

**MINUTES
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
THURSDAY, MAY 19, 2011
7:00 AM
JORDAN ROOM, MATTHEWS TOWN HALL**

PRESENT: Members Tim Jones, Greg Klein, Bev Martin, Jerry McGuire, John Urban, Tina Whitley;
Assistant Town Manager Jamie Justice

ABSENT: Chairman Paul Jamison, Members Paul Babinski, Rachel Garcia, Bill
Rhyne and Mike Simons

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Justice called the meeting to order at 7:00 am.

INVOCATION

Mr. McGuire rendered an invocation.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

Ms. Martin motioned to approve the minutes of the March 17, 2011 meeting. Mr. Klein seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Summit Review

Mr. McGuire explained that very favorable feedback was received. A few attendees indicated they didn't feel that the information was relevant to them but had no other comments or suggestions. One topic that was suggested by several attendees as a future discussion point was fitness in the workplace. Another requested more time after the summits for networking among attendees.

Overall, the consensus is that the format works well. Consensus was also to see if a sponsor can be found for the next event, although it would not be a problem for the town to continue sponsoring the summit itself.

More discussion on attendee comments indicated that health & fitness, art & education, and more in-depth coverage of social media would be well-received. Tips on how to start a wellness program or information on how to make use of area resources might work well. Another discussion point could be tourism in Matthews and how to attract that to area businesses. There was a suggestion to get a marketing expert in to discuss ways for businesses to attract some of the visitors that attend the town's various festivals and special events as well as other local events such as the Democratic National Convention and NASCAR races.

The next summit will occur in the fall. Mr. McGuire agreed to resume his role as coordinator if another member joins him to make it a cooperative endeavor.

Business Incubator

Mr. Justice said the taskforce has a proposal to move forward with the Small Business and Technology Development Center (SBTDC). The SBTDC will help the town refine what it wants to do and help with the financial models to ensure that it's cost-effective. Brainstorming sessions would involve first the EDAC in its entirety to set the direction and then a second session with the smaller taskforce group to expand on those stated goals and pinpoint specifics. A third session would discuss hard numbers. After that spreadsheet is put together, there is the option for feedback by inviting a group of entrepreneurs to test the level of support for the incubator concept. A recommendation regarding moving forward would be made after that.

The Town Board of Commissioners has approved spending up to \$15,000 on a full financial feasibility study, but by proceeding with the "mini-steps" as previously outlined it will cost only \$2,600. The SBTDC could be hired to do additional steps as needed after that. Grant opportunities may exist, but more specific information would be needed.

On a separate track, Mr. Urban has agreed to help with the layout of the former Bradford Clinic building. Having concepts in place will help when figuring out the numbers.

The first full-group brainstorming meeting will be held in the next couple of weeks and updates will be disseminated by email. Ms. Garcia, Mr. Jones, Mr. Klein, Ms. Whitley and Mr. Urban will comprise the taskforce, along with Steve Thomson, who has experience with angel investing.

Façade Grant

Mr. Justice explained that there have been no actual applications yet although seven inquiries have been made to Jay Camp of Planning and Development. Roughly half were tenant inquiries and the other half were owner inquiries. Mr. Camp said he expected two of the businesses he spoke with to submit applications and a couple more may do so in the future. He said he has received no feedback that would preclude anyone from applying, just that people haven't jumped on it yet. Ms. Whitley suggested posting an article when the first recipient is chosen to gain publicity for the program.

Mr. Urban said one of the problems is that some of the merchants are looking for repairs that are not necessarily what the town would encourage in a historic building, such as vinyl replacement windows for a nineteenth century structure. Merchants will need to be educated on the intent of the program to push for historically accurate repairs or renovations. Mr. Camp will have to be proactive on that when he discusses the program with the merchants. Mr. Urban has offered his assistance in meeting with potential applicants as well.

There hasn't been a big push to announce the program. Mr. Camp has discussed it with many downtown area merchants and it was advertised through the town's Communications Officer and online, but a bigger push may need to be made. The proposed budget for the next fiscal year is \$7,500.

NEW BUSINESS

Appointment of Vice-Chair

Due to absence of so many members, discussion of this appointment was tabled until the next meeting. Anyone who is interested in the position should contact Chairman Jamison.

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

Downtown

Jim Johnson previously headed this committee, so there is currently no chair. Mr. Urban suggested that the Downtown subcommittee be rolled into the Planning subcommittee, since there is a lot of overlap between the two. Ms. Whitley said she would like the Downtown Matthews Group get revitalized and used as a resource for input. It currently exists only as an email distribution list. Ms. Whitley would like to see EDAC take a guiding role in revitalizing the group and keep the members on track. Mr. Urban said it would be necessary to get their buy-in as the Downtown Master Plan (DMP) is developed. Right now there is not really a means to gather the disparate groups into a cohesive unit. Mr. Justice said the discussion of the DMP could be the means to do that. Ms. Whitley suggested having the leadership come from EDAC rather than someone from the Downtown Matthews Group itself. Mr. Urban suggested having co-chairs with strengths in different areas. Ms. Garcia was suggested as a good fit. Mr. Klein said that Eran Weaver has expressed interest in becoming an EDAC member – he would be a good fit for this downtown group as well. Ms. Whitley said that Jack Davis could also be an asset.

Mr. Urban said he would be willing to lead the discussion to get buy-in into the DMP until an Economic Development Director is hired. Ms. Whitley said she would contact Jim Johnson for the Downtown Matthews Group mailing list and begin to update it.

Business Development

Mr. Jones said the group continues to visit grand openings and open houses. The difficult part is getting these new businesses to recognize the EDAC as an entity separate from the Chamber or the town in general. Mr. Urban suggested sending a letter signed by the Mayor or the Board of Commissioners to new businesses welcoming them to town. It could reference EDAC, the Chamber, the town website and any other helpful sources of information and be included with new business licenses. The subcommittee will produce a letter for review.

Mr. Jones explained the next Mayor's Breakfast will be scheduled for the summer, with one potentially to follow in the fall.

Development Process/Planning Advisory

Mr. Urban noted that the Unified Development Ordinance draft chapters are in the process of being reviewed by the Commissioners. EDAC subcommittee members will review those sections related to the planning and development process. Mr. Urban reiterated his suggestion to have local developers and businesspeople to hear their experiences and feedback about working with the town. Mr. Justice noted that a separate development process review is also in progress and public comments will be sought.

STAFF REPORT/ACTION PLAN UPDATE

Mr. Justice noted there is a vacant seat on EDAC. Two applications were received and those individuals are in the process of being interviewed. A recommendation will be made to the Board of Commissioners at their next meeting. There was some discussion regarding the best method of choosing members. Mr. Urban suggested a change to the bylaws to require one seat to be held by a downtown merchant. By consensus it was decided to table this topic until the next EDAC meeting in July.

The Board of Commissioners will hear an update on the Sportsplex project at their next meeting. The public-private partnership model does not seem to be the best option. There is potential for Mecklenburg County to get back on track with this project. The economic development aspect of this project could boost the chances of seeing it come to fruition.

The proposed budget for the next fiscal year includes \$50,000 for EDAC with \$7,500 of that for the Façade Grant program. The Board will vote on that at their next meeting.

A transportation plan survey has been disseminated. Mr. Justice encouraged everyone to take part – the link is available on the town’s home page.

ADJOURNMENT: Ms. Martin motioned to adjourn. Mr. Jones seconded and the motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 8:00 am.

Respectfully submitted,

Lori Canapinno
Deputy Town Clerk