

**MINUTES**  
**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE**  
**THURSDAY, MAY 21, 2009**  
**7:00 AM**  
**JORDAN ROOM, MATTHEWS TOWN HALL**

**PRESENT:** Chairman Paul Jamison; Vice Chairman Jim Johnson; Members Paul Babinski, Rachel Garcia, Greg Klein, Nancy LaFond, Bev Martin, Randy Mitchell, Bill Rhyne, Dennis Toler, John Urban, Tina Whitley; Assistant Town Manager Jamie Justice; Deputy Town Clerk Lori Canapinno

**ALSO PRESENT:** Communications Director/Assistant to the Town Manager Annette Privette-Keller

**CALL TO ORDER:** Chairman Jamison called the meeting to order at 7:06 am and rendered the invocation.

**APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES:** Ms. LaFond made a motion to approve the minutes of the March 19, 2009 meeting. Ms. Whitley seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

**REVISE MISSION STATEMENT**

The Mission Statement of the Economic Development Advisory Committee currently states "The mission of the Economic Development Program is to advance the economic development of the Matthews community to benefit all citizens of the Town of Matthews."

The proposed change: "The mission of the Economic Development Program is to advance the economic development of the Matthews community to benefit all citizens and businesses in the Town of Matthews."

Ms. LaFond made a motion to approve the change. Mr. Mitchell seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

**NC MAIN STREET PROGRAM**

Chairman Jamison, Vice Chairman Johnson, Assistant Town Manager Jamie Justice and Town Planner Jay Camp attended a meeting in Salisbury to discuss the state's Main Street Program. This program is a downtown-oriented historic preservation movement that began approximately thirty years ago. It offers grants and consulting as well as confirmation that a town has a downtown area worthy of preservation.

Vice Chairman Johnson described the program as a subset of what the EDAC was formed to do. He said the town would have to buy into the program and that it would require a lot of work and a monetary commitment. The program administration generally looks for a group with 501(c)3 status and requires a three year commitment to a position of a downtown manager.

Vice Chairman Johnson said applications are due by July 15, 2009. The program is offered every two or three years. The town could investigate the possibility of joining the program a few years from now.

Mr. Mitchell asked about the manager position. Vice Chairman Johnson explained that the town doesn't necessarily need to pay for the position – it could be privately funded. In general towns don't have to buy into the program at all, although town assistance would probably be required in order to fund the program here in Matthews.

Mr. Urban suggested that the town explore options and gain the involvement of the Downtown Merchants Group and possibly also the Historic Society.

Mr. Mitchell suggested speaking to some of the towns that have been involved with the program to gain perspective on the program. Chairman Jamison said they were planning discussions with an individual who worked with the program.

Vice Chairman Johnson noted that such plans tie into a town's branding and said that the downtown area should be part of the Matthews brand.

Ms. Martin asked about possible downsides. Vice Chairman Johnson said there needs to be \$5,000 available for program advisors to come and evaluate the town. There is a three year commitment to a full time employee to act as a manager and there is a large time commitment involved. Chairman Jamison noted that the annual membership fees are \$250.

Mr. Justice noted that the town doesn't necessarily have to join this specific program. We could potentially do it on our own. There could be cost-saving measures such as using a part time manager instead of full time. Vice Chairman Johnson said that Matthews is a bit advanced in some ways and agreed it's possible to do this without the guidance of the official Main Street program.

## **BUSINESS INCUBATOR PROGRAM**

Chairman Jamison and Mr. Justice attended a meeting with the Centralina Council of Governments where they learned about business incubator programs. Other towns and counties are interested and Lincoln County has a very active program.

Chairman Jamison discussed the fact that Wachovia has and will continue to lay off employees. Not all of these people plan to leave the immediate area – they are entrepreneurial and could become involved in small businesses in the local area. He suggested the town could align with CPCC and Wingate University to see if there is an opportunity for Matthews to incubate future businesses. The college(s) could take these businesses on campus using university space and resources.

There was discussion regarding the types of businesses that could be involved in the program. Any type of business that needed low cost space, guidance about running a business and possibly shared administrative support could take part in the program.

