

**MINUTES
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 15, 2011
7:00 AM
JORDAN ROOM, MATTHEWS TOWN HALL**

PRESENT: Chairman Paul Jamison; Vice Chairman Tim Jones; Members Paul Babinski, Greg Klein, Bev Martin, Roger Martin, Jerry McGuire, Mike Simons*, John Urban, Tina Whitley; Assistant Town Manager Jamie Justice

ABSENT: Members Rachel Garcia and Bill Rhyne

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Jamison called the meeting to order at 7:02 am and declared a quorum.

INVOCATION

Mr. Martin rendered the invocation.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

Vice Chairman Jones motioned to approve the minutes of the July 21, 2011 meeting. Mr. Martin seconded and the motion was unanimously approved.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Business Summit: program topics

Mr. McGuire explained that the next summit is coming soon and needs a set date and a defined topic. Feedback from the last event suggests attendees have a desire to see more Matthews-focused topics.

Ms. Whitley suggested detailing the current sign ordinance and proposed changes within the new Unified Development Ordinance (UDO). She said she often receives questions and complaints and it would be useful for businesspeople to understand what the town's goals are on this topic.

* Mr. Simons arrived

Mr. McGuire discussed methods of speaker participation. Panels have been used in all previous summits – perhaps another format should be tried. Chairman Jamison suggested exhibitors rather than a speaking panel. Mr. McGuire noted the speaker panels have always received a good response, but he does like the idea of having some other materials in the room.

Mr. Justice suggested transportation as a topic. The town could invite NCDOT Division Engineer Barry Moose and discuss the various transportation projects that affect Matthews.

Mr. Babinski suggested discussing the 2012 Democratic National Convention (DNC) in Charlotte, how the town is positioning itself to capitalize on the event and how local businesses can take part. Chairman Jamison suggested inviting a DNC representative to the summit. Mr. Justice said that would be better as a spring 2012 summit topic.

Mr. Urban suggested contacting state representatives such as Bob Rucho and/or Bill Brawley to provide input and receive feedback directly from Matthews businesspeople.

Mr. McGuire suggested November 18th as the next summit date. Chairman Jamison said the summit planning work group would meet next week and asked members to submit ideas to him or Mr. McGuire.

Business Incubator

Mr. Justice said the Small Business and Technology Development Center put together some information. The takeaway is the town must determine what type and level of involvement Wingate University is willing to commit to. The 196 South Trade Street building is small and the town must determine if that is enough space to launch the incubator. The funds needed just to staff it would be significant. That is Model A. It's possible that Model B could include more involvement with Wingate. There have also been discussions about an off-site incubator. All of the possibilities need to be further discussed. The plan is to meet in the next few weeks and then give an update to the Town Council.

NEW BUSINESS

Economic Development Incentives

Experts will be brought in to advise the town on various incentive options that have been used around the state. The intent is to gain knowledge so the Town Board can decide if it wishes to adopt an economic development incentive policy for the town.

Mr. Justice explained that other municipalities often offer cash grants or infrastructure improvements as incentives. Tax abatement is not allowed in North Carolina. These incentives are performance-based so if the company doesn't perform as promised then the company doesn't get paid. Mr. Urban noted that the School of Government article previously distributed by Mr. Justice showed that zoning and permitting assistance was the most reportedly-used tool in a recent North Carolina local government survey. Mr. Urban also noted the article wasn't able to come down in favor or against incentives – it is a community-specific endeavor.

Mr. Urban noted there was little discussion of the preexisting business community. He said there could be an issue with these loyal businesspeople. He also said Matthews has historically been very good about making sure the existing businesses are happy. Mr. Justice said a way to include existing businesses is to offer incentives to any company that plans to commit to a certain level of investment - a preexisting company planning an expansion could potentially receive the same incentives that attract new businesses to the community.

There are pros and cons to each option and to the idea of incentives as a whole. All of that will be discussed at the meeting. Mr. Justice said the objectives will be determined by the community – it could be that certain industries are targeted or some other method that has to be determined.

Chairman Jamison explained the two options that are available: EDAC can discuss options and make recommendations to the Town Board of Commissioners or EDAC and the Town Board can meet jointly to discuss

options together. By consensus it was agreed that EDAC and the Town Board should hold a joint meeting to discuss economic development incentive options. This will be a 5:30 meeting prior to a Monday night Town Board meeting and will be scheduled sometime in the next few months.

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

Downtown

Mr. Urban said there is a stakeholders group meeting tentatively scheduled for late September or early October. The discussion of a downtown steering group will be part of that meeting.

Development Process/Planning Advisory

Mr. Urban said the customer service training that is currently taking place with town staff will positively impact the development process. The UDO process has slowly continued. The Town Board still has to review the last one and a half chapters that contain most of the design criteria. Mr. Urban said he's not sure how much new and critical information there actually is in the entire document – there will be new material on Mixed Use Districts and a brand-new lighting ordinance but not a lot of other new items.

Mr. Babinski asked about the plan to streamline the planning and approval process. Mr. Urban explained the UDO will make it much easier to read and understand the ordinance. In addition, the manner in which the Town Board meetings and public hearings are conducted have been changed. Now Planning staff issues their report and makes a presentation before the applicant so the staff's professional opinions are made clear at the beginning of the hearing process.

