

Wednesday, May 14, 2014 Meeting Minutes

Economic Development Committee – Corporate Development Workgroup

EDC Workgroup Members Present: Paul White and Edward Morell

EDC Workgroup Members Absent: Don Brown

Staff Present: David Bergmark, Patrick Reidy

Guests: none

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David Bergmark called the meeting to order at 10:07 a.m. He said a quorum of the full Economic Development Committee was not present.

Mr. Bergmark said he wanted to provide an update on the town’s efforts to address indoor and outdoor firing ranges. He said currently these uses weren’t listed in the use matrixes table of the UDO. Mr. Bergmark said the Town Board had directed the Planning Board to look into this item. He said the Planning Board would be discussing the potential addition of these uses at their May 19th meeting. He said he had their new Planner, Allison Rice, do research into how other municipalities addressed these uses. He said many municipalities did not allow outdoor firing ranges. Mr. Bergmark said many ordinances did not address either use specifically. He said some municipalities allowed indoor firing ranges as a type of indoor recreation and others required a special use. He said he had spoken with a Wake County building inspector regarding indoor firing ranges. Mr. Bergmark said the building inspector had informed him that any proposed indoor firing range would have to have a designer or architect design the building to be safe and reduce noise from firing.

Mr. White said the Town needed to go ahead and act on this and not consider it for 6 months. Mr. Bergmark said he thought the text amendment would be resolved in about two months.

Mr. Reidy said he and Paul had attended an APA seminar in which they spoke about how to attract Millenials. He said Millenials wanted different things than other generations. He said Millenials cared more about amenities and pedestrian improvements. He said case studies were presented using examples from Raleigh. Mr. White said Wendell needed to pay attention to what the new generations cared about. Mr. White asked what the three groups discussed were. Mr. Reidy said they discussed Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Millenials at the seminar.

Ed Morell asked if representatives of Newland Communities went to the seminar. Mr. Reidy said they did not. Mr. Bergmark said Newland Communities did similar demographic studies themselves. Mr. White said he was glad someone at the seminar brought up taxes and the means to pay for all the things Millenials wanted.

Mr. White said Laurie Ford and Brad Rhinehalt went on a tour of Central Baptist Church’s facilities. He said he showed them the church’s state of the art auditorium. He said Newland Communities was interested to learn about their 6:30 a.m. – 6:30 p.m. daycare service.

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Mr. White said the Economic Development Committee members should attend the tour of Briar Chapel. Mr. Bergmark said the tour was scheduled for this Friday. He said the purpose of the tour was to show the Planning Board and Town Board examples of some of the products Newland wanted to create. He said Newland Communities was proposing some changes which both board's would need to review. He said Briar Chapel was being used as a physical example of what those changes would look like. Mr. Reidy said he was checking to see how many seats on the bus were still available.

Mr. Bergmark said Paul White, Commissioner Gray, Patrick Reidy, and himself attended a meeting at Carolantic Realty's office last week in Raleigh. He said the purpose of the meeting was to discuss potential partnership opportunities. He said in prior discussions with Carolantic Realty, they had indicated that if Wendell could put together 500 acres, they might be able to bring in an investor. Mr. Bergmark said staff had created a map that showed approximately 1000 acres that could be combined without dealing with many property owners. Mr. White said twelve property owners owned most of the land.

Mr. Bergmark said the focus of the meeting shifted away from the map towards a discussion of how to address Wendell's 'perception problem'. He said Mr. Hibbits, a Carolantic employee, talked about how Wendell needed an identity. Mr. Bergmark said Carolantic brought up three ideas. He said the first idea was to bring high-speed fiber into Wendell via Wendell Boulevard. He said Carolantic Realty even recommended a particular fiber provider which could be used. Mr. Bergmark said the second item brought up dealt with increasing funding and support of recreation and tournaments. He said the third item discussed was how to better support the local schools. He said Carolantic discussed the possibilities of pursuing charter schools or religious academies.

Mr. White said he tried to emphasize how now was the time to act before we hit another recession. He said even Newland admitted that another recession would likely hit in 2018. He said we also discussed with Carolantic Realty the need for road improvements and how the Medlin family was on board with bringing a road through their property.

Mr. Reidy said we now want to have the Town Board and Economic Development Committee meet with Carolantic to receive their presentation on what they think Wendell needs to do. Mr. Bergmark said they were considering a night meeting on June 10th, from 6:00 to 8:00. Mr. Morell asked what day of the week that was. Mr. White said it was a Thursday. Mr. Morell said he would attend. Mr. White said Lesia Mckenzie had said she could come. Mr. Bergmark said he would contact Don Brown to see if he could attend. Mr. Morell asked if the Planning Board would need to go. Mr. Bergmark said most of the items being discussed were not items the Planning Board would make a recommendation on.

