

FRANKLIN COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

Thursday, March 12, 2020

Minutes

The Franklin County Economic Development Commission was called to order at 8:00 a.m. by Chairman Matthew Winslow on March 12, 2020, in the Training Center of Wake Electric, 228 Park Ave., Youngsville.

In attendance were: Matthew Winslow, Mark McArn, Bob Sykes, Keith Smith, Larry Woodlief, Jeremy Neal, Charles Mitchell (County Extension Director-Cooperative Extension), Jerry Edmonds (VGCC-Vice President of Workforce Dev. & Community Engagement), Bobbie Jo May (Dean-VGCC Franklin Campus), Jonathan Franklin (Town Administrator-Louisburg), Emma Stewart (Louisburg Town Council), Oliver Greene (Director-Franklin Co. Parks & Recreation), Jonathan Williams (Focus Design Builders), Allen White (Chairman-Franklin Co. Chamber), Fred Keller (Wake Electric), Lucy Allen (Committee of 100), Jim Moss (Concerned Citizen), Alex Cleghorn (Concerned Citizen), Richie Duncan (Director-Franklin County EDC), Andy Kuhn (Existing Industry Coordinator-Franklin County EDC) and Lori Duke (Admin. Support Specialist-Franklin County EDC). Absent from the meeting were: Rex Foster, Angela Harris (County Manager), Chris Doherty (Public Utilities Director), Bo Carson (Airport Manager), Scott Hammerbacher (Director-Planning & Inspections), Art Wright (Mayor of Franklinton), Michael Schriver (County Commissioner), Shelley Dickerson (County Commissioner), Marsha Strawbridge (Mayor of Bunn), Phil Cordeiro (Town Administrator-Youngsville), John Alexander (NC Senate), Lisa Barnes (NC House)

The next item on the agenda was the review and approval of the minutes from the January 9, 2020 meeting. Commissioner McArn motioned that the minutes be approved as read, with Commissioner Smith seconding. The motion passed unanimously.

Next, Charles Mitchell presented the local agricultural update. Mr. Mitchell said he made this presentation to the County Commissioners last October and he has updated it since that time. Mr. Mitchell said his department has 10 staff members and he passed a brochure around showing his staff and what they do. Locally, we have about 27,000 contacts through educational programs, with an economic impact of about \$3 million. Statewide, the economic impact is about \$2 billion. Everyone has heard of 4-H and what they have to offer. This summer, we're looking at doing an agricultural leadership program for youth at NCSU for ages between 15-19. It will be an eight-day program, with 10 youth, from June through August. Franklin County ranks 47th in the state as far as agricultural gross product – about \$73.5 million. In 2004, we started the Voluntary Ag District Program to recognize agricultural land and keep it in agricultural production. We have an enhanced version and a regular voluntary ag district. It's a 10-year program and acts like a 10-year easement. If

the land is sold, it goes with it. However, with the regular VAD, you can pull it out at any time. We have 14,000 acres in VAD and approximately 80 acres in the EVAD. Some of the top reported commodities as of July 2019 were soybeans, grass and wheat. Tobacco has traditionally been our biggest crop. In 2018, we had 4,200 acres and in 2019, we had 3,300 acres, so we were down about 20%. This year, we will probably be down another 10%. This industry is struggling nationwide. The US is projected to produce about 300 million pounds this year. Worldwide, it's about an 8 billion pound production. Our biggest competitors are Zimbabwe and Brazil. We also compete with Canada and Mexico. Tobacco production is not what it used to be, but it's not going away completely. Our biggest buyer of tobacco was China and due to some of the tariffs, they have doubled, if not tripled, the production that we have and their labor is much cheaper. There are organic crops being grown. Organic soybeans are on the rise, but organic tobacco has decreased a little. In the last three years, there has been a lot of talk about industrial hemp. NC has about 16,000 acres permitted, but only about half of them were planted and there were 1,300 permits statewide. Franklin County has about 250 acres permitted, with 25 permits issued in 2019. Much of that product was harvested and is still sitting in shops in sacks and on pallets. The infrastructure is just not there right now for the processing.

