

MINUTES
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
JORDAN ROOM, MATTHEWS TOWN HALL
THURSDAY, JANUARY 16, 2020 – 7:00 AM

PRESENT: Chair Russ Gill, Vice Chair Randy Mitchell; Members Tim Jones, Marcie Kelso, Brett Kiker, Erin Schackman*, Cindy Sikorski, Commissioner John Urban (appointed member), Assistant Town Manager Becky Hawke; Town Clerk Lori Canapinno

ABSENT: Kim Gossage, Steve Thomson

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Gill called the meeting to order at 7:00 am and declared a quorum.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion by Mr. Mitchell to approve the minutes of the November 21, 2019 regular meeting. The motion was seconded by Mr. Kiker and unanimously approved.

INTRODUCTION OF NEW MEMBERS

Commissioner John Urban was recently appointed as the liaison to the Board of Commissioners, with Mayor Pro Tem Renee Garner as the alternate. They will serve in these positions for the Board of Commissioners' current term through December 2021. Kim Gossage will serve a one-year term through 2020 as the Matthews Chamber President.

ELECTION OF EDAC CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR

Mr. Gill explained that Steve Thomson, although absent today, is willing to accept the nomination for the position of Chair. There were no other nominations. Motion by Mr. Gill to nominate Steve Thomson as EDAC Chair for 2020. The motion was unanimously approved.

Motion by Mr. Jones to nominate Randy Mitchell as EDAC Vice Chair for 2020. The motion was unanimously approved.

**Erin Schackman arrived*

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

DISCUSS EDAC'S LIST OF FOCUS ITEMS

1. Identify and develop a plan to analyze Matthews' potential to attract a full-service hotel and, if so, would also market to desired full-service hotel brands. Pitch this plan to Town Board for support and funding. (Kelso, Kiker, Sikorski)

Ms. Sikorski explained that the subcommittee reviewed a couple of sample market studies, which include the following: a description of the site and neighborhood, if the neighborhood would support a hotel, a supply and demand analysis, construction/upfit costs, project occupancy and average rates, income and expenses, and other financials. The two samples they saw, which were not for this market, were extensively detailed. Ms. Kelso spoke

with CRVA (Charlotte Regional Visitors Authority) CEO Tom Murray, who said the first step should be for him and CRVA Director of Insights Heath Dillard to come out to Matthews and speak to staff and the Board to give them some baseline information. He did say that they love the Sportsplex, but hotels need to focus on business travel rather than family groups on the weekend. The subcommittee recommends using the expertise of CRVA and having them come speak to the Board before we discuss investing in a study. Mr. Mitchell asked if it was common for municipalities to pursue this type of action or for developers to do so. Ms. Sikorski said the people she spoke with wanted to know how much money the Town would put in, and about locations. Ms. Kelso noted that incentives could include donation of land, infrastructure or other means. She said that CRVA could do some preliminary work but then the Town would have to decide if they wanted to move forward with an expensive survey. Mr. Kiker referenced an article shared by Mr. Gill, which states that a full-service hotel would require very high usage, and Ms. Sikorski added that the average nightly rate would be high as well.

Mr. Jones asked if these hoteliers are always on the lookout for areas and Mr. Urban said yes, all the time. He noted that a corporate-type hotel is currently looking at Matthews. Full-service hotels are less likely to be interested; if one thought Matthews was a good fit they'd already be here. He thinks EDAC should look for a local hotelier to come in to talk to the Board of Commissioners about how the brands operate, so that there's a full understanding of all of the types of hotel products. Ms. Hawke said CRVA could discuss what Matthews could support rather than just talking about full-service hotels. Ms. Schackman questioned the focus on a full-service hotel and Ms. Hawke explained that the Board of Commissioners thinks the conference space would be a great asset to the town. In addition, the cachet of having a recognizable brand is helpful. Ms. Schackman suggested looking for some kind of conference center rather than a full-service hotel. Ms. Hawke explained that part of the issue pertains to the lack of available space for something like that in town. Also, conference centers tend to be money losers and cities that partner with them dump a lot of funding into them. A full-service hotel would place that burden on the hotel rather than the Town. Mr. Jones wondered if it would be feasible to encourage (an) existing hotel(s) to move to the better location near the Sportsplex.

