

**MINUTES**  
**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE**  
**THURSDAY, MARCH 15, 2012**  
**7:00 AM**  
**JORDAN ROOM, MATTHEWS TOWN HALL**

**PRESENT:** Vice Chairman Tim Jones; Members Greg Klein, Bev Martin, Steve Thomson, John Urban, Tina Whitley\*; Assistant Town Manager Jamie Justice; Deputy Town Clerk Lori Canapinno

**ABSENT:** Chairman Paul Jamison; Members Paul Babinski, Rachel Garcia, Roger Martin, Jerry McGuire, Mike Simons

**ALSO PRESENT:** Communications Director Annette Privette-Keller\*

**CALL TO ORDER**

Vice Chairman Jones called the meeting to order at 7:10 am. A quorum was not present, so no official business was conducted. Members held a general discussion of each agenda item.

**INVOCATION**

Ms. Martin rendered the invocation.

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

**Term Limits**

Mr. Justice noted that term limits have been discussed in recent meetings. Some members believe the institution of term limits would be helpful in attracting new members to the group, while others believed there is enough natural turnover to make official limits unnecessary. There is no town mandate regarding limits. If EDAC chooses to institute limits, the bylaws would have to be amended and approved by the Board of Commissioners.

There were only a few applicants the last few times an EDAC position was open. Mr. Justice said he did not feel there is a need to force turnover in the group – current and past members have been actively involved from the committee's inception. If the members choose to move forward he suggested allowing members to re-join the committee at some point after their original term ends. Ms. Whitley and Vice Chairman Jones agreed.

Mr. Urban noted some other advisory boards have term limits in place. He suggested term limits for the positions of Chair and Vice Chair. Mr. Justice noted those positions are elected annually so there is some level of limitation in effect already.

Those in attendance agreed that it is not necessary to institute term limits into EDAC's bylaws.

APPROVED 5/17/2012

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **Business Expo**

EDAC will have a booth at the Chamber's Business Expo on March 20<sup>th</sup> from 4 to 7 pm. Vice Chairman Jones, Mr. Martin, Mr. McGuire and Mr. Justice have volunteered to man the booth. Mr. Thomson and Mr. Klein will be in attendance as well and offered their time if needed.

### **Spring Business Summit**

The spring summit has been tentatively scheduled for Friday, May 18<sup>th</sup>. Mr. McGuire has already agreed to run this next summit and would like someone else to take the reins of the following summit. Mr. Justice requested that someone volunteer to serve with Mr. McGuire as he works on the spring summit so they can take the lead with future summits.

Topics have yet to be determined. Mr. McGuire proposed an alternate to the usual topics and suggested having the entire summit focus on town projects and services. Mr. Urban said that would be a good idea – attendees could be educated on things like the wayfinding project, road projects and the various development projects that are underway.

Mr. Urban suggested it would be good to also disseminate this information at various outside locations such as the Chamber of Commerce and other outside groups. Mr. Justice agreed that would be a good way to spread the word about the town's projects.

### **Façade Grant Regulation Revisions**

Mr. Justice said there had been some discussion about revising certain aspects of the program regulations, particularly regarding grant amounts and the possibility of scaling the awards to the overall project value. Ms. Whitley and Ms. Martin volunteered to draft revisions to submit to the Committee.

### **Strengthen Relationship with Real Estate Community**

Mr. Justice explained this came from the Planning Conference to-do list and was prompted by a discussion at the most recent Mayor's Breakfast. It was suggested that real estate agents could be educated on town events/programs/policies and become advocates for the town.

Mr. Urban said getting tools in the toolbox, like completed development plans, will help.

\*Ms. Privette-Keller arrived.

There was some discussion about methods of disseminating information to real estate professionals. Mr. Klein suggested attending real estate community-specific meetings or inviting Realtors to specific town-sponsored events. Currently, real estate agents are not specifically invited to events – open invitations go out to a broad audience. There was some discussion about targeting one specific event to the real estate community. Mr. Urban said certain plans, specifically the Downtown Master Plan, should be completed before such an event is held. He

said it might be possible for attendees to tour the new Matthews Gateway project to facilitate discussion of new development concepts like multifamily and mixed use concepts.

Those in attendance determined by general consensus that an additional event - separate from the fall summit and targeted specifically to real estate professionals - should be held in the fall. Mr. Urban suggested including the Downtown Merchants Group in that event. The Business Development subcommittee can work on it with assistance from Mr. Urban. Vice Chairman Jones said Chairman Jamison should play a significant role in this since he is part of the real estate community himself. Mr. Justice will address that with Chairman Jamison. Mr. Urban said Chairman Jamison will be able to pull Realtors together but that the town will have to figure out how to properly disseminate the information.

## **SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS**

### **Downtown**

Mr. Urban said the town as a whole has plenty of single family housing and excellent shopping centers, but the primary goal of the Downtown Master Plan is to create a mixed-use environment and build a healthy downtown. This shift in thinking was confirmed at the Planning Conference. The Sportsplex and Wingate Commons will play roles in that too.

