

MINUTES
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY
COMMITTEE REMOTE SPECIAL MEETING
WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 19, 2020 – 4:30 PM

PRESENT: Chair Steve Thomson, Vice Chair Randy Mitchell; Members, Marcie Kelso, Brett Kiker*, Cindy Sikorski, Commissioner John Urban (appointed member), Assistant Town Manager Becky Hawke; Town Clerk Lori Canapinno

ABSENT: Kim Gossage, Tim Jones and Erin Schackman

This meeting was held remotely due to the social distancing requirements of the COVID-19 pandemic and the Mecklenburg County Safer at Home Order. Committee members and staff participated in the meeting using the Zoom remote meeting platform, which allows participants to connect via audio and video for live, simultaneous communication and the public was able to view the meeting in real time. This special meeting was scheduled to discuss the committee's recommendations for use of \$300,000 in federal CARES (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security) Act funding as approved through Mecklenburg County.

Mr. Thomson called the meeting to order at 4:35 pm and declared a quorum. Building from the previous week's discussion, Mr. Thomson reviewed two existing grant programs from Charlotte Center City Partnership and Foundation for the Carolinas to see what aspects could be used to build a Matthews-specific program. The group discussed various aspects of the programs.

*Brett Kiker arrived

Assistant Town Manager Becky Hawke asked the group to decide how the funding should be dispersed if demand exceeded available funds. She recommended a randomization factor so that there could be no issues of perceived subjectivity or favoritism. The group discussed options such as a lottery system or first come, first served. By consensus the group agreed to establish an application period with a specified window of perhaps two weeks, after which time the window would close and the applications would be reviewed via a lottery system to determine review order. Applications will be reviewed in the order determined by the lottery and funds will be assigned until depleted.

The group then reviewed issues of eligibility and criteria. By consensus, the group agreed on the following issues regarding eligibility:

1. The business or nonprofit must be physically located within the town limits of Matthews, NC.
2. Applicants must be current on all fees, permits and taxes as of the time of application except when extensions have been granted.
3. Must have between 2 and 50 FTEs.
4. The applicant entity must have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and can clearly articulate how the proposed solution (reason for the grant) will solve a unique challenge that the pandemic has directly created. The solution will be able to be measured to ensure effectiveness.
5. Applicant entity must have been established before January 1, 2020 and must still be in operation.
6. Gross sales (businesses) or earned revenue (non-profits) for 2019 must be at least \$50,000 and no greater than \$5 million. Grant applicants must submit their 2019 business tax return.
7. Applicants cannot currently be engaged in bankruptcy proceedings.
8. Check cashing agencies; gun shops; pawn shops; arcade and gaming establishments; adult entertainment businesses; current EDAC members; elected officials; and town employees are ineligible for this program. Applicants may not apply on behalf of multiple entities.
9. Grant recipients will be required to document how the funds were utilized, including receipts, as well as participate in post-grant interviews.

By consensus, the group agreed on the following issues regarding criteria:

1. The maximum grant will be \$10,000. The actual award will be determined by EDAC & the Town.
2. Funds will be dispersed on a reimbursement basis.
3. Proposals will be evaluated in terms of
 - o Response to direct hardship to the entity including direct expenses incurred as a response to COVID-19 ---- (add info on innovative approaches)
 - o context relative to the impact of COVID-19,
 - o impact on the local economy and community,
 - o any other criteria that relates to the project and the impact on the economic improvement to the town.
4. Grants may be used to reimburse eligible expenses incurred between March 1 and December 23, 2020.
5. Receipts must be submitted by December 23, 2020.
6. Grants cannot be used to replace lost revenue.
7. Grants may not be used for payroll expenses.

The group discussed offering some examples of the way applicants may qualify for a grant, but noted that there could be many ways to qualify, so EDAC doesn't want to be too restrictive. Some of the examples include applicants making the switch to e-commerce; transitioning a restaurant to outdoor seating; using enhanced technology to solve a customer service problem; and adding new COVID-19-related signage

The group discussed the fund distribution process. By consensus the group agreed to set up the program as a reimbursement. Applicants will go through the application process and those who are chosen will then submit a package of documents to the Town so that the grant payments can be processed through the Finance Department as an Accounts Payable process. The applicant package would include a copy of their approved grant, receipts, and any other applicable documents. The applicants would receive the funds after they've proven that they've done what their application stated. This way the Town won't have to worry about clawing back funds or invoicing any entity that doesn't follow through on their applications.

The group discussed using a portion of the funds for advertising to ensure as many people as possible are aware of the grant program. Ms. Hawke noted that a separate plan would have to be submitted to Mecklenburg County for their approval to use some of the funds for advertising. She suggested that EDAC could request marketing funding from the Matthews Board of Commissioners. Mr. Urban suggested partnering with the Red Brick Partnership for marketing. The group then discussed various marketing methods, including direct mail pieces, digital marketing, personal outreach to leaders in the minority communities, and ads in the Matthews-Mint Hill Weekly. EDAC could also try to get local new agencies to cover the program. The group agreed that marketing will be key and EDAC will need to work to get the message out to all possible applicants.

Ms. Hawke explained that Mr. Thomson will be reviewing this plan with the Board of Commissioners on August 24th. Assuming the Board has no problems with the proposed plan, it will be submitted to Mecklenburg County for approval. EDAC won't be able to begin marketing the program until the county issues that approval. EDAC will meet again in September to devise the methodology for application review.

Motion by Ms. Sikorski to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Mr. Mitchell and unanimously approved. The meeting adjourned at 6:54 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Lori Canapinno
Town Clerk