

**MINUTES
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
THURSDAY, JULY 21, 2011
7:00 AM
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE, 210 MATTHEWS STATION STREET**

PRESENT: Chairman Paul Jamison; Members Paul Babinski, Rachel Garcia, Tim Jones, Bev Martin, Roger Martin, Bill Rhyne, Mike Simons, John Urban, Tina Whitley; Assistant Town Manager Jamie Justice, Deputy Town Clerk Lori Canapinno

ABSENT: Members Greg Klein, Jerry McGuire

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Jamison called the meeting to order at 7:05 am and declared a quorum.

INVOCATION

Mr. Rhyne rendered the invocation.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

A correction must be made to the June 30, 2011 minutes – Ms. Martin was not in attendance. Mr. Jones motioned to approve the minutes of the May 19, 2011 meeting as presented and the minutes of the June 30, 2011 meeting as corrected. Mr. Simons seconded and the motion was unanimously approved.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Business Summit

Mr. McGuire will head the fall business summit but has asked for another member to assist him with that summit and subsequently take the lead with future events. Chairman Jamison volunteered to take that role and work on future summits with the support of the subcommittee.

Appointment of Vice Chair

Chairman Jamison motioned to appoint Mr. Jones to the position of EDAC Vice Chair. Mr. Martin seconded and the motion was unanimously approved.

NEW BUSINESS

Bylaw Change to Include Downtown Representative

Mr. Justice explained that a question came up at the last meeting regarding downtown representation on EDAC. The bylaws do not currently require such specific representation but verbiage can be added to that effect if necessary. The group consensus was that while downtown representation is preferred, it may be difficult to require it. By consensus it was determined that the intent is for a downtown business owner to sit on the Committee. Chairman Jamison currently fills that position. A downtown business owner will be sought, but not

APPROVED 9/15/2011

required, when there is an opening. The proposed language will be "It is the intent of EDAC to include as a representative at least one downtown Matthews business owner." Mr. Justice will draft that proposed bylaw change and email it to members. Ms. Martin motioned to approve that language addition. Mr. Martin seconded and the motion was unanimously approved.

Ms. Whitley suggested contacting the downtown business owners via letter when the opening occurs to inform them about the Committee and advise them of the open position.

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

Downtown

This subcommittee needs a chairperson. Ms. Whitley volunteered for the position. Mr. Jones motioned to appoint Ms. Whitley to the position of Downtown Subcommittee Chair. Mr. Simons seconded and the motion was unanimously approved.

Mr. Urban noted that there has been discussion about combining the Downtown and Development Process/Planning Advisory subcommittees. Ms. Whitley and Mr. Urban had previously discussed using that subcommittee to engage with the Downtown Matthews Group and work with them on the Downtown Master Plan (DMP) upon which Planner Jay Camp is currently working. The first draft should be ready for review by the downtown stakeholders group in the next few weeks. One of the recommendations in the plan will be to work on some kind of organized group to make the downtown stronger, lead downtown efforts and be a liaison to the town. The intention is for it to augment the existing Downtown Matthews Group (DMG). Ms. Whitley discussed the history of the DMG and explained that the group meets rarely if ever. It would be great if that group could be revived.

This potential new group will be a topic of discussion at the DMP stakeholders' next meeting in August. Ms. Whitley suggested that it would help to have a high-level town representative at the meetings, like the Mayor, Town Manager or Assistant Town Manager. That would give the group validity and may encourage positive interaction with attendees.

There was some discussion about the role and interaction of the various groups. Chairman Jamison asked if EDAC's downtown subcommittee would play a role. Ms. Whitley said it would be good to have EDAC serve as a parent group. Mr. Urban agreed and Mr. Justice said the subcommittee can keep moving forward and see what happens in the future.

Mr. Urban noted there has been discussion in the past regarding the redefinition of the downtown boundary. The real boundary of the downtown area is probably much larger than the stated downtown limits. Ms. Whitley said many people consider downtown to consist of only the Trade and John Street area. There was discussion about outlying properties and businesses that could also be part of the downtown limits.

Mr. Justice summarized the intention of the downtown group would be to establish a stronger avenue of communication between representatives of the downtown businesses and the town.

Business Development

Mr. Jones noted the next Breakfast with the Mayor event is scheduled for Friday, August 26, 2011 at 7:30 pm. The intention is to get new attendees at every breakfast. The first event had a very small invitation list but invitations for future events will go out to larger groups. Invitees could include summit attendees, Downtown Matthews Group members, Chamber members and others.

Mr. Rhyne suggested a first-come, first-serve method of filling seats, with a wait list for overflow. Mr. Babinski and Mr. Jones discussed limiting previous attendees – perhaps allowing everyone to attend once per year.

Mr. Jones will work on the invitation with Communications Director Annette Privette-Keller, and the invitations will go out to a broad list. Consensus was that the format will not change since it was so effective last time. Mr. Jones said it would be good to have an EDAC member attend on a rotating basis.

