

MINUTES
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 20, 2014 – 7:00 AM
JORDAN ROOM, MATTHEWS TOWN HALL

PRESENT: Chairman Paul Jamison, Vice Chairman Tim Jones, Members Tim Cheuvront, 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: Members Paul Babinski, Mark Harrison, Commissioner John Higdon (appointed member)

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Jamison called the meeting to order at 7:00 am.

INVOCATION

Mr. Martin rendered an invocation.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion by Mr. Cheuvront to approve the minutes of the September 18, 2014 meeting. Seconded by Ms. Martin and unanimously approved.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

DOWNTOWN ORGANIZATION UPDATE

Mr. Justice discussed the public meeting on the proposed downtown organization meeting which was held on November 5th. The meeting was well-attended and there was good discussion regarding possible organization activities. This is an all-encompassing economic development effort, not simply a merchants' group, and includes residents, non-profit organizations, service providers and others as well as merchants.

Mr. Jones said he thought the residents were left out a bit in that discussion. Mr. Jamison thought the presentation on marketing was great and he really liked the name Red Brick Partnership. He liked the idea of coasters for restaurants but wanted to also have something that could be used for non-restaurants participants. He suggested a poker chip. There needs to be a tie-in for residents too. He said it's not likely that everyone is going to be able to be reached immediately. Mr. Gill noted that the circle imagery can be used in many different ways and Ms. Whitley said she had a lot of ideas for other marketing materials.

*Mr. Thomson arrived

Mr. Chevront noted there had been a lot of discussion about “outsider” food trucks during the public meeting and said there needs to be a change in culture for the restaurants in town. They need to be willing to travel out to the park for special events rather than expect attendees to travel down to eat in their restaurants. There was a discussion on food trucks and local restaurants and the restaurants’ involvement with town events. Ms. Whitley said there needs to be strong communication from the Town to make the restaurants aware of upcoming events. Mr. Chevront said the Chamber could help with that.

Mr. Klein said food trucks can be good for local restaurants. People who are encouraged to visit an event because of food trucks, especially those who do not live in town and might otherwise never visit downtown Matthews, become aware of all of the restaurants, businesses and services located in downtown while they travel to and from the various events. Mr. Urban noted that if the downtown organization moves forward it will work on self-directed events so these concerns will be handled internally to provide the best outcome for all involved.

Ms. Whitley said memberships could be a concern in only a small group pays and others don’t. Mr. Jamison said he was concerned with the idea of initiating a municipal service district (MSD) immediately. He suggested allowing time so the group could earn a few small victories first, which could make the concept of an MSD more palatable to those who have seen good results in the organization’s first year. He suggested pursuing funding through a town appropriation, sponsorships and similar in the first year or two and then pursuing an MSD in the organization’s second or third year. Mr. Justice noted that there really does need to be some commitment from the community as well as the town. Sponsorships or other community funding would show the Board of Commissioners that there was willingness by the public for active participation in a downtown organization.

Discussion ensued regarding funding options. Mr. Urban noted that it is important to not lose momentum – there has been good public turnout at meetings and a list of people who wish to play an active role in any future organization. He believes it is important to bring that support to the Board so the members can see there is commitment from the citizens. There are good “low-hanging fruit” items such as a website and wayfinding items which would be relatively inexpensive but which would have a big immediate impact.

Mr. Justice suggested scheduling a special Board of Commissioners meeting in January or February to touch base with the Board and explain some of this. Mr. Urban said it would be important to show the Board that there are specific stakeholders ready to offer their time and/or funding to the organization. Ms. Whitley requested that Mr. Justice put together bullet point information and disseminate it to EDAC members before that special meeting.

Ms. Whitley noted there needs to be specific items in place, such as a Board of Directors and bylaws, at the very beginning. She noted her request to include the Chamber as a significant partner. She also voiced the desire for an information kiosk outside the visitor’s center. Mr. Thompson suggested a mobile application. Discussion ensued regarding marketing and wayfinding materials.

Motion by Mr. Jones to recommend approval of the Downtown Organization concept. The implementation of a Municipal Service District is recommended to be postponed to a future year; first-year funds should come from a combination of Town budget appropriation - to include wayfinding funding from Tourism funds - and funds raised from downtown stakeholders. The first-year action items will include items such as a website with mobile application, marketing items and wayfinding projects; with specific items to be chosen by the organization’s Board of Directors. The motion was seconded by Mr. Thomson and unanimously approved.

FOUR TOWN ALLIANCE UPDATE

Mr. Justice reviewed the special joint meeting on the Alliance, which was held at CPCC on November 5 and at which all four member towns were present. The organization is in place and the board has been structured. The

Creative Giveback project with Crystal Morphus and her group has been completed. A number of potential projects exist, including individual and multi-jurisdictional possibilities. It is possible to leverage the four towns' combined total of 100,000 citizens.

They are still working out the kinks with each town, but over the next few months they will review potential low-hanging fruit projects. One item of note is the idea of identifying the area as a sports hub – that would pull in a lot of people. The group has agreed on the need for a name that is a place-maker for the region – something geographically related so people understand what it represents.

STAFF REPORT

Mr. Justice gave an development project update. The Town 316 project was approved by the Board and will add residential multifamily units to East Matthews Street. The Downtown Master Plan calls for more residential downtown, which can sometimes be seen unfavorably, as was witnessed with the applicant's other residential project, which proposed additional residential multifamily units on Ames Street. There is another proposal for 47 single family residential units on South Trade Street near MARA. The public hearing will be held on December 8.

The Board will vote on the Small Area Plan for the Family Entertainment Area near the Sportsplex on December 8. Land use concepts are being firmed up, with a desire for transit-oriented, mixed-use development and to limit big-box development. Under construction now is the connection to the Sportsplex from Brigman Road to Matthews-Mint Hill Road.

The South Trade Street widening project will begin in early January 2015 and is scheduled for completion in 2016. Discussion on the future widening of Independence Boulevard has taken place and will continue to occur. There will be limited crossings and access to Independence Boulevard. The rotary on NC-51 and Idlewild Road will be constructed in the summer of 2015.

MISCELLANEOUS

There will be two EDAC vacancies, with Paul Babinski and Mark Harrison completing their terms. Applications will be accepted through December 5 and the Board will appoint new members early next year.

Jen Thompson is the town's new Communications Director. She will start on December 1.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Mr. Jones to adjourn. Seconded by Mr. Martin and unanimously approved. The meeting adjourned at 8:25 am.

Respectfully submitted,

Lori Canapinno
Town Clerk