

**MINUTES**  
**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE**  
**THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 18, 2014 – 7:00 AM**  
**JORDAN ROOM, MATTHEWS TOWN HALL**

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

**ABSENT:** Chairman Paul Jamison, Members Paul Babinski, Tim Chevront, Mark Harrison, Commissioner John Higdon (appointed member)

**CALL TO ORDER**

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

**INVOCATION**

Mr. Martin rendered an invocation.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Motion by Mr. Martin to approve the minutes of the July 17, 2014 meeting. Seconded by Mr. Thomson and unanimously approved.

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

**DOWNTOWN ORGANIZATION UPDATE**

Mr. Justice summarized the events of the September 16<sup>th</sup> public drop-in session for the Downtown Organization. There was good discussion and commentary on the proposed strategic plan and events, and some discussion on possible funding sources. Mr. Justice thanked Mr. Gill, Mr. Jamison, Mr. Jones and Mr. Urban for their contributions.

Mr. Gill said he was involved with several good discussions. Mr. Urban reported that his station got some specific ideas, such as requests for live music, art and pedestrian crosswalks and to limit salons/yoga businesses. It was noted that young families with children are looking for activities to do with their families.

Mr. Justice discussed a meeting on funding options to which several of the significant downtown property owners were invited. Funding options such as a town appropriation, memberships, Municipal Service District (MSD), sponsorships and others were discussed. In general the attendees liked the concept of a downtown organization and were not averse to paying but they wanted more details on what funding could do. Mr. Urban noted there was

a consensus that it would be necessary to really prove the worth of the organization for an MSD to be accepted - the property owners were more interested in flat sponsorships. Mr. Jones noted that they were on board with the idea but they want details before focusing on money. The stakeholder group has been saying that it wants the group to be formed first so it can make the decisions on how money is spent. Mr. Justice noted that staff will put together a list of potential items and associated costs for the group to review. Mr. Jones said the organization really won't be able to move forward without some detailed plans, such as information on a website, brochures, posters, etc. as well as benefits of the organization.

Mr. Justice explained that those details are being worked on so that there can be a recommendation from the working group brought to the November EDAC meeting. EDAC's recommendation would then go to the Board of Commissioners, ideally before the end of this calendar year or by the latest for the Planning Conference in February 2015.

Ms. Martin asked if the property owners were more receptive to the MSD proposal or sponsorships. Mr. Urban said they did not want to start with the tax district – they were much more ready to write a check to get it started rather than taxing people. He said it was very generous of them and acknowledged there are issues with taxes. Ms. Martin questioned the difficulties involved with pursuing sponsorships with multiple organizations, such as the downtown group and the Chamber, when there are limited resources in general.

Mr. Thomson asked if the Town could pursue a district sales tax instead of a property tax and Mr. Justice said it was unlikely. The Town would have to approach the state Legislature for authorization and it is very difficult. Mr. Jones noted a question had come up regarding the use of tourism funds and the answer is probably not. Mr. Justice explained it might be possible to use those statutorily-limited funds for specific events but not for operating costs. Mr. Justice explained the need for funding continuity, saying that sponsorships are great but the funding needs sustainability in case sponsorships drop off.

Discussion continued. Mr. Jones asked if EDAC could start anything like the website or a marketing campaign, perhaps with some sponsorship money from the property owner group. Mr. Justice said that could possibly happen, with that being a two-part approach where part one is to decide if the group will be formed at all and part two is to work on something like a website. Mr. Jones pointed out that the group wants to see something before they commit their money. Mr. Urban noted that the Board of Commissioners wants to see a commitment from the town's citizens but the property owners in that meeting believe the Town needs to make a commitment first, with the Town putting in a stipend every year to prove it's invested in the downtown. His impression from some of those attendees is that they believe the Town needs to be committed to the things the property owners are doing downtown or else they will go somewhere else.

Mr. Martin said it's a small pot of money for various sponsorships and he doesn't think there are enough significant property owners who would be able to fund the organization. He thinks there needs to be some funds and commitment coming from the Town. There is a lot of work that needs to be done in the downtown in order to get to the point where we're at the level of Concord or Statesville. The downtown property owners don't have enough money for that vision. Mr. Justice noted that there is always an issue with spending money for only a small part of town. It is recognized that bettering the downtown benefits the rest of the town as well, which is why a town appropriation has been suggested. However, it is a relatively small amount - \$20,000 – with in-kind staff support as well. Ms. Whitley suggested asking Novant Health Matthews Medical Center for support.