2. Identify and develop a plan to analyze Matthews' current business climate (how "Open for Business" are we?) and make a proposal to Town Board for support and funding. (Mitchell, Schackman, Thomson)

Mr. Mitchell explained that the subcommittee started with some assumptions of what the phrase *open for business* meant, but eventually realized that they weren't certain they were interpreting it the way the Board of Commissioners intended. They feel they need a better handle on what is intended with the question, so they plan on meeting with the Board to get clarity on what they want. Ms. Hawke noted that this meeting will take place on February 24 at 5:30 pm. They'll ask the Board what they want answered and what the end goal is.

3. Study if/why Matthews may need a FT Econ. Dev. Director and develop a list of expectations for this position/department. Also investigate the potential for a regional FT ED Director that aligns with the Quad-participating communities (Matthews, Mint Hill, Stallings) (Jones)

Mr. Jones plans on working with the Quad on this but hasn't yet had the opportunity to discuss it with the members. The Quad has talked about this idea in the past and opinions were divided. An economic development director could be hired to go out and look for businesses, or the Board could just continue to build the community it wants, that supports businesses, without hiring an actual director. If hiring a director is a possibility, the Town would have to figure out what exactly they would be doing and decide if it's ready to pay for that kind of work. If the Quad was interested then Matthews wouldn't necessarily have to be in the lead with it. Mr. Gill said the question really comes down to how much the Town wants to drive its growth and development. As an example, Brevard, NC has a lot of outdoor adventure, health and sports-type businesses. Perhaps Matthews could analyze that and figure out what it has and what it wants to be in the future. The Town would then have to decide if it's ready to identify itself as an X-focused community. Mr. Urban noted that before EDAC was established in 2009, the Town had considered an economic development director position, but moved in a different direction. The Quad analysis noted the region is big for sports. Land, prepared pads and physical space is needed for development, but only Mint Hill is pad-ready at this point. Ms. Hawke noted that the Board of Commissioners met this past Saturday and there was discussion about developing employment centers in town, and developing more opportunities for people to live and work here.

A big question is if there is interest from the Quad towns in partnering together or not. Ms. Kelso noted recent changes in the CRVA structure and they might have lost attention on Matthews. Mr. Gill said Ashley Hendrick, the CRVA's Director of Engagement, has expressed interest in attending an EDAC meeting and discussing how the CRVA can work with Matthews.

NEW BUSINESS

CONSIDER CHANGING EDAC MEETING TIME

The group discussed various meeting days and times. The results of a group straw poll were tied so further discussion and input from those absent today will be needed.

REVIEW EDAC VACANCIES

EDAC currently has two vacancies. Members will encourage candidates to apply.

REPORTS

Board/development projects: Mr. Urban noted the Board just had its first meeting of the new year. Mr. Jones asked about the former kebab shop on East John Street and Ms. Hawke explained it is the future home of a White Duck Taco Shop, a small chain with a cult-like following. The Indian restaurant in the back is expected to remain. Mr. Urban noted that the Stronghaven warehouse zoning item is finished and within 18 months their trucks will no longer be able to block East John Street.

Matthews Chamber: Ms. Hawke noted the departure of Kelly Barnhardt. Lisa Grey is the interim Executive Director. She's with a company called Leverage and she'll provide strategic and critical analysis of the organization. She has strong ties to the Matthews community. The Chamber's next big event is the Business Expo in March.

Quad: Mr. Jones reported that Quad just had a presentation from CATS (Charlotte Area Transit System) on the future Silver Line light rail. Phase I is the design phase. CATS is working with Stallings and Indian Trail to consider an end point in Union County. Ms. Hawke noted CATS' goal is to be operational by 2030.

MISCELLANEOUS

Mr. Mitchell noted Russ Gill's impending departure from Matthews. Mr. Gill has years of service to EDAC and the Chamber, and he has a passion for this community. His leadership and service has been excellent and will be sorely missed. The group thanked Mr. Gill for his work.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Mr. Mitchell to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Ms. Schackman and unanimously approved. The meeting adjourned at 8:32 am.

Respectfully submitted,

Lori Canapinno
Town Clerk