Next, Fred Keller and Lucy Allen gave the report from the business ambassadors. Mrs. Allen said she had never heard of Total Flight Solutions before, which is located at the Triangle North Executive Airport. They are a full-service flight school that offers helicopter and fixed wing training and they are looking to expand. They also do aircraft maintenance and they are certified in helicopter overhaul and repair. Fred Keller said they started in 2011, with Phil Greene and Al Mattress. Later, Tim Grant came on board and handles their marketing. They have a flight service, flying lessons, flight school, maintenance and aircraft sales. Also, they have a location in Pinehurst. They want to expand their school and are looking at international students, too. This would be for a 3-month program and offer housing, as well. They'd like to get this established through Louisburg College or VGCC. They have 10 full-time employees and 19 temps. Bobbie Jo May said we are working with them to help them grow and make it more visible. These are highly expensive programs. We were going to try and do another flight school, but there is a contained class for \$9,999.00 that has everything you need in it to do the written work and then you go and do your flight time.

Richie Duncan said the airport is in the midst of their Master Layout Plan (MLP) and there was an open house held last week, with over 70 people from the community who attended. There were three different options presented for how the airport could grow. The group that has been hired as a consultant will come back with the final recommendation at a later date. One reason they will be able to grow is because we received a sewer grant from the state that will allow us to get sewer to the airport. They will be able to collapse the leach field that exists there today and then hangars can be built there, and they do have a waiting list for hangars.

Richie Duncan said we are very fortunate to have VGCC as our partner here and throughout the region. There are two programs, which the Franklin campus will be offering, and she asked that Jerry Edmonds give an update on these. Mr. Edmonds said one of the programs is Community

Paramedicine, which will be offered beginning April 6th. This course allows current paramedics to operate in expanded roles by assisting with public health, primary healthcare and preventative services to underserved individuals in the community. It's about 190 hours, with approximately 110 instructional hours and the remaining 80 hours is clinical. Then, they can skill up, so they are able to make house calls, and follow-up on patients that may have been recently discharged from a hospital. The second program is Basic Correctional Officer Training, which will be offered beginning March 16th. New employees of the Department of Public Safety, Corrections Division, will receive training in the concepts, knowledge, and skills required by Correctional Officers for work performance at the entry-level. The NC Department of Public Safety has asked a number of community colleges to partner with them to host these trainings. The state doesn't have the resources to train as many officers, correctional facilities officers, etc. as needed to meet the demand. Once again, these are programs that are a service to the community, but our resources are stretched thin. Often times, our biggest challenge is the find the instructors to teach these classes.

Richie Duncan said we have five companies in the county that VGCC is doing customized training with. This supports our existing industries and is a service that is provided in partnership with VGCC.

Next, Richie Duncan introduced Oliver Greene and asked him to give an update on Owens Park in Louisburg. Mr. Greene said he is the Director for Franklin County Parks & Recreation. Owens Park, which was formerly Bull Creek Golf Course, is located at 499 Massenburg-Baker Road in Louisburg. It's 167 acres and we had our grand opening in May of last year. The park has four fishing ponds (1 ADA fishing pier), kid's playgrounds, picnic shelter, and several trail (1 ADA .5 mile paved trail). The pond is stocked with bass and bream three times a year. This past December, they bought in 1,500 trout. For about four weeks, the park was packed with people fishing. Also, we have put in a 5k and a 3k cross-country course. Louisburg College has been using it for their practices. Next year, they would like to hold a regional competition there. The cross-country competition for Franklin County schools will be held at Owens Park this fall. We are looking to go forward with phase two of the park. This would bring in a disc golf course, picnic shelter down by the pond and more parking by the pond. Volleyball has grown a great deal in the county and we're going to bring two courses to the park. Also, with the disc golf course, we want to develop a tournament style course. For phase 2 of the park, we are going to apply for a PARTF (Parks & Recreation Trust Fund) grant to help with funding. We have to submit the application by May 1st and we hope to hear something by the end of fall, to see if we were awarded the grant. We will go before the County Commissioners soon to ask for approval for funding for phase 2, so we can move forward with this grant.

