

MINUTES
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
THURSDAY, JULY 17, 2014 – 7:00 AM
JORDAN ROOM, MATTHEWS TOWN HALL

PRESENT: Chairman Paul Jamison, Vice Chairman Tim Jones; Members Paul Babinski; Tim Chevront, Russ Gill, Greg Klein, Bev Martin, Roger Martin, Steve Thomson, Chamber Executive Director Tina Whitley (ex-Officio); Assistant Town Manager Jamie Justice; Town Clerk Lori Canapinno

ABSENT: Mark Harrison, Commissioner John Higdon (appointed member), John Urban (ex-Officio)

ALSO PRESENT: Commissioner Joe Pata

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Jamison called the meeting to order at 7:06 am.

INVOCATION

Mr. Martin rendered an invocation.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion by Mr. Jones to approve the minutes of the May 15, 2014 meeting. Seconded by Mr. Martin and unanimously approved.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

DOWNTOWN ORGANIZATION UPDATE

Mr. Justice summarized the events of the strategic planning session held on June 5th. Liz Parham of the North Carolina Department of Commerce led the group in the drafting of a plan, goals and strategies for the downtown organization. The initial results are very good but the issue of funding still needs to be addressed. The intent is to schedule a meeting in August to introduce the idea to the general public and get feedback and then the smaller organizational group will review any suggested changes. After that it will be brought to the Board of Commissioners.

Mr. Jamison noted that Commissioner Pata has been hosting breakfast meetings with citizens and there might be an opportunity to share talent and ideas. Mr. Pata explained that he meets with small groups of citizens to discuss various issues. Recently there was a good deal of discussion about downtown. One example discussed was that of the Town of Garner, North Carolina, which has a small downtown similar to Matthews' with a limited amount of retail. They are using pop-up shops – temporary retail spaces – to attract people to the area. This is an idea that interested Mr. Pata's group, and they thought the downtown organization might be interested in pursuing the idea - perhaps on the weekend to complement the Farmers' Market or during weekday evenings.

Mr. Jamison noted that the downtown organization is still in the process of building its structure and is not yet ready to work on projects. Ms. Whitley suggested that participants in Mr. Pata's group might wish to take part in already-established downtown activities until the downtown organization is more functional. Mr. Pata said he sees his group as more of a discussion group that could offer suggestions to EDAC or the downtown organization if there were specific ideas that those groups might be interested in pursuing. Mr. Gill noted that special events require a lot of work and usually require one person to lead the efforts.

Mr. Justice noted the downtown organization planning group will meet on July 24th to discuss dates for the public meeting. Once a date is set EDAC members will be asked to help advertise the meeting to the public. The goal is to be ready to meet with the Board of Commissioners in the fall. Mr. Pata suggested identifying those items from the Town's overall strategic plan that fall within the downtown organization's strategic plan. Mr. Justice advised the downtown organization effort is a specific strategy in the Town's strategic plan.

FOUR TOWN ALLIANCE UPDATE

Mr. Justice explained that the Alliance's receipt of a \$25,000 grant has allowed for the consultation services of Crystal Morphis and her firm Creative Economic Development Consulting. The Alliance has registered with the state as a non-profit agency, has completed a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis and has an attorney modifying the bylaws now. Issues of significance for all four towns include the Monroe Bypass, the railroad, Sportsplex and general recreation, a conference/convention center, satellite universities, *The Bridges at Mint Hill* development project, road infrastructure and shared connections and town services. They will have the use of Ms. Morphis' consulting services until November so they are working on addressing issues and challenges with her firm now.

Mr. Jones asked how or if EDAC might work with this group in the future. Mr. Justice explained that that is still undecided. EDAC could possibly become obsolete or the Alliance could focus on large efforts while EDAC focuses on smaller, Matthews-specific items.

