

MINUTES
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
THURSDAY, MAY 17, 2012
7:00 AM
JORDAN ROOM, MATTHEWS TOWN HALL

PRESENT: Vice Chairman Tim Jones*; Members Paul Babinski, Rachel Garcia, Greg Klein, Roger Martin, Bev Martin, Jerry McGuire, Mike Simons, Steve Thomson, John Urban*, Tina Whitley*; Assistant Town Manager Jamie Justice; Deputy Town Clerk Lori Canapinno

ABSENT: Chairman Paul Jamison

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Urban called the meeting to order at 7:05 am.

INVOCATION

Mr. Martin rendered the invocation.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: JANUARY 19, 2012; FEBRUARY 16, 2012; MARCH 15, 2012

Ms. Martin made a motion to approve the minutes of the January 19, February 16 and March 15, 2012 minutes. Mr. Martin seconded and the motion was unanimously approved.

*Ms. Whitley arrived

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Downtown Wi-Fi

Mr. Justice introduced Mike Urquhart and Gary Rowell from Windstream Communications. Mr. Justice explained that staff has been working with providers to determine their stance on downtown Wi-Fi projects and doing research on RFPs. Windstream has worked with staff and made some suggestions about how to proceed.

*Vice Chairman Jones arrived.

Mr. Urquhart, Area Manager for Windstream Communication in Matthews addressed the Committee. He explained that Windstream had been approached to do some sort of Wi-Fi setup downtown as a free offering for citizens. Various models were discussed. Windstream is not interested in offering a full system that would cover

APPROVED 9/20/2012

the entire downtown area since that could adversely affect their own customer base, but they are willing to provide a smaller project with a scaled down coverage area.

The proposed option would cover the corridor of Matthews Station Street down to Stumptown Park and would offer five access points. That would provide Wi-Fi in an approximately 300 foot radius around each access point. There would not be hand-offs between access points so the signal would not be very robust – it's intended to be useful for people sitting in the park but not necessarily those traveling down the street and moving from access point to access point. The equipment would cost approximately \$10,000 and there may be some small recurring costs – perhaps one or two hundred dollars per month – for broadband service. They could also just access existing Wi-Fi lines in the area and that may save some money.

Mr. Urquhart said the robustness of the service would depend on the desire of the town. A lot of equipment would be needed to provide a robust signal throughout the entire downtown area and gaining access to the best locations on which to install that equipment would probably be difficult. The less intrusive option described earlier is a viable alternative.

Mr. Urquhart addressed use. This type of amenity is a quality of life issue and could be used by people in the park. He said he didn't expect that businesses in downtown would want to rely on this Wi-Fi for their own service. He suggested running a trial in Stumptown Park. He noted that Mayor Taylor has talked about installing a webcam in the park so viewers could log in and see what's going on at the park. Mr. Urquhart said Windstream is willing to install some equipment at no cost to the Town as a trial, probably through Matthews Alive over the Labor Day weekend, just to see how or if it gets used. He said there are so many Wi-Fi options available today and he's not sure if it's a great step – many people have smart phones and 3G or 4G equipment and wouldn't need to use the Town's service, but he's willing to test it and determine the interest level.

Mr. Urquhart explained the camera setup in Stumptown Park. Mr. Urquhart was investigating the possibility of installing a Wi-Fi camera in downtown Matthews. Such a camera would allow visitors to remotely view an area of town. His home town has a similar setup and he knows that a lot of the hits come from locations outside the US, particularly in the Middle East. It's likely that deployed soldiers log in to get a glimpse of home when they're away, and that could be true for Matthews too. It's also a way for future visitors to learn more about the town. The camera could be installed in time for Matthews Alive along with the trial Wi-Fi period.

Windstream is willing to set up the equipment for the trial period for free and then work out a cost-sharing option after that for the broadband service at an estimated rate of \$200 per month. The camera will need to be hardwired into a power source, one that was provided by the Town. Ms. Whitley said existing power sources are available all over the park. Mr. Urquhart said the power usage would not be very high since the equipment would be low-voltage.

Mr. Justice said this test period will allow both Windstream and the Town to test the service and see how much use it gets by the public.

