mr. Urban said it would be a good way to get a crowd and promote the town but suggested that this first spring summit should serve as more of an internal organizational process. He said a fall summit and subsequent summits could be used to garner external feedback. There was tentative agreement that this first summit would serve as a way to connect internally with those who live and work in Matthews. Once that is figured out, future summits could be thrown open to invite outside feedback and involvement. Ms. Whitley said the first summit could still be held on the same day as the trade show – people could attend the EDAC summit from noon to 2:30 or so and then enter the trade show at its 3:00 starting time.

Mr. Babinski asked about sponsorship. Mr. Justice said he hopes to get Wingate University to sponsor.

Arts Village

Louis Smith discussed his ongoing project to bring an arts village community to Matthews. Bev Martin has helped him quite a bit. Mr. Smith has met with about ninety percent of the arts community in town. Their comments helped him revise his project. The plan now calls for a 5-unit prototype, with the first phase of fifteen to twenty units and then subsequent phases as necessary. He would like to place the prototype units on the now-vacant site on Matthews Station Street near Beantown Tavern.

Mr. Smith is requesting some things from EDAC. The first is some assistance in establishing costs – the land needs to be appraised. Mr. Smith is making the town aware now that there will be some future discussion at the town level. The request is for EDAC members to help bring about that discussion. Another item is staff assistance with research and a letter regarding a proposed public/private partnership. The final item is the designation by EDAC of the project as an additional economic development strategy for the town.

STAFF REPORT

Action Plan Update

Ms. Privette-Keller discussed the branding initiative. The website will go live next weekend. Town merchandise is being ordered as people express interest in it. The new logo will be placed on town vehicles starting this week. Letterhead and business cards are being replaced with the new versions as old stock runs out. The brand statement “We’re Connected” is slowly rolling out. It will be seen on economic development advertisements in the future.

Mr. Justice stated that revenues are tracking lower than expected. Because of this the Economic Development Director position won’t be filled this fiscal year.

The inventory project is still being worked on. Pieces are coming in and the intention is to have that information available on the new website soon.

Chairman Jamison and Ms. Whitley recently attended a Hospitality Association meeting. Ms. Whitley said the association is really pushing sport complexes, including the proposed Matthews sportsplex. Mr. Justice said the Mecklenburg County attorney is currently looking at the latest proposal regarding the public/private partnership. There could be a decision in the spring.

There was some discussion of projects in other areas, such as a large tennis complex going into Pineville. Mr. Babinski asked what is being done to draw tourism to Matthews rather than Pineville and other areas. Ms. Whitley said the sportsplex will be a huge draw. The town is not currently a tourist destination. Until there is something to market to people, Matthews generally just relies on spillover hotel/motel bookings and restaurant business. The town will see an increase in spillover business when the NASCAR hall of fame opens as well as during the NRA annual meeting, both which will be held in Charlotte in upcoming months. Ms. Privette-Keller noted that the children’s museum will be a good draw to town.

Miscellaneous

Chairman Jamison said he met with Tom Hulme of HWS to discuss the medical waste incinerator off Campus Ridge Road. The facility has a permit hearing coming up for renewal and the company wants to be a good community partner and get connected with the town.

There is no news on the Hendrick Auto Mall or Erickson properties.

Ms. Whitley suggested having someone at the summit to answer questions about road projects and issues. Mr. Justice agreed and noted that Frank Warren will also be there.

Mr. Urban discussed the four month schedule for the Clark House. He stressed the need to work more with historic properties and the desire to be proactive rather than reactive.

Mr. Urban discussed a citizen comment made during the last Board of Commissioners meeting that described communication in town as lacking. There was concern that communication was lost when the town newspaper ceased publication. Ms. Whitley said the Charlotte Observer staff is making a decision soon on whether or not to have a stand-alone Matthews section. She will investigate to see if there is anyone the town staff or elected officials can speak with to render a verdict in the town's favor.

Mr. Urban discussed signage around town. These entry signs to the town should be re-branded with the new town logo. He also suggested the possibility of more high-tech signage similar to electronic billboards with marketing materials about town events. The EDAC may wish to encourage the implementation of new signs.

Mr. Urban also pointed out the need to continue promotion of the Farmer's Market.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:10 am.

Respectfully submitted,

Lori Canapinno
Deputy Town Clerk