Mr. Justice then explained the progress so far in the town's streamlining efforts. Steve Allan, the consultant, will be holding input meetings with the development community at the end of the month. The goal is to hear frank and open discussion of the town's methods, learn what is being done correctly and what needs to be fixed, and receive suggestions on how to make the necessary improvements. EDAC members were asked to invite interested parties to attend one of the meetings.

Business Development

Mayor's Breakfast - Vice Chairman Jones said the recent Mayor's Breakfast was very successful. All of the attendees submitted an after-event survey with very favorable numbers. The last time the survey was done online after the event and not all of the attendees responded. This time they were handed a survey before they left and all of them submitted a complete form. Future breakfasts should definitely use the printed surveys rather than online surveys. It was determined that EDAC would like to continue this program as long as the mayor is in agreement.

Vice Chairman Jones noted an area of improvement related to the invitee list. There was a quick response in the first two days which filled the list but then it stopped – there was no need to make a waiting list. Then on the day of the breakfast several people did not show up, so the meeting was smaller than originally planned. It's possible that fewer attendees diminished the discussion. Ms. Martin said the public relations benefit is great even if attendance is low. There was some discussion of purposefully overbooking to ensure maximum participation but there was no agreement on that practice. Ms. Martin suggested sending a reminder email and Chairman Jamison

suggested a direct phone call. By consensus it was determined that reminder calls or emails to all respondents will be performed for future events.

Mr. McGuire suggested sending out media releases after each event, perhaps with a photograph of the group and a quote or two from attendees.

Mr. McGuire suggested having the Mayor speak on one topic and then open the floor for questions. Vice Chairman Jones said the objective is mostly to listen to attendee input and solicit feedback – to ensure the business community knows that the town is listening.

Vice Chairman Jones said it is a definite help to have Town Manager Hazen Blodgett, Assistant Town Manager Jamie Justice and Communications Director Annette Privette-Keller in attendance to hear first-hand what people are discussing and to help with the follow-up on any concerns that are raised.

Vice Chairman Jones invited other EDAC members to take the lead role on the Breakfasts if they are interested. Anyone who wished to become point person for future breakfasts should contact him and/or Chairman Jamison.

Letter to new businesses – Vice Chairman Jones drafted a letter that will be included with new privilege license applications. Communications Director Annette Privette-Keller is finalizing it and a copy will be distributed to EDAC members when it is ready.

STAFF REPORT/ACTION PLAN UPDATE

Mr. Justice said the economic development newsletter goes out on the second week of every month with three or four items. Consensus was this was a good idea and should be continued. There was discussion of items of interest to be added to future mailings, such as notice of the Mayor's Breakfast and information about events like the upcoming meeting for the development community.

Mr. Justice gave an update on the first façade grant applicant – interior work is being done now and exterior work should commence soon.

Ms. Whitley asked about future grants and noted the \$5,000 given to the first applicant was more than expected. She said she would like EDAC to have the opportunity to review the applications before any grants are awarded. Mr. Justice explained that the committee did in fact make a recommendation to grant the full \$5,000 to this applicant during the June 30, 2011 special meeting.

Mr. Urban mentioned a previous discussion about scaling the award depending on the amount of money spent on the entire project. Mr. Justice said the current language is a little loose and plans to revise the rules in place, which could include scalability. Mr. Urban said it would be good to either do that or break the year into halves so not all of the funds could be used at once. Ms. Whitley noted there had been past discussion regarding saving some portion of the annual fund for future applicants. Mr. Justice said there needs to be more specificity written into the regulations and required from the applicants in the future. Planner Jay Camp will work on these changes after he finishes upgrading the Downtown Master Plan.

Mr. Urban explained that he and Jay Camp met with several potential applicants in previous months but none of them followed through with an application. Some of the desired changes were not historically accurate, such as vinyl windows on a hundred year old building. He said the intent of the grant is to encourage historically accurate improvements.

MISCELLANEOUS

Mr. Urban said he would like to see EDAC become more involved with the development process. He suggested asking a Planning staff member to present a UDO update at the next EDAC meeting or prepare a written report for their perusal. Chapter-by-chapter highlights of the new material and changes would be helpful.

Mr. Urban also suggested asking Communications Director Annette Privette-Keller to provide details on the town's wayfinding initiative.

Chairman Jamison discussed downtown wireless hotspots. Mr. Urban said downtown business owner Jim Johnson had previously discussed setting up WiFi in the downtown area as a private business venture. Mr. Urban said that may be a topic for the Downtown steering group to revisit. There was some discussion about the costs involved in such a program. The town received quotes in the \$10,000 to \$20,000 range. Ms. Martin suggested sending a letter of inquiry to potential partners to gauge interest. Mr. Simons suggested contacting Double Radius out of Indian Trail because they have experience with this type of project. Mr. Justice said the town was not trying to take the lead on this but it may be necessary.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Martin motioned to adjourn. Mr. Babinski seconded and the motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 8:10 am.

Respectfully submitted,

Lori Canapinno
Deputy Town Clerk