Mr. Jones next discussed the privilege license application letter insert. This is a letter that welcomes businesses to town and offers information about EDAC and business development. Ms. Privette-Keller is also helping draft this item.

Development Process/Planning Advisory

Mr. Urban said work on the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) is progressing. The Board of Commissioners is in the process of reviewing chapters and is committed to getting it resolved before the election cycle. He noted that there is not too much new or substantive information in the draft UDO, but rather minor policy changes. It is perhaps not what the Board expected. He suggested inviting a Planning staffer in to the next EDAC meeting to highlight the changes and discuss the new material that has been added that would affect EDAC.

Mr. Justice described the development process review that is currently underway. The intent is to review the steps involved in the process, better communicate how it works and figure out ways to improve it. The consultant will submit a draft to town staff. Public meetings will be scheduled in September to get feedback from developers and others who participate in the process. Ms. Whitley suggested inviting developers who had done business in town and have since left.

Mr. Urban said following the steps is fine but policy problems are the big problem. The town needs to do more than just streamline the steps – it needs to address the curveballs that come up from the Planning and Development Department and the Town Board of Commissioners. He also said the Planning Department needs an outgoing, economic development-oriented figure to guide the process. Mr. Justice said there will be opportunities for recommendations in the process, so that type of concern will come out if people feel that way.

Mr. Jones noted that a Google search for Matthews business information does not pull up the town's economic development page. The economic development information needs to be ranked higher in search engines. Mr. Justice said he will look into it.

STAFF REPORT/ACTION PLAN UPDATE

Mr. Justice gave an update on the Façade Grant program. The first application was recently approved. Mr. Urban and Planner Jay Camp have had discussions with the property owner and contractor to explain more about the Commissioners' request for the use of certain material that are historically accurate. They will continue the discussion after exploring all their options.

Mr. Urban said the grant applications need to include more specificity about proposed materials. There was some discussion of the grant limits. Mr. Justice noted that EDAC had agreed to allow for maximum flexibility, so the guidelines state the grant maximum of \$2,500 but also allow for the Committee to recommend the approval of a larger grant to the Board of Commissioners, which is the ultimate authority. There was only one applicant in the previous fiscal year so it was decided that the entire budget could be allocated to that single applicant. Future applicants have the ability to ask for larger amounts if they so choose.

Mr. Martin suggested scaling the value of the grants to the applicant's project size. For example, an owner may spend \$10,000 on the work and apply for a \$2,500 grant and an owner who spends \$50,000 may apply for a \$5,000 grant. Several members agreed. Mr. Justice noted there is an annual budget cap for the grants which instills an automatic limit on the dispersal of funds.

By intent the town has not made a big public push to get word of the program out past the downtown business owners. That will come in the near future.

Mr. Urban suggested that the person who reviews the applications need to see specifics, because sometimes there is a difference between illustrations and written details. Samples would be very helpful as well, perhaps as part of a second phase review.

Mr. Justice noted the plans for the business incubator are moving forward. The taskforce will meet next week and the Board of Commissioners will receive an update at their next meeting. Cost estimates for work on the building at 196 South Trade Street are more expensive than expected at \$79,000. This covers relatively minor renovation work like carpet and electrical work.

The newsletter will be sent out electronically. About 700 people have signed up to receive it electronically. That may allow a newsletter to be sent more than quarterly. Mr. Justice also suggested including some of the economic development news that he emails out to EDAC members on a regular basis. The group agreed that would be a good idea. Ms. Whitely suggested allowing an economic development link on the Chamber of Commerce homepage to take readers directly to the newsletters. Mr. Justice agreed that would be a good idea. Consensus was a monthly email would be acceptable.

Sportsplex plans progress. Mecklenburg County will fund \$7 million of the first phase, which includes five fields, restroom/concession area, parking, and part of the road connection to the Tank Town area. The town's two million dollars have not been designated for phase one, so those funds will be held back to see where it would best be used. The county's timeframe is to complete phase one in a year. The county will revisit funding and rankings for the second phase next year.

Due to the economy, it's been difficult to find someone to develop the mixed-use part, but now that there is some movement on the county's part there may be more interest coming for the mixed-use development. The town has been meeting with the property owners and there has been some development interest. There could be an RFP to gauge interest. Infrastructure is always an issue.

The county will retain ownership of the land and maintain and operate it. The town's financial interest allows access to the facility for community usage. Mr. Jones suggested seeking sponsorships, and Mr. Justice said the county would likely be receptive to that.

Mr. Justice will be investigating the possibility of offering economic incentives for economic development and he will bring that discussion to EDAC in the next few months.

EDAC has a \$50,000 budget for the current fiscal year. That includes \$7,500 for the Façade Grant program and potentially an Economic Development Director contracted position in the latter half of the year. A possibility is to hire an individual company to target specific properties and see what they can do.

ADJOURNMENT: Mr. Simons motioned to adjourn. Mr. Martin seconded and the motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 8:18 am.

Respectfully submitted,

Lori Canapinno
Deputy Town Clerk