

MINUTES
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
THURSDAY, MAY 16, 2013
7:00 AM
JORDAN ROOM, MATTHEWS TOWN HALL

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

ABSENT: Chairman Paul Jamison, Member Steve Thomson

CALL TO ORDER

Vice Chairman Jones called the meeting to order at 7:00 am.

INVOCATION

Mr. Martin rendered an invocation.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: MARCH 21, 2013

Motion by Mr. Babinski to approve the minutes of the March 21, 2013 meeting. Seconded by Mr. Martin and unanimously approved.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

REALTOR'S RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SIGNAGE

Mr. Justice explained this came from the Realtor's coffee that the Town Board asked EDAC to organize in order to have an open forum for input. The real estate agents' most important action item related to open house signs, saying the current sign regulations are too restrictive. They like Charlotte's ordinance, which allows open house signs to be placed on Friday and removed on Sunday night. Vice Chairman Jones noted the meeting was very cordial but the sign issue was contentious. They unanimously agreed that the town's ordinance was unfair.

Mr. Justice asked if EDAC thought this was a good idea that should be forwarded to staff and the Planning Board for further review. Vice Chairman Jones said it was a good idea. Ms. Whitley agreed. Ms. Martin asked if they wanted just open house signs to be allowed on the weekend or all the rest of their signs too. Ms. Whitley suggested sending that to staff for their review. Vice Chairman Jones said they should be careful about exactly what they were recommending to push forward to staff. Senior Planner Jay Camp was in the meeting so he heard the real estate agents' comments first hand.

Mr. Justice suggested focusing on Charlotte's weekend open house sign regulations since that's what the real estate agents were focusing on. Mr. Klein asked if that would allow builder signs to be placed en mass as well as the targeted open house signs. Mr. Justice said the intent is just to allow the open house signs but ordinances are comprehensive and that's something Planning staff would have to research and figure out if there's a way to allow

one without the other. Mr. Justice noted there are different categories – off-site directional signs multiple streets away from the property, open house signs at neighborhood entrances, etc. Mr. Babinski said EDAC should be cautious on taking a position on this since the idea isn't developed or specific enough yet. He recommended passing the information along as is for Planning staff/Planning Board to review without forcing EDAC to take a position.

Motion by Mr. Babinski to pass the information along to staff for further consideration. Seconded by Mr. Martin.

Mr. Klein asked what EDAC's role was in the future with this. Mr. Justice explained that if it becomes a zoning action then there will be more opportunity for input at the public hearing, but other than that, EDAC has performed its obligation as an advisory committee.

There was some discussion of other sign issues. Mr. Urban said the sign ordinance needs to be thoroughly reviewed as part of the UDO process.

The motion, having been made and seconded, was unanimously approved.

DOWNTOWN WI-FI/CAMERA

Mr. Justice explained that Windstream offered the installation. It would cost approximately \$10-15,000 for access points, which would allow for Wi-Fi and camera hookups. The Stumptown Park setup was offered for free as a test and has been available since August 2012. This gives Wi-Fi access throughout the park and a camera that's mounted on the stage, the images from which can be viewed from the Town's website. The camera is difficult to operate but is used more during festivals. He asked Windstream for data/usage information but they didn't have anything to share. From the Town's website stats we know that the camera stream was accessed 336 views in the last month, with an average visit time of two minutes. The entire website gets about 48,000 views in the same time period.

Mr. Justice asked EDAC how they wished to proceed. The program could be continued as is, expanded to other locations or dropped. Ms. Whitley said she doesn't believe expansion in the Matthews Station area is necessary since there is already Wi-Fi available from Town Hall down to Dilworth Coffee. Security cameras, which have been talked about before, are an issue for the Police, not EDAC. She doesn't think it is necessary to pay for an expanded Wi-Fi and camera system. Mr. Klein noted that there isn't much advertising to let people know it's available. Mr. Justice agreed, saying there was only a sign in Stumptown Park. Ms. Martin said that since the Town isn't incurring any expense for the system at this time it might as well be left in place.

By consensus the Committee agreed to make no changes to the Wi-F/camera system at this time. It will be reviewed if/when Windstream begins charging the Town.

There was some discussion of the expansion of the camera system. It might be useful for security cameras. Ms. Whitley said the Town shouldn't get involved in private property situations like that. Mr. Justice said some businesses want to have cameras with Police dispatch staff monitoring them. Ms. Martin said the cameras could be motion-sensitive and record only when activity is present. Ms. Provance noted they wouldn't have to be monitored live – they could be reviewed after an incident occurred. Mr. Justice said that level of expectation would have to be addressed.

By consensus it was determined that no further action would be taken on the camera issue.

FOUR TOWNS ALLIANCE FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Urban said this idea has been discussed by staff and now it's back in the town boards' hands for buy-in. Matthews, Indian Trail and Stallings are on board but Mint Hill has not yet committed. The bylaws are being worked on now and should be ready by May 26. He said it feels positive for three towns but Mint Hill, while cordial, might not commit to anything with this group. Vice Chairman Jones asked if there is still value in the alliance if Mint Hill doesn't participate, and Mr. Urban said he thinks so.

The ultimate goal is the eventual rebranding for the region as a whole – a larger pot of money, 100,000 people negotiating for services, etc. Cross-county issues can be worked out. This might be able to positively impact taxes for the participating towns.

Ms. Whitley asked if EDAC would be able to attend any of the alliance meetings. Mr. Urban explained that the group isn't at that stage yet. The bylaws will flesh this out further but he thinks the intent is to keep the main group on the small side. He knows EDAC will be brought in at some point.

