

MINUTES
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
THURSDAY, MARCH 19, 2009
7:00 AM
JORDAN ROOM, MATTHEWS TOWN HALL

PRESENT: Members Rachel Garcia, Paul Jamison, Jim Johnson, Greg Klein, Nancy Lafond (via telephone), Bev Martin, Randy Mitchell, Bill Rhyne, Dennis Toler, John Urban, Tina Whitley; Assistant Town Manager Jamie Justice; Deputy Town Clerk Lori Canapinno

ABSENT: Paul Babinski

CALL TO ORDER: Mr. Justice called the meeting to order at 7:08am and declared a quorum.

Mr. Babinski was unable to attend the meeting due to an engagement with a business leader who is currently chairing a large business recruiting effort. Mr. Babinski will present his insights at a future meeting.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

BYLAWS

The revised bylaws were distributed and verified.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Mr. Jamison stated he would like to serve the committee as an officer. Mr. Johnson made a motion to nominate Paul Jamison for Chairman. Ms. Martin seconded the motion. Ms. Whitley nominated Jim Johnson to serve as Vice Chairman. Mr. Jamison seconded the motion. Mr. Johnson amended his motion to nominate Paul Jamison as Chairman and Jim Johnson as Vice Chairman. Mr. Rhyne seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Paul Jamison was elected Chairman and Jim Johnson was elected Vice Chairman of the EDAC for the 2009 calendar year.

NEW BUSINESS:

INSURANCE

Mr. Justice informed the Committee that its members are under the umbrella of the Town's insurance policy with regard to potential legal action. Ms. Lafond suggested that any legal questions that come up should be routed through Mr. Justice who will then contact the Town Attorney.

ADVISORY BOARD SUMMIT

An advisory board summit is scheduled for Monday, April 6, 2009 between 7 and 8:30 pm. All advisory boards and committees in the town will meet to communicate their individual progress and encourage discussion between boards and committees. Each board chairman and staff liaison will make a report and all members are invited to attend.

STAFF REPORT/ACTION PLAN UPDATE:

UDO UPDATE

The Unified Development Ordinance is being created to incorporate the Zoning Ordinance, Land Use Plan, Storm Water regulations and more together into a unified reference. It will ensure that all the plans and regulations work together.

The Town is six months into the eighteen month long process. The Land Use Plan, which describes the Town's broad range vision, is currently undergoing revision. Public meetings discussing the Land Use Plan will occur soon. The hope is to finalize the land use plan component of the UDO this fall.

The seven member stakeholder group will work on the details of the UDO and act as a technical advisory committee for the consultant. The Town hopes to have a significant draft available by Christmas. The EDAC will need to have some input in this process. Everyone involved needs to be sure they're all of the same mindset with regards to economic development.

Mr. Mitchell asked if there were any surprises in the process so far. Ms. Lafond said there were many newcomers to the public meetings and many of them were vocal. This process is encouraging people to become involved in the Town.

Mr. Urban stated that the branding or identity of Matthews is still missing. He said there is still a large group of people who have lived in Matthews for a long time and want the status quo to remain while the UDO pushes for change. He described it as a way to help Matthews survive and said if we don't accommodate change then Matthews as it is known today will cease to exist. He said that a large portion of people are disconnected. Is the town a cradle-to-grave community or a bedroom community for retirees?

Mr. Justice suggested that it could get fleshed out through the UDO process Mr. Urban said that was why he originally suggested the need for the advisory board summit, as a way to encourage communication for everyone and a method to help tackle big issues. He said there should be a monthly UDO report. He also said that some Planning officials have been in place for the last ten years and that a fresh perspective could be helpful. He said the town has a tendency to be very reactive instead of proactive and that needs to change.

Mr. Justice said that it is a public process. The intent is to flesh it all out before the end. Mr. Johnson suggested that it would be a good idea to have the EDAC more involved, perhaps by gaining a seat on the stakeholder committee. Mr. Justice said he would see what he could do to make that happen. Ms. Lafond noted that the stakeholders were appointed by the Town Board so the request to include an EDAC stakeholder could be added to the Town Board agenda. Mr. Urban said he would be willing to be the point person and could report back to the EDAC via email. The Committee agreed that Mr. Urban should represent the EDAC in this position. Mr. Justice stated he would discuss this with Town staff and report back to the EDAC on how we can get the EDAC more involved in the UDO process.

Mr. Toler asked about the pre-zoning process as recommended by Frank Warren. Mr. Justice replied that it is one of the ideas that still needed to be fleshed out.

STRATEGIC PLAN UPDATE

The broad vision includes twelve community vision statements. Separately, the town government has been working on performance measures. The Strategic Plan is the way to connect them. It is currently in the draft stage.

The Town has the vision and mission and now we also have the goals that the town needs to work on to make that happen. It's designed for a five year period and the goals that are in place are the ways we fulfill the mission. The strategies are what are needed to accomplish the goals, and staff will work on that and return to the Town Board. The key outcome measures are the final way to measure the Town's performance. This will make the vision statements come alive and ensure that everyone is on the same page.

The EDAC has a role in making that happen. One strategy likely will be the implementation of the Economic Development Plan. The UDO and Land Use Plan also fall under the Economic Development/Land Use Planning goal.

ACTION PLAN UPDATE

Task number one – EDAC bylaws - has been accomplished.

Number two – initial communications with partner agencies – is ongoing. Mr. Justice spoke with Town Manager Hazen Blodgett about scheduling meetings in the next few weeks with the Mayor, Town Manager, legislators, and EDAC Chairman. Mr. Justice will meet with the Mecklenburg County Economic Director and he and Ms. Whitely will meet with the Charlotte Regional Visitor's Authority. The plan is to work on these meetings in the next 30 to 60 days.

