The Franklin County Economic Development Commission was called to order at 8:00 a.m. by Vice Chairman Mark McArn on March 10, 2016 at the Louisburg Training Center, 104 Wade Ave., Louisburg.

In attendance were: Mark McArn, Keith Smith, Michael Schriver, Larry Woodlief, Bobbie Jo May (Chairman-Greater Franklin Co. Chamber of Commerce), Fred Keller (Manager, Member Services-Wake Electric), Angela Harris (County Manager), Art Wright (Mayor of Franklinton), Lucy Allen (Committee of 100), Jonathan Franklin (Louisburg-Town Administrator), Bo Carson (VP, Business Dev.-RTRP), Stelfanie Williams (President-VGCC), Eric Naisbitt (Legislative Asst.-Senator Barefoot), Ronnie Goswick (Director-Franklin County EDC), Richie Duncan (Existing Industry Coordinator-Franklin County EDC) and Lori Duke (Admin. Support Specialist-Franklin County EDC). Absent from the meeting were: Matthew Winslow, Bob Sykes, Robert Lee Swanson, Don Lancaster (County Commissioner), Charles Mitchell (County Extension Director-Cooperative Extension), Scott Hammerbacher (Director-Planning & Inspections), Steve Merritt (Airport Manager-Triangle North Executive Airport), Shane Mitchell (County Commissioner), Bryce Mendenhall (Public Utilities Director), Margaret Nelms (Mayor of Centerville), Marsha Strawbridge (Mayor of Bunn), Fonzie Flowers (Mayor of Youngsville), Bobbie Richardson (NC House Rep.), and Jeff Collins (NC House Rep.).

The second item on the agenda was the review and approval of the minutes from the January 14, 2016 meeting. Commissioner Schriver motioned that the minutes be approved as read, with Lucy Allen seconding. The motion passed unanimously.

The third item on the agenda was the economic development update by Ronnie Goswick and Richie Duncan.

Ronnie Goswick said he’d like to introduce Bo Carson, who is our contact person at Research Triangle Regional Partnership (RTRP). Mr. Carson thanked everyone for having him there and said he’d like to let everyone know what is going on at RTRP. Mr. Carson said RTRP markets Franklin County as part of the overall Research Triangle region, and the county is very important because of the growth and cluster of companies that you have here. The State of the Region is coming up on May 19th and the Committee of 100 has purchased two tables. Anyone who is interested in being a sponsor or attending the event, please let Ronnie Goswick or Mr. Carson know.

Mr. Carson said there will be an economic summit held on March 24th at VGCC in Henderson, which RTRP is hosting, along with Triangle Business Journal. Ronnie Goswick will be one of the panelists, along with Charles Hayes (RTRP) and the economic development directors from Warren, Vance, Granville and Person counties. Typically, we’ve held these events in the south and east, with about 200 attendees.

Mr. Carson said RTRP is in the midst of revitalizing our next strategic plan. This is pretty much completed and we will start the process of vetting it and running it by our people and investors.
Commissioner Woodlief said he realizes we get water from the Kerr Lake, and is there any chance something will go wrong with that in the future and the county may have to build a reservoir. Ronnie Goswick said we have a 40-year contract with the City of Henderson and he feels that for the foreseeable future, we are in pretty good shape. Angela Harris said we have looked at the opportunities with Franklinton and Louisburg and we are in good shape, but looking further down the road is something we’ve done.

Ronnie Goswick said the Triangle North Executive Airport is planning to do some expanding on the former Anne Gordon property that the county purchase some time ago. As part of that agreement, we had to close Bryant Road and we will have a cul de sac near the Cascine Plantation.