Ms. Whitley noted that previous discussions had mentioned incorporating broadband-enabled information's kiosks into the Wayfinding program. Mr. Urban agreed but noted that was not included in the current wayfinding project. Communications Director Annette Privette Keller is working on wayfinding and she may have more information regarding that.

Mr. Justice noted that the intent is to have a splash page that comes up when one first connects to the Wi-Fi signal. That splash page can have information about Matthews and serve as a venue for advertising and the

promotion of Matthews. Ad space could potentially be sold but that is an idea that would have to be further investigated.

There was some discussion of evaluation methods – what would be considered a successful venture and how would that be measured? Also, how would it be promoted? There was some discussion of advertising the service with the festival vendors to use to conduct business at the festival but Mr. Urquhart noted that it would be a potential liability to advertise the service as a way to collect fees or run their business during the festival since bandwidth will be limited. There could be advertising to suggest that the service is available but with no guarantees of its efficacy.

By common consent it was agreed that EDAC was in favor of running the trial period through Matthews Alive. EDAC will make a recommendation to the Board of Commissioners to allow a trial run with one camera and a broadband access point at Stumptown Park through Matthews Alive. Annette Privette Keller can work on promoting the service for this interim duration. Mr. Justice will contact Mr. Urquhart after the Board of Commissioners makes a decision.

Review Draft Economic Development Incentives Policy

Mr. Justice discussed some of the policy changes that were made after the last discussion. Jeff Edge of the Charlotte Chamber suggested making it clear that the program would be for new and existing businesses. A notation was made to clarify that this would be for taxable properties only. The employee wage levels were added as criteria under section 3D. Language regarding grant dispersion was revised in section 4 to clarify that grants would be paid out in annual installments after the project is completed.

Also in section 4, there was a suggestion to include lower thresholds for small businesses to differentiate Matthews from other municipalities. Mr. Urban said he would like to explore this option more thoroughly. He said that could entice a number of good paying technology-based small businesses to come to town. The Town could provide smaller but more numerous grants and attract diversity in the business base. That would prove that Matthews is small-business friendly. Mr. Justice said a small business category could be created with a value of a half million to one and a half million dollar investment. Alternatively, the threshold could simply be lowered to a half million and up. If the threshold is lowered then more businesses may be grant-eligible. Mr. Justice noted that there is a finite period involved with these grants. There was some discussion regarding the potential awarding of small grants. The general consensus was that Matthews should be small business friendly.

Mr. Justice noted the clarifications in section 7 regarding the process. Mr. Urban questioned subsection 2 and said it may be too intrusive to ask for some of that information, particularly the question related to health insurance. Mr. Justice said that was included because insurance relates to the overall benefits package offered to employees. He said that section could be revised if necessary. By common consensus the Committee agreed to strike that portion of section 7(B)(2) and revise it to read, "Employment numbers for the immediate preceding five years, the number of jobs that will be generated by the new industry or business along with the median wage."

Mr. Thomson made a motion to recommend approval of the policy as revised. Vice Chairman Jones seconded and the motion was unanimously approved. The revised policy will be brought before the Board of Commissioners for their review and action.

Economic Development Plan Update Options: Warren Proposal or In-House

Mr. Justice explained the recent revisions to the proposed Economic Development Plan update from Frank Warren of Warren & Associates. Mr. Warren reviewed the existing plan and touched on the parts he believed should be updated. There have been discussions about cutting out various portions in order to save money and Mr. Warren but these suggested updates are what he feels are necessary to give a real and valuable update to the plan. This will be a little more money than originally planned but it is well within EDAC's budget.

Alternative B would be to tackle some of the data collection in-house between staff and EDAC members. One piece could be a scorecard that measures what has and has not been accomplished from the original plan. Another piece would be recommendations for the future. Doing this in-house would save a good amount of money but Mr. Warren would still need to supply his market experience.

Vice Chairman Jones asked EDAC members what they would be comfortable with producing on their own. He suggested members could handle the scorecard aspect. Demographics might be a little harder but Chairman Jamison might be able to get some of that information. He noted that Mr. Warren would have to handle targeted economic development areas but EDAC members could offer input on the strategic direction section. Mr. Warren would probably have to handle the targeted business sector section.

Mr. Urban noted there was no time requirement to make the decision on how to approach this plan update. Ms. Whitley suggested allowing time for EDAC members to read through the existing plan and determine what areas could be done in-house.