Richie Duncan said with regards to the PARTF grant, would it help if we vote on issuing a letter of support? Mr. Greene said that would be great. Ms. Duncan asked for a motion. Bobbie Jo May made the motion that a letter of support from the EDC be written for Franklin County Parks & Rec, so they could apply for the PARTF grant for funds for phase 2 at Owens Park. Commissioner McArn seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Richie Duncan said we have five acres at Triangle North Franklin under contract for a new company and they are in the due diligence phase right now. Also, she introduced Andy Kuhn, who is our new Existing Industry Coordinator. He was an economic development director in Ohio and he got his masters degree in public administration from NCSU. Mr. Kuhn thanked everyone for the opportunity to join the community. It's been great to see so many people who are so actively engaged in what is happening. He says there is the biggest difference in the amount of resources here. He's eager to get out and meet the people in our businesses and figure out what Franklin County can do to be more assistive to them and at the same time, see all of our businesses grow.

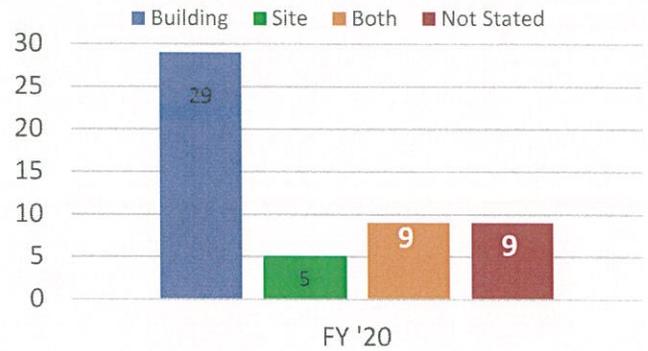
Next, Jonathan Franklin gave an update on activity in Louisburg. We have multiple residential projects ongoing. We just received \$2.5 million in funding for our sewer projects. Downtown, we are still seeing a lot of activity and have four buildings, which have sold in the last month. We have multiple new businesses coming in between now and by the end of the year (restaurants, nightlife, retail). We are continuing to do work in the Louisburg Industrial Park, as well.

With there being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:40 a.m.

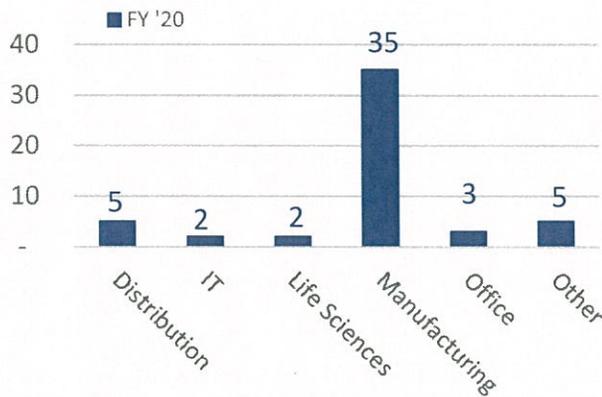
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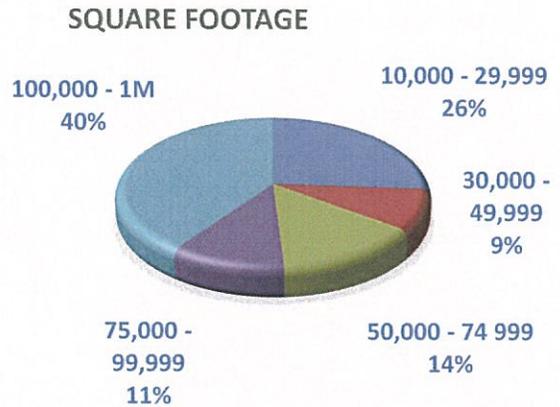
Building vs. Site



