

The Economic Development Advisory Committee proactively promotes a healthier business climate that enhances Greater Matthews by advising town officials, advocating for current businesses and attracting new entrepreneurial ventures.

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

1. Call to Order & Declare Quorum
2. Approval of Minutes: November 21, 2019 Regular Meeting
3. Introduction of New Members: John Urban, Renee Garner, Kim Gossage
4. Elect EDAC Chair and Vice Chair
5. Unfinished Business
 - A. Discuss EDAC's List of Focus Items & Receive Subcommittee Reports
 - 1) Hotel Analysis - Marcie, Brett, Cindy
 - 2) Business Climate Analysis – Randy, Erin, Steve
 - 3) Economic Development Director Analysis – Tim
6. New Business
 - A. Consider Changing EDAC Meeting Time
 - B. Review EDAC Vacancies
7. Reports
 - A. Board/development projects update
 - B. Chamber update
 - C. Quad update
 - D. Staff report
8. Miscellaneous
9. Adjournment

Next meeting: March 19, 2020 at 7:00 AM

MINUTES
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
JORDAN ROOM, MATTHEWS TOWN HALL
THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 21, 2019 – 7:00 AM

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

ABSENT: Marcie Kelso, Chamber Executive Director Kelly Barnhardt (ex-officio)

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Gill called the meeting to order at 7:01 am and declared a quorum.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion by Ms. Kelso to approve the minutes of the September 19, 2019 regular meeting. The motion was seconded by Mr. Mitchell and unanimously approved.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

DISCUSS EDAC'S LIST OF FOCUS ITEMS

The group reviewed the list of focus items for EDAC. This list had been requested by Mayor Bailey earlier in the year and the intent is for the Board of Commissioners to review each advisory committee's proposed list of items. Ms. Hawke noted that the Board has not yet reviewed these items, but that EDAC should continue to work on them, as they're worth pursuing. The group reviewed the first several items and will continue to discuss them in subsequent meetings.

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.

Ms. Hawke noted that the Board of Commissioners has repeatedly talked about wanting hotels with a certain price point and with certain amenities. Board members are particularly interested in a full service hotel with significant meeting space, especially something in proximity to the Sportsplex to meet sports teams' needs. A full service hotel generally has significant amenities such as on-site food preparation and meeting space.

**Erin Schackman arrived*

Ms. Hawke noted that this hasn't yet been evaluated for feasibility. At their last planning conference, the Board discussed having EDAC take the lead on figuring out who can do this type of analysis and its cost, so that EDAC can then bring a proposal on it to the Board. Mr. Higdon said the Board has talked about not wanting low-end extended stay hotels but doesn't want to restrict higher-end brands like Residence Inn and similar. Ms. Hawke reviewed the Planning Department's recent work on text changes to better define hotels and extended stay hotels, which include details about daily housekeeping services and required sizes for amenity areas. Mr. Higdon explained that his former employer, Conbraco, frequently had executives coming to Matthews but had to put them up in hotels

outside of town. Matthews is losing a lot of opportunities of that nature. He noted the Waverly development in Charlotte is popular because people can park at their hotel and then walk to all types of amenities without having to drive to them. That aspect is very important to any future Matthews hotel development and is why the Sportsplex location would be great.

Mr. Gill noted that EDAC has identified the first three items as highest priorities and suggested dividing them up and forming subcommittees to work on each. Marcie Kelso, Brett Kiker and Cindy Sikorski volunteered to work on #1 and Ms. Hawke will be included in the conversations. They don't need to do the actual market research but learn how to find and hire the expert consultants to guide Matthews through the process. Ideally, the consultant could then perform the marketing of Matthews to those brands.

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.

Mr. Higdon explained that Matthews should be more proactive and advocate that it's a great place to open a business. Ms. Hawke noted the issue of how little available land there is and how cost-prohibitive it is to purchase. A full-fledged economic development program gets into incentives. The question is, is that what it takes, and if so, is the Board ready to get into that sort of program? Matthews does have an incentive policy, which involves rebating the tax burden after the fact based on different business factors, but no company has ever taken advantage of it. None of the companies that expressed initial interest came even close to meeting the required wage threshold.

Mr. Mitchell discussed speaking with existing business owners to hear their opinions on the business climate. Ms. Hawke said that could be part of it, but as previously discussed, everyone needs to be prepared to react to those concerns: to follow up and meet those needs when they're expressed. Mr. Gill said he's a big believer in benchmarking against other communities to see what they're doing well. Randy Mitchell and Erin Schackman volunteered to work on item #2.

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)

Mr. Mitchell noted that items two and three may be able to be handled together. Mr. Higdon said he is interested in the idea of jointly funding an economic development director position with other towns. Ms. Schackman questioned if there would be any conflicts of interest with a shared director; Ms. Hawke explained that it benefits the entire area when a big employer is attracted to the area, not just the town it opens in. Mr. Gill suggested this is something the Quad Alliance could review. Mr. Jones noted that Matthews' available land is limited but he is a proponent of a shared ED director position.

*Steve Thomson arrived. He confirmed he will work with Mr. Mitchell and Ms. Schackman on item #2.

Mr. Higdon said the Sportsplex will be a significant opportunity, and there is other land available around town. Ms. Hawke noted redevelopment opportunities as well, such as the Family Dollar site. Light rail development will also create opportunities throughout the region. Mr. Higdon noted that the light rail development is being pushed through and the intent is to make it happen in the next ten years or so. The exact location is still not known. Ms. Hawke noted that the Town adopted a preferred alignment, but it was never officially accepted. The desired ending point is at Central Piedmont Community College. She explained that everyone is welcome to provide input on the alignment.

