

MINUTES
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
THURSDAY, MAY 21, 2015 – 7:00 AM
JORDAN ROOM, MATTHEWS TOWN HALL

PRESENT: Chairman Paul Jamison, Vice Chairman Tim Jones, Members Adam Brooks, Russ Gill, Greg Klein, Bev Martin, Roger Martin*, Commissioner Kress Query (alternate appointed member); Emory Simmons, Steve Thomson*, John Urban, Chamber Executive Director Tina Whitley (ex-Officio), Assistant Town Manager Jamie Justice

CALL TO ORDER

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

INVOCATION

Mr. Simmons rendered an invocation.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion by Mr. Jones to approve the minutes of the January 15, 2015 meeting. Seconded by Mr. Gill and unanimously approved.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

RED BRICK PARTNERSHIP UPDATE

Mr. Justice reviewed the work involved in getting the Red Brick Partnership (RBP) started and noted that it has been approved by the Board of Commissioners with a \$20,000 appropriation. Those funds are in addition to the \$10,600 raised by private founding sponsors. The RBP leadership group has been meeting regularly and some of their work is already visible: promotional banners and coasters and the recurring First Thursday events. This is the monthly series of downtown promotional events that occur on the first Thursday of each month. They are business-driven with participants choosing the specials, events and activities they wish to pursue. The first one occurred in May and the next is coming up on June 4th.

Ms. Whitley discussed the pop-up market which has been included in First Thursday and which will recur on a monthly basis. The market is for those with hand-made items from the general area. The artists are placed on the vacant lot on Matthews Station Street. Last month's event, the first, was very successful.

In the future there will be an information tent with First Thursday shirts and things of that nature, and at least one other business will be purchasing their own tent for use on First Thursday. Businesses are taking notice and signing up to take part in the events.

Mr. Urban noted that several businesses partnered up and enjoyed doing so. He also noted that several businesses - whether or not they specifically participated in the First Thursday events – experienced strong business that night. He spoke of some upcoming events, including a downtown directory for visitors and future uses for a trolley like was used during BeachFest. The trolley was very popular and helped people learn what other businesses are located in downtown Matthews. Information was given to trolley riders about other events in town. The RBP is working on arrangements for the inclusion of the trolley in Matthews Alive in September.

Mr. Justice noted that the funding mentioned previously runs through the next fiscal year starting on July 1. There could be more private donations to help but there won't be any more public funding in the upcoming year.

Mr. Gill noted that Food Truck Friday is becoming very popular and asked if there was any reason or way for EDAC to have a presence there. Mr. Justice explained that it does not currently but that EDAC and RBP could have a presence there if they desired. Food Truck Friday is a Parks and Rec initiative but they would likely be open to allowing information tables or something like that. Mr. Brooks noted that social media posts can connect events and draw attendees to other activities around town. Discussion ensued regarding EDAC or RBP's participation in Food Truck Friday. It was noted that there are a lot of visitors who are not Matthews or local natives – a lot of customers follow the food trucks from place to place. This is a good audience for more information about Matthews and what it has to offer.

FOUR TOWN ALLIANCE UPDATE

Mr. Urban reported on the Alliance's progress. There are short, mid and long-term goals, ranging from gathering data to enacting physical projects. The Alliance is working on actually committing to projects and that is ongoing. There is an inventory of sports-related activities in the region that can be capitalized upon. The Matthews Parks and Rec staff has done an inventory of the public and private fields in the area and now the Alliance needs to figure out how to act on that information. There are a lot of possibilities and the Alliance towns need to make some commitments. Things are slowly moving in the right direction.

NEW BUSINESS

BREAKFAST WITH THE MAYOR

Mr. Justice noted that EDAC had previously decided to hold one summit and one breakfast event per year, staggered in spring and summer. Working with the Chamber, there was an attempt to get Governor McCrory down in lieu of the summit but that didn't work out. The next event would be the breakfast with the Mayor in late August or September – it's up to EDAC to decide what to do next.

Mr. Jones said EDAC should continue to offer both events. There are two good ways for businesses to learn and make their voices heard. He noted that attendance for the breakfasts changes from event to event. Ms. Martin said the breakfast she attended last was interesting because it piqued people's interest in running for the Board of Commissioners.

Ms. Whitley suggested advertising it to all residents. Mr. Jones noted that the premise is economic development and it's geared toward businesses, so it's normally advertised through the economic development newsletter and Chamber lists, among other advertising avenues.

Chairman Jamison suggested holding a summit in the fall in November after the election. Mr. Jones agreed and said a spring 2016 breakfast would work well. Mayor Taylor doesn't make it political at all but it would still be better to hold it next year.

ECONOMIC SUMMIT

Chairman Jamison suggested holding a summit in the fall and start planning for it at the next EDAC meeting. EDAC agreed by consensus.