Mr. Thomson asked if there was a way to use the façade grant model, with the Town setting aside X amount; the downtown group would then put together a list of things it wants to do and get approval from the Board. Sponsorships could be used for a portion and town funding for others. Mr. Jones suggested starting one project, perhaps before the organization is fully formed, to gain momentum.

By consensus it was determined that EDAC would like to keep moving forward with the work on the downtown organization.

#### **FOUR TOWN ALLIANCE UPDATE**

Mr. Urban explained that the creative grant funding will be finished in November/December. An action plan will be presented to the full group and the next step will be the organization of the structure. Some plan items include a joint planning committee which would consist of staff members from the four towns' planning departments working together on issues that affect the border areas. Public Works might be involved as well. Another task will be to inventory the recreation options in all four communities so that the area can be marketed as a large recreation destination. Other items will include capitalizing on the educational opportunities in the area by working with CPCC; working on new and existing business development; working with Jeff Edge in Charlotte and Chris Plate in Union County to ensure they think of the Alliance when dealing with economic development opportunities in their respective territories; and targeting sectors in the health, energy, aerospace and finance fields.

The big takeaway is that there are zoning and permitting impedances in all four towns. There are not a lot of by-right zoning opportunities, which is a significant hindrance to businesses. The four towns and the joint planning committee need to locate those potential spots, figure out what is needed and zone them appropriately.

#### **BREAKFAST WITH MAYOR TAYLOR UPDATE**

Mr. Jones noted the next day's breakfast. Responses are good. He also noted there had been some discussion to include another Commissioner with the Mayor. This will be done on a rotating basis with randomly-selected Commissioners. Chris Melton received the first invitation and will attend tomorrow's breakfast.

#### **NEW BUSINESS**

##### **DOWNTOWN FAÇADE GRANT APPLICATION: 196 NORTH TRADE STREET; WEAVER, BENNETT & BLAND BUILDING**

Mr. Justice explained this application is for a \$3,500 grant towards a \$17,000 project. The site is a designated historic property and the owners will be replacing the storefront glass and front door as well as the side doors facing both E. Charles Street and the alley adjacent to Renfrow Hardware. The amount requested is consistent with previous applications and staff recommends approval.

Motion by Mr. Martin to recommend approval of a façade grant in the amount of \$3,500 for the property located at 196 North Trade Street. Seconded by Ms. Martin and unanimously approved.

#### **POP-UP EVENTS**

Mr. Gill discussed pop-up events, which are generally small, short-term business locations, such as retail kiosks or food trucks/kiosks. He visited Raleigh and explored their pop-up program, which runs in a small downtown lot for five hours on the fourth Sunday of most months. It gets people downtown on an otherwise slow day and allows for home crafters and other businesses to sell their merchandise without the overhead of a standard

storefront. Raleigh's program is currently sponsored by a craft shop and the event is set up in the craft shop's parking lot. They have about 30 vendors on site and most come back month after month. Their table fee is \$48 for adults; a children's table is available for \$5. It has a crafty, woman-centric vibe along with two food trucks and a method of offering beer. The beer is not sold in the normal way; a beer distributor donates beer and the group then offers the beer in exchange for donations, which are then donated to a revolving list of nonprofit organizations. The City of Garner had a similar program and these events were usually scheduled around festivals.

Ms. Whitley noted that the Matthews farmers' market is generally sold out by 11 am each week. A pop up market could be a very nice addition to citizens' weekly farmers' market visits. It would be easy to coordinate internally but would have to also be coordinated externally with the farmers' market. Mr. Gill noted that the Garner staff said that the pop-up market by itself was not a big draw, but a combo event does work well.

Ms. Martin said Darlington, South Carolina is in its fourth year of holding a monthly market on Darlington Square. The application process is handled by city planners and they have plenty of vendors. It costs \$25 per month; less if a long lease is signed and it's free for charitable organizations. There are 52 spaces which are 10x10 and the vendors supply their own tents, tables and other materials. The market does have entertainment and something for children each time, such as chalk art and chili cook-offs. The intent of the program is not to generate revenue.