Mr. Urban summarized the nine key recommendations from the draft Downtown Master Plan, which include incorporating shared use parking structures, encouraging additional housing unit development and the expansion of the downtown street grid. The entire draft document will be made available for review in the near future.

Discussion of the downtown area ensued. Mr. Klein noted that the area doesn't offer much at night and wondered if incentives for unique retail shops that would draw people are warranted. Mr. Justice explained the incentives policy is not aimed at that type of small business. He said the way to address that issue is to get the Downtown Master Plan done, get an active downtown group organized and then figure out how to get new businesses into Matthews. The town needs to be able to sell the vision of downtown and its value, perhaps with joint marketing funded through a special program instead of straight cash incentives. Mr. Urban agreed and said buy-in is necessary. He said sometimes downtown merchants in general want town government to provide businesses, clients and incentives, when in reality the town should only be promoting a healthy environment. A healthy downtown environment means mixed use with higher density and things of that nature. He said developers should be informed that they can lower rents and get people in their spaces to help generate that healthy environment - the market is there. The town government needs to promote, not provide.

Mr. Urban said the town is in essence starting over with the downtown. Restaurants seem to be the niche that downtown is currently holding onto, but then heads on beds are needed to keep that vibrant. Matthews is about 10-15 years behind the redevelopment curve - Cornelius, Huntersville and similar towns have already gone through the revitalization process that Matthews is now trying for. Matthews has restaurants coming in, and boutique shop owners will start trying to capture those customers. The town needs to get to that critical mass that would allow for that to happen. It's coming now but businesses have to stick around. There needs to be some level of patience and for the town's plans to come to fruition. Mr. Urban said he feels restaurants are a good start for that, but the town is years away from the momentum that is necessary to sustain the process. Downtown needs to be diversified before the Sportsplex and Wingate Commons projects come in since they could have an ill effect on downtown.

Mr. Justice noted the Downtown Master Plan should be adopted in July or August. There is opportunity for public comments prior to that so the members are encouraged to review and comment.

\*Ms. Whitley departed.

### **Business Development**

Vice Chairman Jones said the recent mayor's Breakfast was a success. If Mayor Taylor is willing then the program will continue.

Mr. Urban asked if the conversation was productive. Vice Chairman Jones said the discussion gave people substantive information and gave the town something to take action on. Signage and beautification issues have come up in the past and discussion on pride in the community/appearance occurred at this breakfast too. It's another way for the community to touch government. Mr. Justice agreed and said a mix of education and action items come out of each breakfast.

### **Development Process/Planning Advisory**

Mr. Justice said the final report is ready and includes some things to act on. Town staff will devise a plan to implement the changes.

### **STAFF REPORT/ACTION PLAN UPDATE**

Communications Director Annette Privette-Keller gave an update on the wayfinding system. This will affect the aesthetics of the town, including signage, landscaping and demarcation of culture/destination areas and making sure the town boundaries are obvious. The first phase includes several things: naming town facilities like the community center theater, creating a cultural arts center and instituting signage for parks and facilities. There will be murals at key downtown locations along with directional signage and gateway signage. The first phase was approved by the Town Board on Monday.

*Wingate Commons:* Wingate Commons work is planned. Grading, utilities and roadwork will take place this spring and summer with construction of the school building beginning September 1<sup>st</sup> with a planned completion date of May 2013 (*Subsequent to this report, it was announced that construction of the Wingate school building has been delayed from 6 months to 2 years*).

*Façade Grant Program:* The recipient of the first façade grant, Planet Ballroom at 189 North Trade Street, will be opening in early April. The town will tie in the promotion of the program with that grand opening. Planner Jay Camp has been talking to some other possible applicants and Ms. Privette-Keller has identified some possible mural locations, for which façade grant money could potentially be used. An issue to be aware of is that the program guidelines require older buildings, so while murals do fit the criteria for a grant they would have to be placed in the right locations.

*Downtown Wi-Fi:* Mr. Justice spoke with representatives from Time Warner Cable and Windstream and both are interested. Time Warner Cable will respond to an RFP with non-specific numbers but a bid process would allow them to come in with specific price proposals. Windstream is more interested in free hotspots downtown rather than also offering paid services to potential customers. Mr. Justice will work on the RFP.

*Business Incentives Policy:* Mr. Justice is still working on that and plans to have more specifics to EDAC at the May meeting.

*Sportsplex:* Groundbreaking will take place in May or June.

*Business Incubator:* The incubator report was well-received by the Town Board. Concepts still need to be worked on.

*Farmers' Market:* The Farmers' Market is working on adding a Tuesday night market with live entertainment. The plan is for it to be held from 6 to 8 pm starting in May and running through the summer.

**ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 8:20 am.

Respectfully submitted,

Lori Canapinno  
Deputy Town Clerk