

Wednesday, March 23, 2016 Meeting Minutes

Economic Development Committee – Joint Workgroup Meeting

EDC Members Present: Ed Morrell, Sheree Hedrick, Paul White, Don Brown, Lesia McKensie, Dr. Connie Jones

EDC Members Absent: Barry Perry

Staff Present: Allison Rice, David Bergmark, Patrick Reidy, Teresa Piner, Sherry Scoggins

Guests: Commissioner Virginia Gray, Ruth Van der Grinten, Brad Rhinehalt, Kelly Maness, Jonathan Freeze

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The meeting was held in the Board Room at Town Hall, 15 E. Fourth Street.

Mr. White called the meeting to order at 5:40, and opened the meeting with a short prayer. Mr. White welcomed all visitors.

Mr. Brown made a motion to accept the minutes from November 18, 2015. Ms. Hedrick seconded the motion. The minutes for the meeting held November 18, 2015 were approved.

Kelly Maness with Capital Area Workforce development board gave a presentation about ways they were working to help strengthen businesses and work with schools.

Ms. Maness said that Capital Area Workforce is a federally funded organization that works for workforce development in Wake and Johnston Counties. Their focus was on making sure training met the needs of employers through the NCWorks System through business engagement services, adult services, and youth services.

Ms. Maness said that Capital Area Workforce was working on the following programs:

- Work-based learning: a spectrum of services that enhanced classroom learning and helped inform career choice through internships, job shadowing, apprenticeships
- Work Ready Community Designation for Wake and Johnston Counties
- Summer Youth Internship Program: program in its inaugural year to provide high school students 6 weeks of paid internships

Jonathan Freeze with the Greater Raleigh Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB) gave a presentation on marketing, branding, tax, and collaborative opportunities in support of economic development.

Mr. Freeze said the CVB was funded by a percentage of tourism tax dollars. Mr. White asked who created the CVB. Mr. Freeze said it originally was a part of the Greater Raleigh Chamber of Commerce, but is now its own organization with a Board of Directors appointed by the City of Raleigh and the Wake County Board of Commissioners. He said they provided marketing, online advertising, customer service, work to attract trade shows and conventions, etc. Mr. Freeze said there were many advisory boards for the CVB, including live music, beer summits, cultural presenters, sports alliance, meeting planners, etc.

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Mr. Freeze explained that one facet of the CVB was destination marketing, which he defined as travel promotion as economic development on the demand side. The CVB worked to create demand for things that already existed in a community. Mr. Freeze said one thing they looked at was what each community's current unique selling proposition was. He said towns outside of Raleigh were diverse and bountiful, and should market themselves that way. He suggested the town use Raleigh as a hook to attract visitors that would then visit Wendell. He suggested that the EDC plan overnight and day trips in Wendell. What should people visit? He said there needed to be more hotel options in Wendell, and that the Town should continue to list important events on visitraleigh.com.

Mr. Freeze said the EDC should ask themselves the following questions as they move forward:

- What are some of Wendell's hospitality and visitation goals?
- How does Wendell define "visitors"?
- From where does Wendell draw its new customers/relocation?
- Beyond "small town/big charm", what story is Wendell telling visitors? What makes Wendell unique beyond being another small, charming town?
- What type of smart, new experiences are people creating in Wendell? Is anyone being creative or innovative? Mr. Freeze is looking for lists of specific people to be featured on the website peoplefirsttourism.com

Mr. Freeze said he and the CVB were asking for businesses, restaurants, etc. to engage with the CVB by participating in trainings and being featured on the CVB website. He said the CVB could help the Town and its businesses through tourism marketing content, hospitality business advocacy, visitor impact/market research, mini marketing plans, tech/system integration, etc. He said he would be happy to sit down with staff or the EDC to discuss specific ways the CVB could help the Town.

Ms. McKensie asked if there was anything that people wanted to see that towns weren't providing. Mr. Freeze said more towns were building performing arts centers, and they were very effective. He said he would have to get back to her with more research.

Ms. Rice asked if product festivals like beer festivals were effective. Mr. Freeze said it depended on whether it conflicted with other events in the Triangle. He said these events tended to pull the same people from around the Triangle and didn't bring in tourism from the outside. He said that the event would have to be truly unique to draw people from outside the Triangle, and that the organizers must be passionate about the products.

Mr. Freeze said to look at the types of visitors that would visit Wendell. He said they might come from Eastern North Carolina instead of the Triangle. He said they may have different interests.

Ms. Hedrick said the concert venue at Wendell Falls was our unique story. She said it was more peaceful than other venues. Mr. Brown said the Barn Quilts that had been put up at Wendell Falls and at Perry's Gun Shop was a unique draw. Mr. Freeze said there were other things that would be a draw to the Town, even if it wasn't retail. He said the CVB is working on developing a Beer Trail, which would generate repeat business. Mr. Freeze said more people were getting interested in bike trails. He said the Mountain to Sea Trail was getting more advertising, and that it was a lucrative potential market. He said bike tourists would bring in a lot of money.

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Mr. White said that there were a lot of new parks in Eastern Wake County. Ms. Hedrick said there were a lot of bikers and walkers downtown, and that people came from out of town to walk around.

Mr. Bergmark asked the board to consider new and expanding company announcements and events that could be shared with Wake County Economic Development.

The EDC talked about new businesses and development in Town. The space that used to house Kannon's was discussed, along with Southern Glimpse, 1903, a potential BBQ restaurant, commercial development in Wendell Falls, the EMS station, and a new industrial site was also discussed.

Ms. Hedrick thanked staff for the data that captured attendance at the Open House event during Wendell Wonderland in December. She said it would be good to go back to businesses to show the benefit of participation.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:10.