

MINUTES
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
THURSDAY, MARCH 21, 2013
7:00 AM
JORDAN ROOM, MATTHEWS TOWN HALL

PRESENT: Chairman Paul Jamison, Vice Chairman Tim Jones; Greg Klein, Roger Martin, Bev Martin, Crystal Provance, Steve Thomson, Commissioner John Urban (appointed member), Chamber Executive Director Tina Whitley (ex-officio); Assistant Town Manager Jamie Justice; Town Clerk Lori Canapinno

ABSENT: Members Paul Babinski, Mark Harrison and Jerry McGuire

ALSO PRESENT: Senior Planner Jay Camp

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Jamison called the meeting to order at 7:04 am.

INVOCATION

Chairman Jamison rendered an invocation.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: JANUARY 17, 2013

Motion by Ms. Martin to approve the minutes of the January 17, 2013 meeting. Seconded by Mr. Klein and unanimously approved.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

GREATER MATTHEWS BUSINESS EXPO

The Expo is scheduled for March 26th and volunteers are needed to man the EDAC booth. Tim Jones and Steve Thomson volunteered for the 4-5 pm shift, Greg Klein and Roger Martin for 5-6 and Roger Martin and Tim Jones for 6-7.

FOUR TOWNS PARTNERSHIP UPDATE

Mr. Urban explained that each of the four towns – Stallings, Indian Trail, Mint Hill and Matthews – have agreed to pay a small amount of money to move forward and formulate an action plan to create an alliance with the four towns to address any number of possibilities. These possibilities include everything from marketing the four towns

as a regional area to combining services to a shared business park. The Matthews Board of Commissioners supports the partnership.

REALTORS' COFFEE

Chairman Jamison noted that only 6 people had signed up but 22 showed up for the event. It was a good event with great feedback. Senior Planner Jay Camp will host another meeting soon to have a follow-up discussion on signage. It would be a good idea to hold this meeting about once a year.

Mr. Martin asked if it would be prudent to start generating additional interest for future meetings by developing an email list and sending town information on a regular basis. Demographic data and information specific to both residential and commercial development could be sent out quarterly. Mr. Martin and Chairman Jamison will meet to further discuss this possible action.

NEW BUSINESS

SPRING BUSINESS SUMMIT

Mr. Justice noted that the planning group from last fall's summit worked on a list of possible topics for the next summit. The normal schedule would call for the next summit to be set for the third Friday in May. Jerry McGuire, the usual organizer, was not present to discuss this but the question was raised regarding the short timeline and if it would be better to push the summit back to the summer or fall. There was some general discussion that May would not be the best time. Attendance has started to level off, although those numbers change depending on the speakers involved. There was a discussion of a correlation between the number of speakers and attendance rates, but the most recent evaluation results are inconclusive in that regard.

By general consensus it was determined that the spring summit was not necessary and the next summit should be held in October 2013. Mr. Urban suggested targeting higher-level dignitaries as speakers. Mr. Justice noted that in the past, the committee invited appointed staff rather than elected officials in order to avoid marking the summit as a political event. He asked if the committee had any concerns with that. Ms. Whitley supported it. Mr. Martin said it's important to have a meaty discussion, not just light political discourse, and suggested an emphasis on commerce, transportation and similar topics. Mr. Urban noted the recent legislative discussion regarding the potential changes to sales tax regulations that will affect most businesses – politics and reality are combining for these businesses.

Chairman Jamison, Vice Chairman Jones, Mr. Klein, Ms. Martin and Mr. Thomson volunteered to work with Mr. McGuire on the next summit. The next planning session is tentatively scheduled for April 19th at 7:45 am.

GO2MATTHEWS 2013

Ms. Whitley explained the revised concept for the Go2Matthews marketing program. Instead of trying to incorporate all of the businesses in town, this effort focuses on Chamber member businesses. Members will be working for members this way. Any time one shops at or gives business to a Chamber business, a Go Buck form can be filled out for prizes to be drawn at the monthly Chamber luncheons. The intent is to increase awareness of chamber members and increase business to business traffic.

BEARING RESOURCES SITE ANALYSIS PROPOSAL

Mr. Justice explained this is a proposal to review greenfield sites in town and analyze their positives and negatives in terms of future development. The proposal, at \$300 per site, would include the analysis, report and ranking to have as a resource for developers interested in the town.

Ms. Whitley asked why a consultant should be paid for work that could theoretically be done by staff and/or committee members. Mr. Justice said the consultant is an economic developer who knows what companies are looking for. Staff could attempt the same work, although they would not have the same economic development background. Chairman Jamison said he and Mr. Martin probably have all the knowledge necessary to work with the data.