STAFF REPORT

Mr. Justice gave a development project update. The Downtown Streetscape Master Plan is being worked on now with the contract awarded to McGill and Associates. The next small area plan will cover the East John Street corridor between 485 and the county line. Planning staff will work on that in-house. There has been some development interest in that area so the small area plan will spell out what type of development the town is looking for there. There was a public hearing for the proposed 312-unit Monroe Road apartment complex recently. It's fairly controversial and there is a valid protest petition in place. The application goes back to the Board of Commissioners in June.

Mr. Martin noted that there have been lots of news about what's going on at Providence Road, which is not actually far away from East John Street. It will be important to set the town's expectations for that area high and not accept too little in terms of development plans. He suggested getting input from quality developers such as Childress Klein and Lincoln Harris. He also said he believes the town is at the point of having too many apartments at this time. Mr. Query said he wasn't sure there are too many but perhaps they all aren't in the best locations. He said apartments need to be placed in locations that would allow pedestrian activity, particularly downtown. Mr. Urban noted that it is a goal of the Four Town Alliance to work on the adjacent border areas and the small area plan will tie into that.

Mr. Justice noted that an Administrative Amendment was approved for the historic McEwen-Moore house at the Royal Park rehabilitation center location. It grants them a one-year extension to find a tenant for that house or use it as their own office space. A contract has been awarded by Mecklenburg County for phase two of the Sportsplex. Work will start soon and there will be a fifteen-month construction timeline.

Weaver, Bennett and Bland has completed their façade work and looks good – that was the last facade grant approved. Since the inception of the Downtown Façade Grant Program in 2011, the Town has approved six façade grants. Five of them were acted upon by the applicants. Of the five that were completed, the Town spent \$17,000 total and spurred about \$45,000 in private investment. People are being incented to make improvements to their properties. The proposed town budget for the next fiscal year includes \$20,000 for EDAC and \$5,000 for the Alliance. In the \$20,000 is included the Downtown Façade Grant Program. EDAC has generally allocated \$7,500 for grants; this number is flexible so if there is a lot of interest that could change. The public hearing for this budget is May 26th.

The Board has approved five additional wayfinding signs to point into the downtown area. Staff is working on obtaining DOT approval on their placement. The business kiosks are part of this phase – these will be 24-square foot signs that can be placed in downtown or the ENT district at the sportsplex. Two locations in downtown are being worked on now – on Matthews Station Street near Thai Taste and on North Trade Street at the old ATM kiosk near Café 157.

EDAC had talked about ways to offer information at the Sportsplex. There is a software solution for an informational system that is being reviewed now. It could be a kiosk or just a TV monitor with a static or interactive display. Staff is currently demoing a particular program at the Community Center.

Regarding road projects: Buckley Way – the connector between John Street and Charles Street - will be finished by December. South Trade Street is on track to finish by March 2016. The Matthews-Mint Hill Road and Idlewild roundabout has been pushed back by the DOT until the summer of 2016 but the Matthews-Mint Hill Road superstreet from Butler High School to the Phillips Road intersection is on track for the next fiscal year. It will tie into the roundabout project when that is done. The Campus Ridge Road extension, which will bring Campus Ridge Road over to East John Street, and which used to be known as McKee segment B, will be funded in the next fiscal year.

MISCELLANEOUS

Mr. Martin noted that real estate submarkets often include Matthews in the *Crown Point* submarket, and this generally is not a positive thing for Matthews. Chairman Jamison explained that the areas and subareas can't be changed since the data is dictated and sold by the entities that use it.

Mr. Brooks spoke of the Knight Cities challenge. This group gives away grants for economic development and urbanization projects. A number of grants were awarded in Charlotte last year. This could be a way for some economic development projects to get done in town. More information can be found at their website at knightcities.org.

Mr. Jones spoke about other boards and committees and suggested that it would be useful for EDAC members to learn more about what these other committees do as well as discuss what EDAC does. Perhaps there are opportunities for economic development that EDAC doesn't currently know about. Mr. Brooks noted there are Chairs on each committee – an email discussion may be easier to deal with than an in-person meeting. Mr. Urban suggested reading meeting minutes and then supplementing that with information on mission statements and goals from each of the chairs. He also suggested that EDAC should become more involved with the Four Town Alliance. EDAC could review the Alliance's short, mid and long-term goals and see if there are any that EDAC members could take on. Chairman Jamison suggested sending an EDAC representative to each committee to report back on their activities.

Ms. Whitley suggested inviting representatives from the larger companies in town, like Harris Teeter or the hospital, to keep information flowing between EDAC and those organizations.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Mr. Jones to adjourn. Seconded by Mr. Klein and unanimously approved. The meeting adjourned at 8:25 am.

Respectfully submitted,

Lori Canapinno
Town Clerk