

**MINUTES
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
THURSDAY, MARCH 17, 2011
7:00 AM
JORDAN ROOM, MATTHEWS TOWN HALL**

PRESENT: Vice Chairman Jim Johnson; Members Paul Babinski, Rachel Garcia, Tim Jones, Greg Klein, Bev Martin, Jerry McGuire, Mike Simons, John Urban, Tina Whitley; Assistant Town Manager Jamie Justice; Deputy Town Clerk Lori Canapinno

ABSENT: Chairman Paul Jamison; Member Bill Rhyne

CALL TO ORDER

Vice Chairman Johnson called the meeting to order at 7:10 am.

INVOCATION

Mr. McGuire rendered the invocation.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

Mr. Klein motioned to approve the minutes of the January 20, 2011 meeting. Mr. Jones seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Summit

Mr. McGuire explained the next summit will be on Friday, May 13, 2011 from 11:30 am to 2 pm in the Town Hall. Notice will be sent in the newsletter and in a press release. Three topics will be on the agenda: business success stories, social media and technology, and educational resources. There may also be enough time for Mayor Jim Taylor and/or Town Manager Hazen Blodgett to give a town project update.

Currently there is no sponsor in place. EDAC members should network to see if any business is interested in sponsoring the event.

Small Business Incubator

Mr. Justice explained that meetings have been held with Paul Wetenhall, President of the Ben Craig Center and Mark Bryant of Wingate University. Both organizations are willing to help – the town now has to decide what it needs. The Ben Craig Center doesn't have the funding to start a satellite incubator in Matthews but it has plenty of knowledge to pass on. Wingate may eventually increase their entrepreneurship minor at the school and may have a larger role in this type of project at some point in the future.

The town needs to figure out which option would be better: a brick and mortar situation or services available in different locations around town. Mr. Justice explained that the town-owned Bradford Clinic building may be available as office space. It could be a cost-effective way to get actual office space. Mr.

APPROVED 5/19/2011

Justice suggested forming a small committee to investigate the options and make a recommendation to the Town Board. A feasibility study could be performed on the concept of the incubator in general and with the Bradford Clinic specifically as the physical location.

Consensus was that Bradford Clinic would be a great location. A tour will be arranged for the members to see inside. There was some discussion of the condition of the building. Roof repairs and exterior work are being done now. Costs and funds for any work needed inside have not yet been identified. Mr. Justice noted the town's long-term plan for that area is an expansion of Stumptown Park, so the exact length of time any use could be in the building is uncertain.

Ms. Whitley, Mr. Jones and Ms. Garcia volunteered for the committee. A tour will be set up for next week and a place will be held on the March 28 Town Board agenda.

There was some discussion about the setup of an incubator system. Mr. Justice explained it is up to the town. Mr. McGuire suggested it would be good to form an incubator as a non-profit entity. Ms. Whitley wondered if there was any downside to keeping an incubator under the town's direct purview. She suggested having Town Attorney Charlie Buckley review the matter to determine the method that would be best for the town.

Mr. Justice introduced audience member Byron Brogan of the Ministry at Work program at Matthews United Methodist Church. Mr. Brogan has a group of people looking for space to start businesses. This indicates end users are out there and are looking for what the town may be able to provide.

Mr. Urban asked if community interest could be gauged - with an email blast, article in the paper or something else - soon. Mr. Justice noted the SBTDC performed a market assessment last year and the response was favorable. He cautioned against marketing too soon, before certain ideas are fully fleshed out. There was discussion of inviting responses with articles in the local newspapers and public meetings. A survey could be developed to indicate the idea is under consideration and request public comment. The general consensus was to determine the condition of the building and then see if the Board of Commissioners will grant approval to move forward. If so, next steps will be figured out and the program could be announced at the summit in May.

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

Downtown – Façade Grant Program

Vice Chairman Johnson said many people have been talking about the Façade Grant program. Mr. Justice said no applications have been received yet but Jay Camp has recently been in discussions with a new downtown business owner who will probably be applying soon. He mentioned having Jay personally disperse flyers and discuss the program throughout the downtown area. This should happen soon.

