



**Leesburg Economic Development Commission
REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING
February 3, 2021
7:00p.m.
WebEx**

- 1. Call to Order**
- 2. Roll Call**
- 3. Adoption of the Agenda**
- 4. Approval of Minutes**
 - a. December 2, 2020
- 5. Petitioners (5 minutes each)**
- 6. Liaison Comments (5 minutes)**
- 7. Staff Report**
- 8. Leesburg Business Survey**
- 9. Business Recovery**
- 10. Old Business**
- 11. New Business**
 - a. **Election of Chair and Vice-Chair for 2021**
- 12. Commissioner Comments (5 minutes)**
- 13. Chairman's Comments (5 minutes)**
- 14. Adjournment**

This meeting is being held electronically pursuant to and in compliance with the Amended Ordinance to Ensure the Continuity of Government during the State of Emergency Caused by the COVID-19 Pandemic, adopted by the Leesburg Town Council on January 12, 2021. As set forth on the agenda for this meeting, members of the public who wish to participate or to provide comments during the public comment portion of the meeting may do so by following the link <https://leesburg.webex.com/leesburg/j.php?MTID=m4ec9b8af604c69c24a743bdfb9c7dabd>. Additionally, comments may be emailed to Russell Seymour at rseymour@leesburgva.gov.

**Leesburg Economic Development Commission
Town Hall Council Chamber
Draft Meeting Minutes
December 2, 2020**

Commission Members Present: Eric Byrd; Kevin Arbogast, James Choi, Brittany Youkers, and Andrew Boardman (remotely)

Commission Members Absent: Curtis Allred, Nick McCarter

Staff Present: Economic Development Director Russell Seymour

AGENDA

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 7:01p.m. by Chair Byrd.

2. Roll Call

Commissioner Byrd asked for the Calling of the Roll by Director Seymour; Director Seymour stated a quorum was present.

3. Adoption of the Agenda

Motion by Commissioner Arbogast to adopt the Agenda; seconded by Commissioner Youkers. Motion carried.

4. Approval of Minutes – October 7, 2020

Motion by Commissioner Youkers to approve the Minutes; seconded by Commissioner Choi. Motion carried.

5. Petitioners

None.

6. Liaison Comments

None.

7. Staff Report

Business Expansion/Retention

Director Seymour indicated that a letter of consent to be relocated into the Town has been received from At Home Décor, which plans to occupy a new building presently under construction (late spring 2021 opening).

Director Seymour announced that an occupant of professional office space in the Town of Leesburg has expanded its business and plans to stay in the Town (10,000 sq. ft.). Director Seymour added that a press release is forthcoming.

Chair Byrd expressed the importance of business retention, and added that it is a large part of what the EDC does. Director Seymour indicated that the retention rate has remained positive, despite business closings due to Covid-19. Director Seymour noted that the Town continues to experience growth and that businesses desire to be in the Town for a number of reasons.

Director Seymour mentioned that a recent downtown business promotion of Bingo Cards was put into effect by 16 local businesses to attract people to establishments during the Thanksgiving holiday

Chair Byrd expanded upon reasons for business retention being hard to track, and expressed his desire to look at this in 2021 once recovery oriented information is available for discussion.

Quarterly Regional Leesburg Broker Meetings

Director Seymour participated in the November Quarterly Regional Leesburg Broker Meeting. He noted that certain markets, such as flex/office/industrial space, are doing well, but that retail market is suffering. Director Seymour indicated the 10-year average vacancy rate for office space in Leesburg is 6%, well below the 10-year average and slightly up from 2019. Director Seymour noted that the retail vacancy rate of 7.63% is above the 10-year average (last year was 4.8%), and noted that these statistics are in-line with those from other areas in the region.

Emergency Management Update on Covid

Director Seymour indicated that Covid-19 and test/hospitalization rates for Loudoun County are beginning to rise, and added that one of several assets Loudoun County has is hospital capacity, which has been stable.

Spring Job Fair

Director Seymour advised that, as of this time, the spring job fair is cancelled, and that staff is looking at the possibility of a holding a virtual event.

Ribbon Cuttings

Director Seymour indicated that, due to Covid-19, ribbon cutting events have been placed on hiatus until March and at that time staff will reevaluate. Director Seymour mentioned recent ribbon cuttings:

- Experimax
- Tree of Life Ministries - SimplyBe Coffee Café
- Maverick Cafe
- A Little Wedding Studio – postponed

Future Virtual EDC Meetings

Chair Byrd suggested that, due to Covid-19, commissions not hold a January 2021 meeting. Chair Byrd pointed out the significant number of new members getting up to speed with Council. Commissioner Youkers questioned whether the EDC could begin meeting virtually.

8. CARES Grant Update

Director Seymour stated that the CARES Grant program went well. Director Seymour indicated that two rounds of grants were held, and a third round was specifically geared towards outdoor dining. Director Seymour indicated business infusion grants one and two provided 344 business grants of \$2.9 million (66% of the approximate number of applications). Director Seymour noted that this number is consistent with those from other localities, and added that he would not be surprised if another Federal grant will be received after the first of the year.

9. Old Business

Chair Byrd recommended establishment of a task force to help invigorate business in the Town, and that conversations on this subject should be held in 2021 to encourage businesses to become involved. Chair Byrd offered the SBDC to sponsor a call to help initiate conversations.

10. New Business

Virtual Business Forum

Commissioner Youkers brought up for discussion a plan to virtually host quarterly business forums. Chair Byrd expressed his favor in holding a simplified forum, to gain feedback from local businesses on what additional federal aid they may seek.

The commissioners proposed an event date of late February, and Chair Byrd offered the SBDC to host the virtual forum. Chair Byrd suggested an agenda of no more than two topics. Director Seymour asked for guidance on who the target audience would be.

Motion by Commissioner Youkers to establish a Virtual Business Forum on Thursday, February 25, 2021, from 8:00a.m.-9:30a.m.; seconded by Commissioner Choi. Motion carried.

Members of the EDC designated Commissioners Choi and Youkers with the task of planning the forum, and composing a questionnaire to be communicated via email. Director Seymour will reach out to Commissioners Choi and Youkers to plan a date to discuss the details.

EDC Meetings

Chair Byrd indicated the desire to present Town Council with the request of virtual commission meetings during the pandemic. Discussions ensued.

Chair Byrd moved that Town Council revisit allowing boards and commissions to meet virtually during pandemic; seconded by Commissioner Youkers. Motion carried.

Based on the Town Manager's recommendation that no January meetings be held, Chair Byrd moved that the EDC cancel its January 2021 meeting; motion seconded by Commissioner Youkers. Motion carried.

11. Commissioner Comments

Commissioner Choi is looking forward to seeing what the new committee will look like, and to working on the business forum questionnaire.

Commissioner Youkers recognized the Town on its triple rating, and looks forward to obtaining important information during the February business forum. Commissioner Youkers expressed her appreciation for working with the EDC.

Commissioner Arbogast thanked Director Seymour, Manager Scoggins, staff, and the Town on steps taken to shutdown streets in the downtown area, and welcomes 2021.

Commissioner Boardman thanked the members of the EDC, and expressed his optimism in the direction the EDC is going to support the Town of Leesburg.

Chair Byrd formally expressed his gratitude to the EDC and staff, and specifically to outgoing Commissioners McCarter, Arbogast, and Boardman.

12. Adjournment

On a motion by Commissioner Arbogast, seconded by Commissioner Youkers, the meeting was adjourned at 8:20p.m.