Mr. Justice noted issues from an economic development standpoint – a town can spend a lot of money going after big businesses but may not get them. An alternative is to go after small businesses. Small businesses clearly are important to Matthews. The town has space available for such a program, like the Bradford Clinic and empty retail space. He also noted that John Urban had introduced the idea of a business incubator program some time ago during a Park & Rec meeting.

Mr. Urban said the question came up with the taskforce for the Strategic Economic Development Report – why can't the town put unused municipal buildings to good use? It would be a win-win situation for everyone. The town could even consider a barter system, such as a contractor who

is part of the program and works on the building. It's a great idea for people who wouldn't be able to afford their own rental space. He said the Bradford Clinic location is great and mentioned that businesses remain in the incubator for approximately two and a half years.

Ms. Whitley said that many people would want to be involved and asked who would choose those who requested to join. Mr. Urban said there could be a trial period and suggested possibly expanding to a vacant big box location if the need was there. He also suggested a plan in which only one type or category of business would be accepted, which would be on a first come first serve basis. Mr. Mitchell noted that there would have to be guidelines that each business would have to agree to, such as an agreement to accept the help and guidance offered. He said it would be good for the businesses as well as the town.

Ms. Martin said it could encourage businesses to stay in town when they leave the incubator.

Mr. Justice discussed small business and technical development centers. The Charlotte office is located in the UNCC Ben Craig Center. The group does business incubator feasibility studies to figure out the needs and desires of the community. He said Matthews could use them to get a group together and then do a feasibility study. The first step would be to hold meetings and get input to determine if a full feasibility study is warranted at a cost of one to two thousand dollars. The second step would be to perform a feasibility study and market and financial analysis at a cost of approximately up to fifteen thousand dollars.

He said that the Bradford Clinic is a logical location, but that there are ongoing discussions about placing the military museum there.

Ms. Whitley asked why the town would have to spend fifteen thousand dollars on studies when we already know the program would work. Mr. Justice replied that they would survey to figure out the right types of businesses that would do best in the program. They'd look for a niche, such as health care. Ms. Whitley said she hears complaints from townspeople that the town spends too much money on studies. Mr. Urban agreed and said there is enough talent in the EDAC and in the town to do it. He said there should be a number of interested parties in the Chamber and the Downtown Merchant's Group. He also suggested working with local developers – maybe offer a percentage off rental space when businesses leave the incubator.

Mr. Toler suggested using the resources of CPCC and/or Wingate to help in order to save the town money. He doesn't think that spending two thousand dollars is wise. He said the EDAC could form a subcommittee to do the work. Mr. Mitchell said the town could probably do it with CPCC resources but that it is always a good idea to get information from someone who has already done the task. Chairman Jamison agreed and said that he's also rather not spend the money but that it would be good to have expert opinions. Ms. Whitley said it might be helpful to get information from an outsider's perspective.

Mr. Toler said it's a great idea but asked how many different good ideas will be going on at once. Chairman Jamison said that was a good point and asked the group if they felt the project should move forward by approving the first step and/or forming a subcommittee to explore other options.

Mr. Urban said that the town has the necessary resources. The town could help put people back to work and generate income. He believes there are plenty of people looking for small office space. Vice Chairman Johnson noted that the space used for the program would need internet access, phone lines and a conference room. Mr. Urban noted that the military museum would have to do a lot of work in the Bradford Clinic to work as a museum. He said that since that was used as a business use in the past it would be easier to keep it as a business use.

Mr. Toler said he would be willing to meet with CPCC to begin discussions and see if the town could do this without spending the money or if it would be better to spend the money for the expert advice. Mr. Mitchell offered to help with discussions with SPCC.

Common consent of the group was that Mr. Toler and Mr. Mitchell will explore options and that the EDAC will revisit this idea at its next meeting.

## **STAFF REPORT/ACTION PLAN UPDATE:**

### **MARKETING/BRANDING INITIATIVE**

Annette Privette-Keller discussed the town's marketing/branding initiative. We are in the initial steps. An RFP has gone out and a staff committee will be going through the proposals. They have received 11 proposals, including some from local entities. Council will hear proposals on June 8<sup>th</sup>. The expectation is to have a contract by June 30<sup>th</sup> and a product in the fall.