Mr. Morell asked what the impact of the new Cell Tower would be. Mr. Bergmark said the positive impact would be better cellphone reception downtown. He said the reason why it did not have to go before the Town Board for review was because the property was zoned Manufacturing and Industrial and the tower was less than 200 feet tall.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:00 a.m.

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Economic Development Committee – Downtown/Town Branding Workgroup

EDC Workgroup Members Present: Barry Perry, Lesia McKenzie, Joe Ann Wright,

EDC Workgroup Members Absent: Steven Kyle Williams

Staff Present: Patrick Reidy, Allison Rice

Guests: Paul White

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Patrick Reidy called the meeting to order at 1:05 pm.

Patrick Reidy and Paul White updated the workgroup on the recent APA Planning for Prosperity Seminar, which outlined how to attract Millennials to your town. He said Millennials cared more about amenities and pedestrian improvements. He said case studies were presented using examples from Raleigh. Mr. White said Wendell needed to pay attention to what the new generations cared about.

Paul White said that Commissioner Gray, Patrick Reidy, David Bergmark, and himself attended a meeting at Carolantic Realty’s office last week in Raleigh. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss potential partnership opportunities. Carolantic said that Wendell had an identity problem, and provided four strategies for the Town to solve this: provide access to high speed internet by laying high-speed fiber down Wendell Blvd, encourage diverse business growth in the downtown area, support and develop more local schools, and continue to grow the Parks and Recreation department, including activities and green space. He said both groups are meeting again June 10th in Raleigh to further discuss strategies, and to discuss means for aligning Wendell’s property owners. Mr. Reidy extended an invitation to the workgroup to participate in a meeting with Carolantic from 6 pm to 8 pm on June 10th in Raleigh.

Mr. Reidy invited the EDC to attend an information-gathering trip to Briar Chapel on May 16th, to look at a Newland Properties development and discuss plans for Wendell Falls.

Patrick Reidy updated the workgroup on the town’s efforts to address indoor and outdoor firing ranges. He explained that these uses aren’t outlined in the UDO. Barry Perry said that several people had approached him about the viability of opening a firing range in Wendell in order to capitalize on Mr. Perry’s established firearms sales business, but they do not follow up with the town about zoning and the issue is always dropped. Mr. Reidy said that indoor firing ranges, from a safety and environmental perspective, would be more acceptable in Wendell than outdoor ranges.

Mr. Perry and Mr. White expressed a need to not provide too many conditions to this use, which would drive away business. However, Mr. Perry said that some regulation was needed to ensure that a firing range didn’t open in an inappropriate area. He said that indoor firing ranges are loud, and that Wendell’s noise ordinance allowed for noises 110 decibels and below, then the firing range should be able to comply. The workgroup agreed to support the town allowing indoor firing ranges with some stipulations, such as encouraging the business to locate away from downtown and away from schools, residential areas and establishments selling alcohol.

Mr. Berry had to leave following this discussion.

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Mr. White said that we should not wait too long to act on this. Lesia McKenzie and Joe Ann Wright asked about the status of the murals project in downtown Wendell. Patrick Reidy said that murals are now allowed in the UDO, but only one store has expressed interest in having one painted. The workgroup discussed ways to move this project forward, including hiring an artist, asking high school students to submit designs, and looking into whether old advertisements such as Coca-Cola can be painted. Mr. Reidy reminded the workgroup that the Appearance Commission had disbanded but would pick this issue up again when it is re-formed.

Mr. Reidy presented his findings on other municipality's outdoor dining regulations, outlining his suggestions for Wendell's regulations. He said that other jurisdictions had more strict rules. There was some concern about the required 5 foot pedestrian clearance to comply with ADA standards, but Mr. Reidy said that the clearance was for through-traffic and that the seating could be on either side of the walkway. The workgroup agreed to present the proposed regulations to the Town Council. Mr. White suggested that individual EDC members would follow up with Board members to convey their support and will attend the board meeting June 9th. They would also talk to the owner of Aubrey and Peedie's Grill, since he would benefit from the regulations, to get his support and involvement.

Joe Ann Wright pointed out that there's not a sign pointing to Wendell when turning off highway 64 onto Wendell Falls Parkway. All agreed to recommend getting a sign to Town Council. It was also suggested that Wendell Falls Parkway/Buffalo Street/Richardson Road/Poole Road's name be changed to Wendell Falls Parkway. All agreed to recommend this to Town Council.

The meeting adjourned at 2:30 pm.