Mr. Higdon asked if staff could contact other area towns to gauge their interest in a regional economic development director position; Ms. Hawke said yes, but that it would be important for the mayors and other elected officials to

talk about this possibility too. Mr. Gill suggested contacting Liz Parham as a resource for this item. Tim Jones volunteered to work on item #3.

The discussion stopped at these three items. EDAC will discuss all of them in the future.

NEW BUSINESS

DISCUSS BUSINESS SUMMITS

Ms. Hawke reviewed statistics from the October summit: 78 people registered but only 53 attended. This is a high cancellation and no-show rate. There were several non-registered walk-in attendees as well. Her analysis of the registered attendees indicates there were 24 businesspeople; 29 members of EDAC, the Board, and similar “known” groups; and 29 who registered but did not attend. The content was great and directly beneficial to interested parties, but the number of attendees was poor. EDAC should consider alternatives for the future. Mr. Higdon said the Sportsplex location was great. Ms. Hawke agreed that it was aesthetically great but logistically challenging, and the space was very tight. It would have been uncomfortable if all the registered attendees had been present. Mr. Thomson agreed. Mr. Mitchell said EDAC should consider not holding a summit in 2020. Mr. Jones said the summits are well worth continuing, but perhaps less frequently. Mr. Thomson noted that the last evaluations had a lower score on “relevance to my business” than in previous summits. Ms. Schackman agreed that the information wasn’t very helpful to her particular business, but it was still helpful information and gave her a better understanding overall. Mr. Thomson suggested providing that same type of information in a different manner than a summit. Ms. Schackman said she really liked Mr. Mitchell’s “get to know your table” icebreaker. She recommended programming in more time for networking during future summits – probably after the event itself rather than before. She also suggested asking attendees if they’d like to be connected to other attendees: perhaps part of the survey could facilitate making those connections. She said emailing after the fact definitely needs to continue, but there needs to be some sort of call to action to get people to respond.

The group discussed possible next steps. Ms. Sikorski said following up with attendees is important, to continue to be in front of them more than just once a year. She suggested making personal phone calls or other methods of contact. Mr. Gill said following up is great if the information gained is actually used, but he questioned what information would be gained and what would be done with it, saying that it would be worse to have a ‘black hole’ of information that goes nowhere. Mr. Mitchell said following up with all past summit attendees could be done as part of focus item list #2. Mr. Thomson suggested using the Mayor’s Breakfast event to continue to share information – perhaps taking ten minutes from it to talk about one of the suggested topics. Ms. Hawke suggested charging a nominal fee to summit registrants, which might reduce the number of no-shows. Mr. Mitchell asked if there was still the required time and energy to continue with the summits. Ms. Hawke said she felt the resources that were in the room were great – it might be wise to make some minor tweaks, but the general group should be kept the same. There was a significant amount of access to people and organizations that could help businesses who need it. Maybe the summits could move to every other year, and it could be livestreamed for those unable to attend in person. Ms. Schackman suggested shifting the keynote speaker each time and said resources for new and existing businesses would be helpful. Mr. Higdon said it’s important to hear success stories to learn how people made it work in Matthews. He said maybe the keynote each time should be someone with a successful business. Ms. Hawke said perhaps the keynote could be someone who used the previously-discussed resources to open or grow their successful business – it wouldn’t necessarily have to be limited to Matthews businesses.

By consensus the group agreed to continue holding business summits. Summit frequency and specific programming will be addressed in the future.

DISCUSS 2020 EDAC LEADERSHIP

Mr. Gill noted that there's currently one open seat and there will be another in 2020 after he steps down. Any member who knows of a person who may be interested in joining EDAC should encourage them to apply. The 2020 Chair and Vice Chair will be chosen at the January 16, 2020 meeting.

REPORTS

Board/development projects: Ms. Hawke reported that the 2019-2021 Mayor and Board of Commissioners will be taking office on December 9. *Matthews Chamber:* Ms. Hawke noted the Chamber's upcoming annual gala on December 12. Kim Gossage of Garrity & Gossage is the incoming 2020 President and JD Yearwood of Lat Purser & Associates is the incoming Vice President. *Quad:* Mr. Jones reported on the Quad's continued consideration of a joint police and fire training center. They also recently heard a presentation on the area's greenways. Matthews is taking the leadership on that, while Mint Hill is pursuing more sidewalks and unpaved paths.

MISCELLANEOUS

Mr. Gill asked about business opportunities related to the upcoming 2020 Republican National Convention in Charlotte. Ms. Hawke explained that she has heard nothing about it. Former Mayor Bailey was the one pursuing that. Mr. Gill then noted that there are new, high-priced homes being built in "old town" Matthews – the heart of the residential area in downtown Matthews. Old homes are being taken down and new one put up – he said it's nice to see things are happening here in town. He then noted the upcoming Small Business Saturday, which promotes supporting the local business community on the Saturday after Thanksgiving. Ms. Hawke noted the upcoming holiday stroll on December 7th, which is put on by the Red Brick Partnership, Chamber, and Town. The Farmers' Market is holding a special holiday market that day – it's great to see them becoming engaged with Red Brick.

Ms. Schackman asked about work on the property at the intersection of McKee Road and Pleasant Plains Road and Ms. Hawke explained that Windsor Run has easement access to continue to develop their property next door. Also, Town staff installed some fencing to stop the illegal dumping that has been occurring there. The Board is still evaluating that property and its potential long-term uses. Ms. Hawke also noted that EDAC will discuss in January the possibility of changing its regular meeting hours.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Mr. Jones to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Mr. Mitchell and unanimously approved. The meeting adjourned at 8:30 am.

Respectfully submitted,

Lori Canapinno
Town Clerk