Mr. Justice said there are sites in town that are not being actively marketed. His opinion of the value of this tool is that the information would be put together that addresses the sites' deficiencies, which would then allow the town to address those deficiencies, such as determining the costs of adding infrastructure or overcoming environmental problems.

Mr. Martin noted that Indian Trail has an Economic Development Director and has determined that the town wants to develop land and grow their business community. He asked if the Matthews Town Board has come to the same conclusion, or if the Board is willing to sit and wait for developers to bring forth the next great idea to the town. There are certain areas in town that could be looked at, particularly around McKee Road and the Mount Harmony Church Road areas. He said he's not sure this proposal is worth the money unless the town decides to get very involved and support development. He suggested the town needs to get in touch with property owner Rick Hendrick and try to get him moving on development on his property.

Discussion of attempting to perform similar studies in-house continued. Mr. Justice noted that between several staff and committee members there was probably enough institutional knowledge of the properties but all of that information needs to be put together in a useable format. General consensus was that the time is not right to proceed with this proposal.

Mr. Klein questioned if Matthews would lose potential development to Indian Trail if Matthews waited to take action on this project. Mr. Urban said he didn't think so – Matthews is actively approaching developers for input and is not resting on its laurels. The momentum is building.

Ms. Whitley said she feels that Matthews really needs a large meeting space for conventions and similar events. She hears a lot of requests for that and wondered if the upcoming sportsplex-adjacent Family Entertainment Area plan proposals called for anything like that. Mr. Justice explained that the Town Board is open to all ideas, and that the intent all along has been to incorporate a hotel there, which will likely include such space. The Board is willing to listen to whatever the developers propose. Ms. Whitley said she will send a letter to the Board to inform them of the types of development people are looking for.

DOWNTOWN AREA EXPANSION

Mr. Justice explained the expansion of the downtown boundary beyond the Downtown Overlay District to include the Matthews Presbyterian Hospital area, then out to South Trade Street and Fullwood Lane area. This expansion would help with identification and marketing. There would be no regulatory changes so nothing different for the property owners. It's a great marketing tool and will tie in with the wayfinding and branding that is already located out there in those areas. Mr. Urban said the section of land by Fullwood and 51 would make a strong boundary,

although the map does not indicate its inclusion. He believes the Board of Commissioners decided to include that section when it was discussed at their recent planning conference.

Ms. Whitley asked why the Williams Business Park was not included. Mr. Justice explained that Industrial-zoned properties or business parks are generally not included in downtowns. It could possibly be included in the future if it was developed differently.

Mr. Thomson asked if the eligibility for façade grants would be expanded also. Mr. Justice said no because they are tied in to the Downtown Overlay, which is not changing. That decision could be changed in the future.

DOWNTOWN ORGANIZATION

Mr. Justice said the Town Board reviewed this concept at their recent planning conference. The Downtown Master Plan calls for the creation of a downtown organization. There are a few options: the creation of a downtown steering committee, a downtown merchants organization-type concept or a formal downtown non-profit organization. The Board asked EDAC to lead this and work with staff to figure out how to create an effective downtown organization. The initial thought is to start with the steering committee concept, find some stakeholders who will be assets to the planning and functioning of the group and then figure out how to get started. Ultimately that group should be able to make recommendations on the best way to move forward.

Senior Planner Jay Camp said the town is at a critical point and this group needs to determine what is best for the downtown area. There are much smaller communities that have much more involved downtown organizations.

Ms. Whitley noted that there is a downtown group in existence now. If there is a strong purpose for the new group it will work, but if it's seen simply as a reason to get together and talk about issues it won't. She suggested discussing with them some talking points about the other communities – what they do and how they do it. Chairman Jamison agreed that there needs to be an outline of what the group is going to do. They need to know what the group is going to do and then the structure can be built from there. They need to be told what to do. Mr. Klein and Mr. Thomson noted that the expansion of the downtown boundary allows for new people to become involved in any discussions. New people might have fresh insights. Mr. Camp noted that the existing group is comprised only of merchants. The new group needs to consist of the right people – they might not be only downtown merchants. It needs to be a group of people with business acumen that knows how to create advocacy and knows how to do marketing. They might not be from businesses within the downtown boundary. The group would solely advocate for the continued improvement of downtown Matthews.

Mr. Urban noted the Town will be the catalyst that runs the show in the beginning and then will back out once the group gets going and can run on its own. Mr. Camp said there are two main things these groups have: a purpose and a funding source. Some have grant funding, taxes through business improvement districts and the like.

A working group will meet with Mr. Justice and Mr. Camp. Chairman Jamison, Mr. Martin, Ms. Provance, Mr. Thompson, Ms. Whitley and Mr. Urban volunteered their services. Mr. Camp will email information to get started.