Business Development – Taste & Trade presence, Breakfast with the Mayor follow-up

Mr. Jones said the Mayor's Breakfast went very well. The small group allowed for a comfortable exchange of ideas, and both Mayor Taylor and Town Manager Hazen Blodgett were excellent. The after-event survey results have already been distributed, but Mr. Jones pointed out two highlights: 100% of respondents were pleased with Mayor Taylor's responses, and 100% of respondents *agree* or *strongly agree* that this type of event should continue. The comments were very favorable as well.

Mr. Jones said the Jordan Room is the perfect location with the small group. He also suggested allowing an EDAC member to attend. Vice Chairman Johnson suggested allowing one or two members to attend on a rotating basis. He noted the small number of invitees allows for the best discussion.

There was discussion of taking photographs at future events and sending media releases afterward. Consensus was to produce media releases after each event.

Mr. Jones said the subcommittee has suggested asking the mayor to hold these breakfasts on a quarterly basis. Vice Chairman Johnson motioned to make a recommendation to the Board of Commissioners to continue holding the event on a quarterly basis. Mr. Jones seconded and the motion was unanimously approved. Dates will be discussed with the mayor and the next event should be announced at the summit.

The Taste & Trade business show is scheduled for March 24th. Ms. Whitley has arranged for a table for EDAC. Roger Martin has volunteered to staff it.

Development Process/Planning Advisory – UDO, Development Process review project

Mr. Urban said the UDO consultant has been asked to have the final draft ready by the end of March. Three study sessions will be scheduled for the Board of Commissioners to perform a line by line review.

Mr. Justice explained that the development process review project comes from last month's Planning Conference. The goal is to map out how the process works now and then streamline the process for best practices using stakeholders and public input sessions. Strategic changes to improve the process will make things easier for everyone involved. Mr. Justice will send information to the Chamber for inclusion in the newsletter once dates have been finalized.

STAFF REPORT/ACTION PLAN UPDATE

Democratic National Convention

Forty thousand information packets will be dispersed to the media and Matthews is working on getting plugged into that. The goal is to get interest in Matthews – get people to come early and attend Matthews Alive, get media attention, offer live feed locations, etc. All Matthews hotels will be filled.

Status of Downtown Initiative

David Blackley and Steve Benson will become part of the Downtown Master Plan stakeholders group. There should be some action items planned with an organized effort for any future downtown initiatives.

Planning Conference report

All the information is on the town's website. Highlights include the UDO, wayfinding (directional signage) and branding. Tourism finds will be used for some of that. A smart growth policy will be discussed. The hope is for the Board of Commissioners to come to a consensus on what they'd like to see, which would then be included in the town's policy documents. It would eliminate guesswork on the part of developers and businesspeople. Another issue was incentives for economic development. Various options will be researched and brought back to the Commissioners for review.

Sportsplex

The town has been working with the Centralina Council of Governments to put together a public/private partnership. The property owners, Town Board and stakeholders have all been brought to the table. The discussion to decide whether or not to move forward should take place in May. If everything goes well, meetings with developers would follow, along with a market assessment conducted by Frank Warren. Following that would be public meetings, then an RFQ for a master developer.

MISCELLANEOUS

Ms. Whitley discussed a meeting that took place recently about sign regulations, particularly signs on Independence Boulevard and directional signs in downtown. Planning Director Kathi Ingrish spoke about the size of signs and their visibility in relation to the speed at which drivers pass and street number markers on Independence Boulevard. Mr. Justice asked for anyone with input on sign regulations to forward that input to Ms. Ingrish as soon as possible. Mr. Urban said the Town Board is very interested in a wayfinding system and they will probably push forward with that soon.

The town has received its official Census population figure for 2010: roughly 27,200. That shows a 22% population increase in the past ten years. The state's estimate of Matthews' population was higher, so the town will check the Census data to be sure there aren't any obvious errors.

The greenway's official opening will be on April 9, 2011. All are invited to attend.

ADJOURNMENT: Mr. Urban motioned to adjourn. Mr. Babinski seconded and the motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 8:25 am.

Respectfully submitted,

Lori Canapinno
Deputy Town Clerk