Mr. McGuire said it would be difficult and time-consuming even to analyze the existing data, let alone work on the updates. He said he is not certain that EDAC members would feel comfortable performing the necessary work and suggested letting Mr. Warren do all of the work himself since he is the expert.

Mr. Urban said he favors a partial in-house version and would be willing to sit down with a small group to work on some aspects of the plan and let Mr. Warren handle the rest. He said it doesn't seem like a good idea to pay Mr. Warren to do some things that could be done at no charge by staff and EDAC members. This plan also ties into the Downtown Master Plan and Land Use Plan and all of these documents need to work in conjunction with each other. Mr. Urban suggested having all EDAC members review the existing plan before figuring out how to proceed.

The two options were to come up with a small group to review the existing plan, come up with an outline of what could be done in-house and then figure out who could do each piece, with the potential to take a hybrid approach with staff and EDAC doing some portion and Mr. Warren handling the rest. The second option would be to allow Mr. Warren to do it all.

By common consensus it was determined that a small subgroup would be formed to examine the options and make a recommendation. Mr. Urban, Mr. Thomson, Mr. Martin, Vice Chairman Jones and Chairman Jamison will work together with Mr. Justice to review the existing plan and figure out what portions can be updated in-house.

NEW BUSINESS

Spring Business Summit

Mr. McGuire explained that everything was on track for the following day's Spring Summit. Chairman Jamison will not be able to be there so Vice Chairman Jones will handle some introduction duties. He will explain a little of what EDAC does. Frank Warren will then have about thirty minutes for his presentation and questions. Each of the other speakers – Mayor Jim Taylor, Commissioner John Urban, Communications Director Annette Privette Keller and Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources Director Lee Tillery will get about ten minutes to talk about various aspects of what's going on in town. The speakers will be asked to hang back after the summit for additional discussion if necessary. As of the previous day there were 47 outside attendees. Previous events usually had numbers in the sixties. There are usually a few last-minute requests to attend the day before and day of the event, so that attendance number will probably change.

Review Draft Façade Grant Program Revisions

Mr. Justice said Ms. Martin and Ms. Whitley worked on the revisions. The criteria on page two included the most substantive changes and now include a scaled award based on project cost. Now larger projects have the potential to receive more substantial dollars, but the final award amount will still be determined by the Board of Commissioners.

Ms. Whitley stated that she and Ms. Martin believe grants should not be awarded for murals such as those that have been discussed in the new wayfinding program. Mr. Urban said town-initiated wayfinding-specific murals are already included in the wayfinding budget. Mr. Justice asked if they were opposed to murals that were not town-initiated. Ms. Martin said they think the initial painting of the building could be paid for by a façade grant but that the artwork itself should not. Mr. Justice said that can be an item of discussion if an applicant intended to add a mural to their building that that he didn't think murals should be excluded completely. He also noted that some buildings that might serve as a good backdrop for a mural are too new to qualify for a façade grant anyway. Ms. Whitley agreed that the application should not include any mention of murals. There was some discussion of the wayfinding program and murals. There are some unanswered questions that have to be resolved before definitive answers are available.

Mr. Klein made a motion to approve the amended changes to the façade grant application, Mr. Simon seconded and the motion was unanimously approved.

Strengthen relationship with real estate community

Mr. Justice explained that at this year's Planning Conference, the Board of Commissioners mentioned strengthening the Town's relationship with the real estate community. EDAC discussed this in a previous meeting and the directive was for Mr. Justice to work with Chairman Jamison since he is a member of the real estate community himself. It was decided that it would be good to educate the real estate community on what's going on in Matthews but also to allow a chance for them to ask questions. This meeting should be held with coffee and/or food and should probably be at least an hour long. Mr. Justice likes the idea of keeping it separate from the

Summit so he suggested targeting it for the fall and hold it in between the next Mayor's Breakfast and the Fall Summit.

They have not yet figured out how best to reach out to the real estate community. The Chamber is one source, EDAC members another. Mr. Justice can make contact with the Charlotte Real Estate group to see if they can be a good source on reaching people. Ms. Whitley suggested contacting apartment community managers too. Mr. Justice said that could be done but the original intention was to reach the real estate and development communities since most of them do not live in town. They could be educated on how to sell Matthews as a community. It wouldn't hurt to include apartment managers too.

