

Wednesday, September 24, 2014 Meeting Minutes

Economic Development Committee – Joint Workgroup Meeting

EDC Members Present: Don Brown, Paul White, Joe Ann Wright, Ed Morrell, Lesia McKenzie, Steven Kyle Williams, Barry Perry

EDC Members Absent: Ginny Porter

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

Guests: Brad Rhinehalt from Newland Communities, Robb Miller from Buxton

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The meeting was called to order at 5:40 pm.

A motion was made to approve the minutes from August 27th. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Bergmark introduced Robb Miller from Buxton, a data sharing group from Fort Worth, TX, that specializes in sharing consumer data with municipalities and corporations to promote strategic development. Mr. Miller said he reached out to the Town of Wendell because they have recently signed agreements with other towns in North Carolina, including Fayetteville and Thomasville.

Mr. Miller said that there were 150 people in their Fort Worth office, and that on average, for every dollar spent towards these services there is a \$94 return.

Mr. Miller said Buxton uses consumer information generated from things like credit card purchases so that towns can know who their citizens are as consumers and analyze their needs. He said towns can then look at Buxton's databases to find and reach out to corporations that meet the needs of the community, providing contact information for the correct decision makers. Mr. Miller said Buxton provides their clients (the towns) detailed marketing and retail data and cut-sheets to make an educated market and data-based case for the corporation relocating or expanding to that town.

Mr. Miller said that in order to ensure that this service doesn't provide more work for town personnel, Buxton provides a dedicated account manager for each client. He said the account manager would provide personal services to ensure the data is used strategically and effectively, even joining phone calls with retailers and town staff. He said the intent is to have staff work less on economic development, but more effectively. Mr. Miller said to this end, Buxton has created a program known as "Scout" with a mobile platform that, among other things, provides clients with easy access to competitors for any given retailer that is selected as a match. He said Buxton gives all clients an iPad Air with Scout pre-installed so that clients can easily pull up data when they're making their sales pitches.

Mr. White asked how Buxton gets paid. Mr. Miller said that there's a flat \$50,000 annual fee. He said there are no additional fees or commissions that are tacked on later. Mr. Miller said that Buxton prefers to establish a multi-year agreement, since often with investments like this, demographics change as developments pick up. He said it will probably be a year or two for some of the leads to come to fruition.

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Mr. Brown asked if Buxton works with developers, and Mr. Miller said they did. Mr. Perry asked if Buxton works with individual retailers, and Mr. Miller said they did that as well. Mr. Rhinehalt asked if Buxton's retail matches only come from those retailers they work with. Mr. Miller said that all retailers are included in the search. He said that it usually takes 60 days to run through the analytics to create initial results for a community, and that retail matches are updated every year.

Ms. Piner suggested that Mr. Bergmark talk to other communities that have used Buxton, to gauge their experiences. She said she would like to see if Mr. Rhinehalt could talk to the correct people at Newland Communities and determine what business analytics data they are already gathering, how much of it would be applicable to Wendell rather than just Wendell Falls, and what data they could actually share, understanding that much of the information is proprietary.

Mr. Bergmark asked the Committee to nominate and vote for a Chair and Vice Chair, since that hadn't been done yet. Paul White was nominated for Chair, and was unanimously approved. Berry Perry was nominated for Vice Chair, and was unanimously approved.

Mr. Bergmark introduced Tamah Hughes, who was at the meeting to talk about the East Wake Business Alliance. Ms. Hughes said that the East Wake Business Alliance was looking for businesses to join their organization and/or volunteer to offer their time and guidance to children at events such as the annual career fair. She said the career fair will be held December 12th from 8:00 to 10:30. She said the East Wake Business Alliance typically meets 5 – 6 times a year. Mrs. Hughes said they are looking for business leaders' time, not money. Ms. Hughes said the speakers at the career fair discuss such things as interview techniques and how to dress for success. Ms. Piner said she thought Ms. Wright would be an excellent choice to guide kids on how to properly dress for interviews. David Bergmark said he would place a reminder on a later agenda to see who could participate in the career fair. He said even those who could not attend could potentially get other business owners to become involved.

Don Brown made a motion to adjourn at 7:27. The motion passed unanimously.