NEW BUSINESS

DOWNTOWN FAÇADE GRANT PROGRAM REVISIONS

Mr. Justice explained the need to improve the language. The intent of the program is for exterior improvements that can be viewed from the pedestrian level and includes work to the front/façade of the building. There was previous discussion regarding the requirement for the improvements to be visible – this program is not intended for structural issues – but it could be used to improve roof elements that are visible from the pedestrian level.

Mr. Jamison questioned if the wording should read *front* or *street side* since some buildings, such as those on street corners, may need improvements on a street side that is not the front. Discussion ensued; suggested phrasing included the terms *should include* or *typically includes work to the front of the building* rather than *must include* and *viewed from pedestrian street level* or *public street level*. There was some discussion of non-traditionally shaped buildings such as those in Griffin Square since some of those units don't face the street at all. Mr. Justice said it would depend on what, if anything, of the unit could be seen from the street.

Motion by Mr. Thompson to change the wording of guideline number four from *façade grants may only be for exterior improvements* to *façade grants may only be used for exterior improvements that can be viewed from the*

pedestrian/street level and includes work to the front of the building. Seconded by Mr. Martin and unanimously approved.

NCDOT PRIORITIZATION FOR ROAD PROJECTS IN MATTHEWS

Mr. Justice explained that the State has changed its prioritization process for road projects and is actively seeking citizen input with a comment period that ends on July 21. EDAC could advocate for projects that would be beneficial to Matthews.

By consensus it was decided that EDAC will submit a letter of comment in support of the Matthews-specific projects and EDAC members will encourage other citizens to submit comments as well.

FOUR TOWNS VISITORS' GUIDE

Ms. Whitley explained that the Matthews, Mint Hill and Union County Chamber offices have decided to work together on a joint visitor guide which will be put together some time in the next two years. Sharing the resources between the towns will work to the benefit of all of them.

BREAKFAST WITH THE MAYOR PROGRAM

Mr. Jones noted the next breakfast would occur in September. He asked for input and the consensus was that these breakfasts should continue. Past suggestions included having a council member present in addition to the Mayor, but Mr. Jones wants to be sure that the program remains non-political. Mr. Pata said that Mayor Taylor should make the final decision but that he thinks it would be a good opportunity for all of the elected officials to interact with attendees and hear the issues being discussed. Mr. Martin noted that the program is only one hour and that having too many people in attendance could slow down the conversation. Mr. Pata said any other Commissioner would be there to observe, not lead discussion. Mr. Jamison said if the intent is for another Commissioner to attend simply to listen and learn then it would be appropriate but it probably would not be if the second member was active and participated as much as the Mayor.

Mr. Jones then discussed the possibility of asking attendees for anything specific, like input on certain subjects. The consensus was no – the breakfast discussion should be free-flowing and led by the attendees.

STAFF REPORT

Mr. Justice gave a development project update, explaining that the Eden Hall townhomes, Charlotte Metro Credit Union and ACTS projects have all been approved. New zoning applications include Town 316, a dense multifamily residential structure on East Matthews Street near the Town Hall and an extension of the multifamily residential Lofts at Gateway on Ames Street.

The façade grant for 500 West John Street was approved by the Board of Commissioners at the May 27th meeting. Mecklenburg County will start phase two of the Sportsplex in September. Construction is expected to take 12-15 months. There will be grass fields in the stadium and two other fields.

Some industrially-zoned parcels are on the market. The former Hill Sand and Gravel parcels off Mt. Harmony Church Road and the Select Stainless building and lot on Monroe Road have been listed for sale while two spaces in Conbraco on Matthews-Mint Hill Road are available for lease.

MISCELLANEOUS

Mr. Martin asked about the possible creation of a small area plan for the Independence Pointe Parkway/Mount Harmony Church Road/485 area. It's mostly industrial now but has the potential to become a great office or mixed use area for a large developer, perhaps with an extension into Union County. Mr. Justice said he will discuss the request with Planning staff.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Mr. Thomson to adjourn. Seconded by Mr. Babinski and unanimously approved. The meeting adjourned at 8:16 am.

Respectfully submitted,

Lori Canapinno
Town Clerk