NEW BUSINESS

BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT AWARDS

Mr. Justice discussed a program run in the City of Lincolnton, NC in which improvement awards are given to recognize those who make beautification efforts to their businesses. It's an interesting idea but Matthews doesn't have anything like that. He wanted to throw out the idea and see what the Committee thought.

Ms. Martin noted the improvements done by the owner of Certified Collision Services on the Monroe Road/Matthews Township Parkway intersection – it's a great example of the type of work that could be recognized.

Mr. Babinski said the idea is worth pursuing – staff should find out more information from Lincolnton and find out what criteria they use and flesh out the logistics of such a program. There was some discussion of the methodology and criteria. Mr. Urban suggested having the Downtown Steering Group get involved. Mr. Klein said it should be for more than just downtown properties. Mr. Babinski and Vice Chairman Jones agreed.

Ms. Whitley said the program could run through an EDAC subcommittee. Mr. Martin suggested having Code Enforcement Officer Carlo McKoy involved on the staff level. Ms. Martin offered to do research and bring information back at the next EDAC meeting.

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

Downtown

Mr. Justice said the subcommittee will meet next week to produce a roadmap of things to accomplish for the next several months. Ms. Whitley said the first meeting was great and a lot of good ideas were discussed. It's good to get new people to the table and everything is moving in a positive direction. This group will have to be strong enough to lead and overcome the past history.

Mr. Urban said four goals were already decided, which will help avoid those problems of the past. These goals have been tested and proven. He loves the idea of homeowners being involved.

Mr. Justice said he is excited to bring State folks in as resources to tap into that expertise.

The goal is to come to EDAC's November meeting with developed information.

Business Development

Vice Chairman Jones said the intent is to reach out to raise awareness in the surrounding area, but the question of how to do so remains. For example, how does Matthews make itself more known to entities such as the regional partnership? Matthews is part of it because it's part of Mecklenburg County and the County is part of the partnership, but that level of separation doesn't help Matthews come to the top of their minds. He wondered if Matthews should participate on its own instead of as part of the county. Mr. Justice said the state government is changing and there is a movement underway to move toward a public/private model for economic development rather than a strictly public model. This is proposed, but not yet approved. There is another movement regarding regional partnerships and a bill has been proposed to eliminate those.

EDAC needs to carry the flag as ambassadors for the Town. He explained the State Department of Commerce has representatives all over the world to promote NC trade. EDAC members should know these state representatives are available to help.

Development Process/Planning Advisory

Mr. Urban said there is a series of House and Senate bills moving through Raleigh right now that would effectively decimate the UDO. They would basically remove the Town's ability to instill design guidelines and possibly remove the ability to regulate aesthetics. All towns and cities are upset by this and say local governments should have regulatory control.

Mr. Martin asked if the Town planned to reach out to citizens to inform them of these legislative issues. Mr. Justice said some information had gone out through social media but there hasn't been a big push to get citizens involved. It's a challenge. Ms. Whitley said it might be good for Bill Brawley and other representatives to hear directly from the people. Mr. Justice explained it is different for an elected official to reach out to the citizens versus the town as an entity doing the same thing. Mr. Harrison said people don't know about this. Mr. Urban said it's an interesting debate. It could go public but he doesn't know how other Board members feel about it.

Mr. Urban said the fear is that this legislation is going to creep from residential property to multifamily and commercial property too.

STAFF REPORT/ACTION PLAN UPDATE

Business Summit – Mr. McGuire said the intent is to upgrade visibility with the summit. The Governor and/or other high-ranking official would be best. Mr. Justice said Mayor Taylor is trying to get Governor McCrory and maybe the Secretary of Transportation or Commerce. The Governor is very positive about it but isn't sure the schedule will work out. Mr. McGuire said a lot of well-known names were discussed, so there will be a good line-up no matter what.

Business Expo – Mr. Justice said the expo went very well. He thanked the EDAC members who volunteered their time and noted there were a lot of questions about the Town in general. There were some questions specifically related to economic development so it was good exposure.

Tax Revenue Analysis/Urban3 – Mr. Justice explained this project has been approved by the Town Board and Mr. Minicozzi has started the work. He will be analyzing development projects on a per-acre basis and figures out if we're really getting the best bang for our buck with the type of development that exists in town today. He'll calculate the return on these projects and make a public presentation on June 18th. EDAC will be asked to reach out with advertising. There may be a sneak preview on June 10th for the Town Board and EDAC. Mr. Justice will keep the group informed about that via email.

MISCELLANEOUS

Mr. Justice explained the Economic Development budget for FY 2013-14 has been cut from \$50,000 to \$35,000. There was some discussion of the proposed budget and revenue issues. The Town Board will decide on the recommended budget in June.

Medians have been planted using tourism funds and people have already been complimenting the plantings. This is the second phase of the beautification project that started with the wayfinding signs.

The Mecklenburg County Manager has been fired and there is some uncertainty. The Town is lobbying to make sure phase two of the Sportsplex is funded by the County in the fiscal year that begins on July 1, 2013 as planned. If so, then phase two should be built within the next eighteen months.

The Family Entertainment Area near the Sportsplex is being worked on. Two property owners who own land adjacent to that have partnered with a developer who is interested in pulling a proposal together. The existing plan that was developed years ago is no longer suitable to the current market, so the effort now is to see how to revamp that small area plan. The concept will probably be similar with mixed uses that support the Sportsplex, but the intent is to ensure the uses are correct. Some public meetings will be held and EDAC will be invited once the process has been formalized.

South Trade Street and connectivity is an ongoing issue. The Town Board is struggling with the decision and meetings are ongoing.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn by Mr. Babinski. Seconded by Mr. Klein and unanimously approved. The meeting adjourned at 8:30 am.

Respectfully submitted,

Lori Canapinno
Town Clerk