

Wednesday, June 25, 2014 Meeting Minutes

Economic Development Committee – Joint Workgroup Meeting

EDC Members Present: Edward Morrell, Paul White, Lesia Mckenzie, Barry Perry, and Joe Ann Wright

EDC Members Absent: Kyle Williams, Don Brown

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

Guests: Commissioner Virginia Gray, Gene Braddy, Michaelle Hankerson, Brad Rhinehalt, Ruth van der Grinten, Bill Connolly, Regina Harmon, Bruce Lynch, Larry Vaughan, and Joe Milazzo.

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The meeting was called to order at 5:45.

David Bergmark said there were several meeting minutes to approve and asked for a motion. Barry Perry made a motion to approve the minutes. Lesia McKenzie seconded the motion. The minutes for the March 26th, April 9th, May 14th, and June 10th meetings were approved.

Mr. Bergmark said they had a guest speaker, Joe Milazzo with the Regional Transportation Alliance present to talk about the I-495 project and its impact on Wendell’s transportation network and economic development opportunities.

Mr. Milazzo said he was glad to be there. He said his organization had worked on obtaining the interstate designation for nine years. He said the I-495 signs had just gone up that week. He said he had seen the new designation referenced in the Wendell Falls brochure as well.

Mr. Milazzo said his organization’s website was ‘letsgetmoving.org.’ He said having an interstate status was a major factor in site selection of big companies. He said House Bill 4829 would designate a corridor from Rocky Mount to Williamston. He said this would further extend the interstate system into Virginia.

Mr. Milazzo said the purpose of his organization was to maintain a sustained focus from the business community for critical transportation projects. He said processes were in place to get the I-495 corridor to being an actual interstate. He said the shoulders would need to be widened and some bridges would have to be jacked up. He said the project should cost less than 50 million, not counting paving.

Paul White asked where the money would come from to improve the road and obtain the interstate status. Mr. Milazzo said the state had dedicated to complete and fund the project within the next 25 years. He said the MPO could try to apply for federal funding to get the corridor there faster. He said Wendell could talk to Wally Bowman of NC-DOT about getting regional division points applied to this stretch of road.

Paul White asked who Wendell would need to talk to that was higher up than a regional division engineer. Mr. Milazzo said the new transportation funding system had removed politics from the

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equation. He said the new system was definitely an improvement over the old one. He said the new system was less subjective and more merit based and driven by congestion.

Barry Perry said the future 495 designation was a big accomplishment. He asked if the hard part had already been accomplished. Mr. Milazzo said he would agree with that statement. He said an interstate had a defined character which could be used for advertising purposes.

Mr. White said there are some businesses and restaurants that only locate on interstates.

Mr. Milazzo said it was in Wendell's best interest to start referring to it as the I-495 corridor as much as possible.

Mr. White asked if economic development played a role in the new transportation funding formula, or is it only driven by congestion. Mr. Milazzo said his understanding was that economic development did play a role, but that role was much smaller than the desire to reduce congestion.

Mr. White asked if the toll status of highway 540 would speed up its completion. Mr. Milazzo said it would help.

Mr. Reidy asked how long it would take to get the designation up to Wendell Boulevard. Mr. Milazzo said the answer to that question would depend on pending legislation. He said legislation could speed up the timing of that segment.

Mr. Perry asked if there was anything Wendell could do to help play the game. Mr. Milazzo said Wendell could reach out to our representative, Congressman Holden, and thank him for signing off on House Resolution 4829 and let him know it is important to us. He said Wendell could encourage him to reach out to other members of the delegation to have them sign off as well. Mr. Milazzo said it would look good if Virginia representatives signed off.

Mr. Milazzo said Wendell could also call the Secretary of Transportation at 919-707-2800 and leave him a message thanking him for his leadership on I-495. He suggested that the EDC write a letter thanking him for his support. He also suggested that Wendell coordinate with Knightdale, Zebulon, and Franklin County to try to move this forward.

Mr. Perry asked if there had been any opposition to the I-495 project. Mr. Milazzo said there had not been opposition.

Mr. Bergmark said Mr. Reidy should make sure to mention the I-495 corridor in the highlight Wendell was asked to do by the Raleigh Chamber of Commerce.

Mr. Milazzo said his organization is involved in transit projects as well. He said the Wake County Board of Commissioners were having a work session to discuss transit. He said his organization was in favor of a bus rapid transit approach, but that they supported transit measures that were not an end goal, but a means to a goal. Teresa Piner said the work session was on July 21st she believed.

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Mr. Bergmark thanked Mr. Milazzo for making time to come speak to this committee. Mr. Milazzo said it was his pleasure.

Patrick Reidy said he had presented information to the Town Board regarding his outdoor dining application. He said they were generally receptive but there were some changes requested.

Mr. White asked if there was a cost associated with the outdoor dining application. Mr. Reidy said there was no cost associated with the application. He said the City of Raleigh did have a \$150 fee in their policy.

Mr. Bergmark told the EDC that the Firing Range amendment had been brought to the Planning Board for comment. The Planning Board was more supportive of allowing indoor firing ranges in the town, but had questions about safety and noise, and had asked staff to survey downtown businesses to get their feedback. Staff has been working on answering their questions and gathering feedback, and was supposed to present their findings to the Planning Board on June 16th, but they were not able to meet. Mr. Bergmark said that staff would keep the EDC updated.

Mr. Perry said that he was happy to answer any questions anyone might have about firing ranges, and suggested that the EDC look at Colonial Shooting Academy in Richmond VA as an example of the types of shooting ranges that are being built now. The successful ones are now large operations with multiple ranges, restaurants, club houses, and lecture rooms.

Mr. White said that we need to jump on this niche before someone else does

Mrs. Wright asked where are the other firing ranges in Wake County. Mr. Perry said that there are two indoor ranges, one on Tryon road and one on North Market Drive. Ms. Rice said that Wake County has its own facility as well.

Mr. Perry said that 50,000 guns sold at his business since 2008, which means that there are 50,000 people who have bought guns recently who are looking for a place to shoot. That is a large source of revenue for the town.

Mr. Bergmark said there was a house bill, House Bill 1135, that could potentially provide loans for municipalities to acquire property for the purpose of economic development. He said the bill, if passed, could help municipalities establish shovel ready sites. Mr. Bergmark said the bill did have certain timelines and performance criteria which had to be met. He said Don Brown had attended a seminar that was going to discuss this bill and other related items. Mr. Bergmark said Don Brown could share what he learned at the next meeting.

Mr. White asked about the status of pursuing broadband. Mr. Bergmark said he had contacted Steve Stroud's assistant, Laura, to obtain the consultant's contact information would be supposed to provide information to Wendell. Mr. Bergmark said Laura responded to his email and said she would see if she could get that information from Mr. Stroud. Mr. White asked what Wendell Falls was doing in terms of

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fiber. Mr. Reidy said they were working on an agreement with AT&T. Ms. Rice said AT&T had recently formed agreements with Chapel Hill, Cary, Wake Forest, Carrboro, Durham, and Raleigh.

Joe Ann Wright asked what the status was of the welcome sign. Mr. Reidy said the foundation was installed and the actual sign was being fabricated.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:03.