

Wednesday, July 22, 2015 Meeting Minutes

Economic Development Committee – Joint Workgroup Meeting

EDC Members Present: Paul White, Ed Morrell, Berry Perry, Sheree Hedrick, Connie Jones, Keisha King

EDC Members Absent: Lesia McKensie, Ginny Porter, Don Brown

Staff Present: David Bergmark, Allison Rice, Patrick Reidy

Guests: Commissioner Gina Gray, Brad Rhinehalt

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The meeting was called to order by Paul White at 5:34 pm.

Mr. Bergmark asked everyone to introduce themselves to the group, since there were new members.

Berry Perry made a motion to accept the minutes. Sheree Hedrick seconded it.

Mr. Bergmark asked if there were any questions from the newcomers, but everyone was ready to get started. Mr. Bergmark explained the structure of the EDC and its history. He said it started with the shovel ready sites project, but that it had done quite a few things in the past few years, including: the economic development portion of the Town website, the wayfinding program, text amendments, the business incentive program, the outdoor dining policy, as well as helping to spur fiber, recreation, and transportation improvements.

Ms. King asked what resources the town and the group provides for businesses. Mr. Reidy said staff had compiled a list of resources to provide for businesses, although it was difficult to get businesses to use them.

The EDC discussed Town regulations and historic districts.

Ms. Hedrick said she had seen an example of local business school resources partnering with local universities at the Bailey County Doctors Museum. She suggested the EDC look into doing a project like that.

The EDC discussed things that would encourage Downtown visits, including stores staying open in the evenings, keeping streets open during festivals, and downtown parking.

Commissioner Gray suggested that the EDC make a list of projects for them to work on, and ask the Town Board for a task, since the EDC needed some direction moving forward. She said it was hard to pinpoint the purpose of the EDC since it didn't have a set task.

Ms. Hedrick asked if the EDC could have an inventory of available properties for rent and for sale. She said the EDC could then look to connect those stores with appropriate businesses. Mr. Reidy said they had started a list on the website, but it was difficult to get property owners and real estate agents to respond to requests or to participate.

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Mr. Morrell asked for a list of empty buildings in town with their owners. He said the Town's goal should be to have 90% of them filled in 1 year. He said the best prospects were businesses that were successful in other Towns that were looking to expand. He said the EDC should come back to the next meeting with a priority list of potential businesses, indicating type and specifics about the businesses. Ms. Hedrick said that everyone should come back to the next meeting with the name of one prospective business. Mr. Morrell said he brought his business and family to Wendell because he spoke to the Wake County Chamber of Commerce and they told him there was a building available in Wendell.

Mr. Bergmark said staff would come to the next meeting with a list of available properties. He said that staff had also been working on a business incentive program which could prove helpful.

The EDC discussed the historic photos placed in vacant business windows in Downtown Wendell. Ms. Rice gave a report on her progress. She said she hadn't placed any in the windows yet, since she was still collecting photos, printing and laminating them. The EDC discussed costs of the project and how to get more photos. Mr. White said he had some photos of people at Lake Myra. Ms. Hedrick gave Ms. Rice some yearbooks and photos.

Mr. Perry made a motion to adjourn. The motion passed.