She said the desire is to have an agency come in and look at the town and offer constructive criticism. The EDAC will be a part of the stakeholder group that will look at research over the summer months. The staff committee had not yet gone through each proposal but she expected bids to range from \$30,000 to \$60,000. She noted that this is a creative process and they want to hire someone who can handle all three components: the town brand, logo development, and redesign of the town website. Economic development, residents, existing businesses and tourism are all important parts of this initiative.

Selection of the proposal will not be based solely on the bid price. A weighted scorecard will be used to determine the best proposal. Mr. Urban said he would prefer not to give too much weight to bids from those who have worked with government agencies in the past. Some new business would be good. Ms. Privette-Keller said that creativity will be heavily weighted.

### **REVIEW OF UPCOMING DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS**

Mr. Justice reviewed two development projects. The Matthews Gateway II project is currently underway on Sam Newell Road near Highway 51. The site is in the process of being graded. This project will consist primarily of professional offices and will also include retail and restaurant facilities as well as multifamily residential units.

The Wingate Commons project is located at East John Street near 485. This site is currently involved in a rezoning request to allow for the development of a mixed use project that will include a Wingate University campus, retail and dining, hotel, daycare and residential uses. The Town Board is scheduled to render a decision on the rezoning request on June 8<sup>th</sup>.

### **EXISTING BUSINESS LETTER**

The Committee discussed some responses received from recipients of the letter that was sent to existing business owners last month. Chairman Jamison mentioned that it helps to nurture those who already do business in the town and offered his thanks to Mr. Toler for his work in drafting the letter.

### **DISCUSSION OF FORMATION OF SUBCOMMITTEES**

Chairman Jamison discussed the necessity of gaining outside input through contact with community members. He asked the group to decide if subcommittees were necessary. Mr. Urban said that the EDAC members volunteer their time and efforts for different reasons and subcommittees are a good way for people to offer their service in a particular manner. Committees are a good way to talk informally. He suggested subcommittees for business development and downtown and also raised the possibility of a subcommittee to focus on the UDO. Mr. Toler said he thought subcommittees were a great idea. Ms. Whitley suggested calling them focus groups. Chairman Jamison noted that the bylaws don't currently reference subcommittees.

Suggestions included subcommittees for Downtown/Main Street program, Planning Advisory/UDO, Business Development and Special Projects/Miscellaneous. The general consensus was that Mr. Toler would work on the definitions/focus for each subcommittee.

### **MISCELLANEOUS**

Chairman Jamison discussed his experience at the Advisory Board Summit meeting. He said it was a great opportunity to see what other boards and committees are working on. He also discussed the recent Unified Development Ordinance meeting and reminded everyone that Mr. Urban is now part of the UDO stakeholder group. Mr. Urban discussed some issues relating to the UDO. The stakeholders thought that the current ordinances weren't always understandable. There is a general consensus that there are communication problems between developers and the town and that Commissioners micromanage when becoming involved with development issues. The question is how to write the ordinances that offers flexibility to developers but still allows the town to have control. The group needs to formulate a plan to remediate these problems. The preliminary document will likely be available in December. Mr. Urban mentioned that he'd prefer to avoid using the name "UDO." He'd like something more tied to Matthews itself. He also noted that the current ordinances are fifteen to twenty years old. They don't respond to the demands of development today. Ms. LaFond noted that the code was written by one person and that may be part of the problem. Ordinances must be understandable to everyone who reads them, not just the individual who wrote them. Mr. Urban brought up the possibility of using PUDs – Planned Unit Development - as a regulatory process. He suggested that a subcommittee could be formed from the Planning Board. There was a discussion of trees and parking in the downtown area. Vice Chairman Johnson said that the town doesn't have any pedestrian vision. There are sidewalks that lead nowhere and no sense of community. Mr. Urban said that visions for the town are needed.

Chairman Jamison noted that a budget of \$90,000 was recommended for economic development for the upcoming fiscal year. The town will fill the position of Economic Development Director in January 2010.

Mr. Justice updated the group on the UNCC students' work. They're close to completion but classes end soon. Summer class students will continue the work.

**ADJOURNMENT:** Ms. LaFond made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Mitchell seconded and the motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 8:35 am.

Respectfully submitted,

Lori Canapinno  
Deputy Town Clerk