Number three – product inventory – has begun. Mr. Justice met with the UNCC professor last week and his students have begun collecting information this week. They started pulling information electronically. They began with the downtown area as the test case and will expand out to the rest of the town. They were asked to start by gathering the same information that is available on the City of Hickory business inventory document. This could turn into a continuous project for subsequent classes and may be completed by the end of the summer.

Number four – marketing/branding strategy – was presented at the Planning Conference. Funding needs to be allocated by the Town Board to make this happen. Annette Privette-Keller is working on the proposal and should present it to the Town Board within the next thirty days. Ms. Whitely asked if the EDAC would see any ideas before they were presented to the Town Board. Mr. Justice said that has been discussed and the process will likely include opportunities for input from stakeholders. Several groups want input, not only the EDAC.

Mr. Mitchell asked if funding has been allocated. Mr. Justice explained that \$125,000 exists in the current budget for the economic development program but was frozen due to the economic situation. However, the branding is very important and that funding could be requested to be made available.

Mr. Jamison stated that we first have to figure out who we are as a town. Matthews needs a strong indication of the brand. Mr. Justice explained that Ms. Privette-Keller is driving this. She is currently researching the process and will propose the consultant who will do the work of forming the brand. Ms. Lafond mentioned that branding is definitely a priority - something the Town Board agreed with at the Planning Conference.

Number five – review Economic Development Strategic Plan. Mr. Justice said that Frank Warren is happy to speak to the group. It is up to the committee as to when he does that.

Mr. Urban stated that they currently don't know what the UDO folks are doing, and that perhaps that information is needed first. He said that the committee needs an equal balance of information and suggested that they get information regarding the UDO first and then invite Mr. Warren to speak at a later date. The Committee agreed to this approach.

Number six – existing business taskforce. This hasn't yet begun. Mr. Justice suggested that some committee members be appointed to work on this. Mr. Urban suggested initiating contact between business owners and the EDAC and then incorporating a second phase by asking for information. He suggested that first contact take place in the form of a letter informing business owners of the EDAC and proposed that a regular letter be mailed to the CEO of every business in town. He said the Town needs to treat businesses as its most valuable asset and keep its businesspeople informed.

There was some discussion of what the letter could include. Mr. Urban said that people need words of confidence. Mr. Jamison said it is important to show businesspeople that the Town and EDAC are in place and care about their businesses and desire business people's input. Mr. Klein suggested the inclusion of topics of interest, such as the public meetings that will be held to discuss the UDO as well as meetings of the EDAC and any other group that might be of interest. Ms. Garcia mentioned the importance of a forum for feedback. Mr. Toler and Mr. Klein will help Mr. Jamison draft the letter and will bring it to the next EDAC meeting. Mr. Justice confirmed that the Town has funding to process and mail these letters.

Ms. Whitely asked about an email distribution list. Mr. Justice said that could be done also. Ms. Martin mentioned the town website and suggested either a calendar people could consult themselves or a web-based form people could submit requesting updates. Mr. Rhyne noted the need to develop a separate web page at some point, especially when the data collection has been completed. Mr. Mitchell noted that the redesign of the town website was discussed along with branding at the Planning Conference. Mr. Jamison noted that the Charlotte website is a very good example to follow. It was agreed that Mr. Jamison, Mr. Toler and Mr. Klein will work as this task force on this initial mailing.

Number seven – development tools taskforce. The presentation at the Planning Conference introduced the concepts. The next step involves better understanding how it works and to get specific examples to bring to the Town Board. Mr. Justice suggested a joint meeting of the EDAC and Town Board for the next step to ensure everyone is following the same plan.

Number eight – budget. The budget is currently being worked on. The ED position isn't funded. The proposed budget goes to the Town Board in May and hearings will be held in early June. Mr. Justice said the question is whether he should continue his part time work as de facto Economic Development Director or if the Town should spend the money to hire a full time director.

Number nine – follow up communications – will be performed after tasks three and four have been completed.

MISCELLANEOUS:

Mr. Justice dispersed a flyer that was distributed with the privilege license invoices that were recently mailed. It includes a mention of the EDAC.

He discussed the tour of various local areas made by the Town Board during the Planning Conference. They had favorable comments for the Class A office space in Providence Park located in Charlotte off Highway 16. One specific issue was that all the offices were on one side of Providence Road but all the services were on the opposite side – not something to emulate. Baxter Village was also visited. It's a mixed use project that was also received favorably. It looks great with office space tucked behind buildings or on the second floor. More office space could be added in a project of that type. Ms. Lafond said that she really liked it, especially the storefronts right by the entrances so people could see them immediately.

Mr. Justice also said that construction has begun on the second of three buildings in the Matthews Park Corporate Center. This is the location where Morningstar Properties will be headquartered. It's an \$18.5 million local investment and will make a connection to Ames Street.

Mr. Urban made a suggestion to have Planning Director Kathi Ingrish come in to discuss upcoming projects. Mr. Justice said he will request that Ms. Ingrish attend the next meeting.

There was some discussion of development in other areas of the country. Ms. Lafond described some of the construction and development she'd recently seen in Texas. Mr. Rhyne discussed development in Northern Virginia and its plentiful use of mixed use and planned unit developments.

ADJOURNMENT: Ms. Lafond made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Johnson seconded and the motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 8:25 am.

Respectfully submitted,

Lori Canapinno
Deputy Town Clerk