Fred Keller said the Greater Franklin County Chamber of Commerce’s annual golf tournament is on April 4th at Hasentree Golf & Country Club. Also, the elected officials reception is on April 7th at CenturyLink from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Richie Duncan said at the Commissioner’s meeting Monday night, they approved a TDA (Tourism Development Authority) grant for $10,000 to be able to continue the historical survey of the county. We did Phase 1A already and they identified hundreds of properties that needed to be studied, so with another $10,000 we can finish Phase 1B. In addition, Claudia Brown (NC Historic Preservation Office) called and said that the state is now going to dedicate $45,000 to Franklin County to do a Phase 2. This means that every site identified in the county will be mapped, photographed, etc. Lucy Allen asked if there was a possibility of a book being published. Ms. Duncan said yes, they will produce a hard copy.

Dr. Stelfanie Williams said VGCC is working hard to try and partner with the school system and new superintendent. Bobbie Jo May and I are working to get college classes offered in high school and NCA&T just sponsored our first ever summer bridge program, which will help those students who are not quite ready for college level work. Also, the last dollar scholarship program will be announced in two weeks. This is available to students at all four campuses.

Dr. Williams said the “Connect NC” bond is on the March 15th ballot. From this $2 billion bond, VGCC would get $7.6 million, which is the highest allocation, primarily because our main campus is located in a tier 1 county.

Dr. Williams said for the first time at the Franklin County campus, you can earn an FTE (Full Time Equivalency) and she encouraged people to come take summer classes. She said the legislature approved for funding year round.

Dr. Williams said we’ve also partnered with NCA&T to allow graduates of VGCC’s Associate Degree Nursing program to easily transition to NCA&T’s four-year nursing degree program.

Richie Duncan said the County Commissioners also approved waiving the capacity fees for the Sterling Mill Lofts project to move forward. This originally came before the County Commissioners in January 2015, with 80 units. Although the County Commissioners approved this, the project was not awarded state funding. Now, it has 96 units and we are glad this is happening because it will allow that building to be redone. Inter Technologies will remain there, as well. Art Wright said this will add to the tax base and increase business in Franklinton, also. Richie Duncan said the company will get notification of the award in August. Art Wright said they plan to break ground in January 2017.
Richie Duncan said on March 16th there will be a “Small Business Breakfast & Learn” at CenturyLink. George Ports, with CAI, will be the speaker. He will be discussing the US Dept. of Labor’s proposed changes to overtime regulations and what businesses must do in order to remain compliant.

Richie Duncan said the economic development portion of Leadership Franklin, which is sponsored by the Greater Franklin County Chamber of Commerce each year, will be held on April 13th. We will be touring Eaton Corporation, Robling Medical, Wake Electric, Novozymes and Covenant Trucking. Lunch will be provided by Wake Electric, also.

Richie Duncan said the CTE (Career & Technical Education) directors in Franklin, Vance, Warren and Granville counties will be participating in the “Summer Cruising” program June 15-17. This program will be offered for Advanced Manufacturing for teachers, school administrators, and staff in our region. We will be touring companies in the county, with Novozymes hosting 100 teachers from all four counties.

In other business:

- Lucy Allen said for those of you who may not know, we lost a very important person in the community recently. Pete Smith built a thriving business, which turned into a family business that has grown a great deal through foresight and hard work. Commissioner Keith Smith said his father started from nothing, literally under an oak tree. He was known for building automatic transmissions, and when he ran across a problem, he had the vision to write down what the problem was. He emphasized to all his children the importance of education. There have been three generations, admitting their mistakes and writing down what we had done wrong and learning from it. We went from a shade tree mechanic, to grow into seven stores. I started the “Shop Sauce” business, and I’m also involved in the restaurant business.
- Lucy Allen said the Person Place Preservation Society will be holding their annual Brunswick stew sale on April 2nd. If anyone is interested, please let her know. Quarts are $8 each.
- Eric Naisbitt said Senator Barefoot is in the process of wrapping up our interim and oversight committee process, and we will go back into session at the end of April.
- Vice Chairman McArn said Scott Hammerbacher (Director, Planning & Inspections) told the Planning Board to be ready for a busy meeting next time because there will be eight subdivisions coming up for approval. This is a good sign of growth. Ronnie Goswick said this represents 602 lots, mostly in the Youngsville and Franklinton areas.

With there being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:50 a.m.