Mr. Martin said speaking from a residential broker standpoint, the brokers who are influential enough to be targeted are probably going to be too busy to attend a function like this. This will probably be most successful with the commercial development community – architects, commercial real estate agents, et cetera. In order to get the most effectiveness out of this meeting, we may need to think about how to target a little more. Ms. Whitley said she thought the targets would include only the brokers in charge, not the other agents in any given office. Mr. Justice said that has not been decided yet and would be a good topic of discussion for the EDAC subgroup.

Chairman Jamison will work on the event. Mr. Martin and Ms. Whitley also volunteered.

*Mr. Urban departed.

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

Downtown Master Plan (DMP)

Mr. Justice said the latest schedule for the DMP calls for the public hearing on September 10 and final decision by the Board of Commissioners on October 8, 2012.

Business Development

Vice Chairman Jones said the next Breakfast with the Mayor will be scheduled some time just before or just after school starts. Mayor Taylor will confirm his availability.

Development Process/Planning Advisory Downtown

Mr. Justice said development process ideas are still being worked into the Unified Development Ordinance. There is a to-do list of recommendations that will need to be incorporated.

STAFF REPORT/ACTION PLAN UPDATE

Mr. Justice noted that the Sportsplex groundbreaking is planned for 9 am.

The necessary zoning revision was approved to allow the wayfinding signs to be placed. NCDOT has approved some of the signage and is in progress with the remainder. The RFP is already out for that signage.

There was no quorum at the last EDAC meeting but a discussion was held regarding the committee's bylaws and possible term limits. That group indicated that no change was needed but Mr. Justice asked if any other members felt it necessary to discuss the issue further. By common consensus it was determined that term limits were not necessary and no bylaw changes were needed at this time.

The State has a new Certified Retirement Community program that is slowly being rolled out. Intern Spencer Burns researched this program and explained that the State Legislature passed a bill for this program with the intention of bolstering tourism for North Carolina and attracting the aging population who currently live elsewhere.

The program, through the Department of Tourism, recognizes a community as one that is desirable for retirees. Ads are placed in national magazines and are advertised at AARP conventions. The intent is to capture those younger retirees who may be retired from their primary career but who are still active and perhaps interested in a second career or other business opportunity. The program is very new and so far only the communities of Lumberton and Asheboro have taken part.

Mr. Burns explained that the process of getting involved requires the formation of a Retirement Action Committee that must show six months of planning to formulate how the community serves retirees and the plan of how to maintain these people once they join the community. There is a one-time application fee of \$10,000 or fifty cents per person in the community's population, whichever is greater. For Matthews that would be about \$13,600. The fee would be designated for five years and an annual fee would then apply. Since the program is so new the State has not yet announced the post-five year fee but it was suggested that it would be \$2,000. If Matthews chose to move forward, a Retirement Action Committee would have to be formed and work for at least six months on this plan, then apply to the state board for this recognition.

Mr. Burns spoke to staffers in both Lumberton and Asheboro to get information about the financial or economic development benefits of this program. Both communities were very positive about the program but could not point to specific benefits. Mr. Burns spoke to staff in the Department of Tourism who explained there is a limited budget but they do work with the communities they certify.

Mr. Burns asked if Matthews was interested in specifically working to present itself as a desirable place for retirees instead of or in addition to being a desirable place for small businesses. He said it has been difficult to quantify the potential returns on a community's investment because the program is so new. The question is if this is a good program to get in on early or if it's something that is not too appealing.

By common consensus it was determined that there is not enough information available to make a decision on now. Mr. Burns will continue to research the program and then make a presentation at the next EDAC meeting.

MISCELLANEOUS

Mr. Babinski noted that the groundbreaking for the Royal Park Nursing and Rehabilitation facility is tentatively scheduled for Wednesday, July 18.

Mr. Justice noted that the grand opening for Planet Ballroom, the first Façade Grant recipient, is scheduled for early June.

ADJOURNMENT

Economic Development Advisory Committee Minutes
May 17, 2012

Vice Chairman Jones made a motion to adjourn. Ms. Martin seconded at the motion was unanimously approved. The meeting adjourned at 8:20 am.

Respectfully submitted,

Lori Canapinno
Deputy Town Clerk