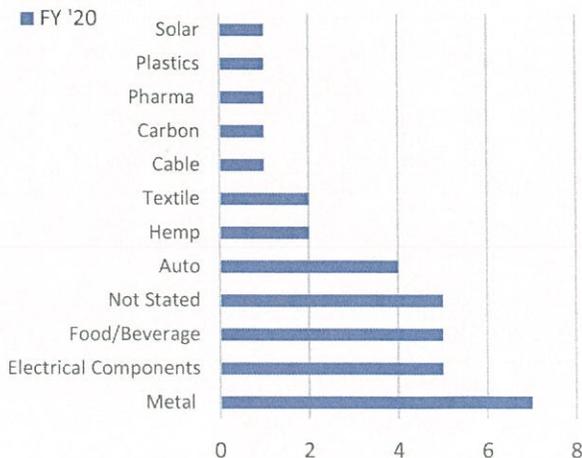
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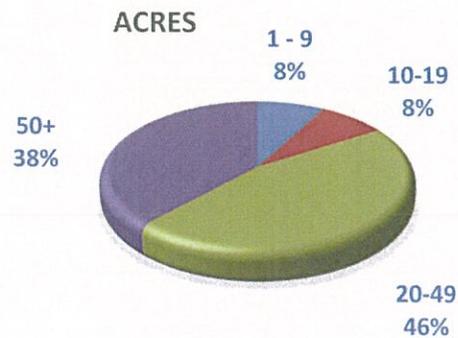
Building Request



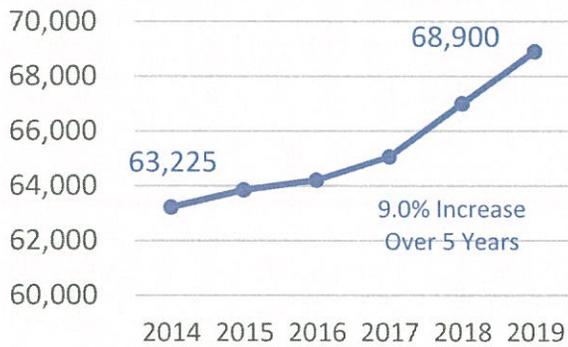
Manufacturing Sectors



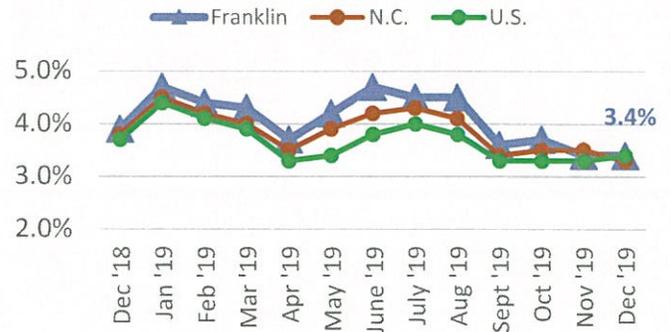
Site Request



Population



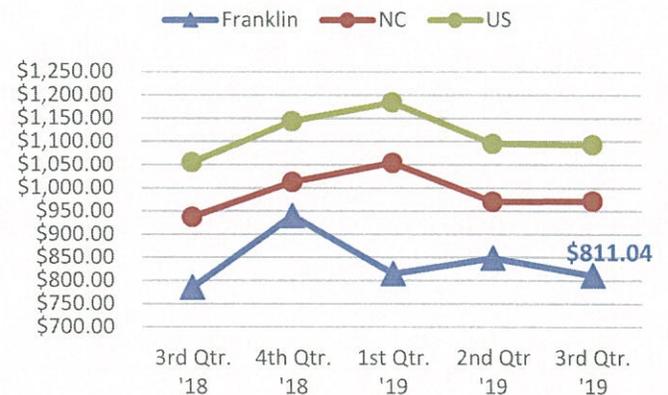
Unemployment Rate



Labor Force



Average Weekly Wages



Employed



Housing Permit Activity