Ms. Whitley said it would be very important to coordinate calendars since it would be bad to diminish existing events. Mr. Thomson said that the parking lot across from Dilworth is empty on Saturday mornings. It would be a great location, and there could be signs directing people to the farmers' market. It would be a great way to extend the time people spend in downtown on a weekend. Mr. Urban instead suggested using the vacant lot on Matthews Station Street in order to avoid blocking the use of public parking spaces.

Mr. Gill noted there would need to be an application process with regulations on what would and would not be accepted. There is a concern that it would need to avoid looking like a flea market. He suggested the name "Matthews Marketplace."

Mr. Thomson said Washington, DC has five of these markets. They're located on government-owned property which has a blanket zoning permit. The vendors check out at the end of the day and pay their sales tax on the spot. Ms. Whitley said the market could be put under the Town or Chamber's insurance. The vendors could pay a booth fee and then be responsible for taxes and licensing fees themselves.

Mr. Justice said it would be great for this or a food truck program to be the first success for the downtown organization.

Mr. Urban noted that people have commented on wayfinding, saying they don't know where to park or where to go afterwards, and that they are unaware that there are 22 restaurants/food venues downtown. Mr. Thomson said Davidson has A-frame signs that say "park here" and also direct people to cafes and other venues. They are portable and relatively inexpensive.

Next steps were discussed. Mr. Thomson suggested EDAC could work on a pop up market and have the downtown group run with it in the spring. Ms. Whitley said it should come from the downtown org. Mr. Justice said EDAC can work on the details so it is ready as an action item for the downtown group when the organization is on its feet.

Mr. Jones volunteered to spearhead the website research. Mr. Gill noted that there should be a point person for initiatives. He said he could work on it but would need some help. Ms. Martin and Ms. Whitley volunteered to help.

Mr. Gill noted that Garner staff said they put out a press release calling for creative folks to help and they had 38 people show up.

## **STAFF REPORT**

Mr. Justice gave an update on the E. John Street widening project, explaining that the DOT is working on the design now but it is years away from being funded. The intent is to widen it to four lanes but the Town doesn't want the DOT to take down any buildings or do any other majorly adverse takings. Right of way will have to be acquired and there will be an impact to businesses and properties, although the plan is in an early stage so the exact locations of the impacts are as yet unknown. A cloverleaf design at 485 will take some more land which is currently undeveloped. The 485 to Indian Trail work is scheduled for 2017; the other two phases are not funded.

Mr. Martin said that if all of the right of way was acquired on the railroad side of E. John Street then there may be an opportunity to create the impetus for new development. Mr. Justice noted that the DOT isn't in the aesthetic improvement business and they would not be willing to take all those houses. Mr. Urban suggested that the Town should devise a small area plan for that section. Mr. Martin said a future development plan could suggest that those houses be removed bit by bit.

Mr. Justice noted some members' terms are expiring; anyone who wishes to be appointed should let him know.

Mr. Justice gave an update on various zoning projects and suggested that EDAC members with opinions on these projects should make their opinions known to the Board of Commissioners.

## **MISCELLANEOUS**

Mr. Martin's new building is complete and occupied. The firm that occupies 80% of the building moved from Ballantyne to Matthews and is a solar engineering firm owned by a larger company out of Australia. It's the kind of firm that has been talked about as being necessary to get into Matthews.

Ms. Whitley explained that the Chamber would like to invite Governor McCrory to its January meeting. EDAC would like him to attend a summit too, so Mr. Jamison suggested combining the two. Ms. Whitley has started the formal process to request the Governor's time and they should know in a month or two if he will be available to attend. Mr. Justice said EDAC would probably not hold a spring summit if this event came to fruition. Ms. Whitley noted that anyone who has been interested or attended summits in the past would receive an invitation to this event.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

Motion by Mr. Thomson to adjourn. Seconded by Mr. Klein and unanimously approved. The meeting adjourned at 8:34 am.

Respectfully submitted,

Lori Canapinno  
Town Clerk