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

Downtown

Chairman Jamison noted no new façade grant applications have been received.

Business Development

Vice Chairman Jones discussed the recent Breakfast with Mayor Taylor event. The paper didn't run the notice and responses were very slow. Eight people attended and there were two no-shows. Mr. Klein said the discussion was good even with the small group. Mayor Taylor did an excellent job. Vice Chairman Jones agreed and said the response was very good – attendees said they wanted to see it continue.

Vice Chairman Jones said that part of the original mission for these was to inform the business community about what EDAC and the Town does, but that doesn't usually wind up happening. Ms. Whitley suggested submitting an article to the Matthews-Mint Hill Weekly every couple of months to describe what EDAC has been up to. Ms. Martin suggested also sending out the EDAC update synopsis. It could go to the economic development email contact list too. There was some discussion about attendance rates and future events. Ms. Martin suggested sending out the ads more than a week in advance, and perhaps multiple times. She also suggested inviting reporters to attend.

Mr. Martin said most of the small business people he knows are scrambling to keep their businesses alive and don't have time to attend events like this. He suggested having the Mayor attend different locations around town – perhaps he could go to a Family Dollar conference room, a Novant meeting room, Conbraco, etc. Or he could have a coffee conference at McDonald's like Stallings' Mayor Paxton. Vice Chairman Jones said the original intent was to invite people into the town hall so they can see what the Town is doing, but the "roadshow" option could work too.

Development Process/Planning Advisory

Mr. Urban explained the Land Use Plan has been approved and work on the Unified Development Ordinance is still in progress. The new item in the development process calls for a more proactive approach between the Board and developers. The intent is to hold charettes –planning and development sessions that allow for review and input – before developers have to spend a lot of money on the formal rezoning application process. The process will need to be flushed out, but the intent is to help developers and the Board work together and develop a level of trust that hasn't existed in the past.

STAFF REPORT/ACTION PLAN UPDATE

"Matthews Experience" & How to Benefit Businesses Subcommittee: Mr. Justice will call the meeting for interested EDAC members soon.

Buckley Way update: This is the road connection between Charles Street and East John Street, just southeast of the Post Office property. The plan is for the project to go to bid in mid-June and start in August. It'll be a six month process.

Sportsplex & Family Entertainment District: The first phase of the Sportsplex should be finished this summer. September 5th is the tentative grand opening date.

Tax revenue analysis/Urban3: The Town Board approved it. There will be some public meetings coming up with some opportunity for feedback, although there are no specifics yet. It will probably take two or three months.

Former Erickson property: There has been some interest in this property at McKee and Pleasant Plains. A rezoning application is expected soon for a portion of the property. The application is for residential development.

Developer meetings: Coming soon will be some opportunities for meetings with developers regarding more density in the downtown area. The idea is to allow a tradeoff or ability to negotiate about parking – it's an opportunity to have a different view of how that can work downtown. Mr. Justice will send out more information when it becomes available.

MISCELLANEOUS

Mr. Martin asked about the timeline for road access to the Sportsplex. Mr. Justice explained that phase two includes the connection from John Street over to Charles Street and then into the Sportsplex. Phase two is supposed to be approved this July, so it would be about twelve to eighteen months after that before the road is completed. It will be a Town-owned road. Short-term connectivity includes Matthews-Mint Hill Road through to Crestdale, Tanktown Road and Charles Street, and hopefully Buckley Way to Charles Street too. Independence Pointe Parkway is scheduled as a long-term project.

Ms. Martin asked about the annual thank you letters for privilege license holders. Mr. Justice said this year's letter went out very recently. He explained there is a bill in the legislature now to eliminate privilege licenses, which equates to about \$200,000 in revenue for Matthews. The bill is still in progress – Mr. Justice will send out more information when it becomes available.

Ms. Martin asked about the camera and WiFi at Stumptown Park. Mr. Justice said there is not good data on usage yet. Mr. Justice will work on this for discussion at the next meeting. He noted that WiFi and its expansion in downtown was a discussion item for the Town Board's recent planning conference but they didn't get to it that weekend. It will be raised for discussion again in the next few weeks. Expansion of WiFi throughout downtown and the inclusion of security cameras for downtown will be discussed. Ms. Whitley said she would push for security cameras on the backside of the Matthews Station Street buildings.

Vice Chairman Jones noted the new business brochure looks good. It has a lot of information for people starting a business in Matthews. Mr. Justice displayed the new tourism brochure that will be available at welcome centers in the state.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn by Mr. Martin. Seconded by Ms. Martin and unanimously approved. The meeting adjourned at 8:45 am.

Respectfully submitted,

Lori Canapinno
Town Clerk