



**Leesburg Economic Development Commission
REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING MINUTES
July 7, 2021
7:00pm.**

Commission Members Present:

Curtis Allred, Eric Byrd, James Choi, Marantha Edwards, Jason Miller, and Brittany Youkers

Commission Members Absent: Britta Neel

Staff Liaison Present: Mayor Kelly Burk

Staff Present: Economic Development Director Russell Seymour; Business Development and Retention Manager Melanie Scoggins

Presenters Present: None

AGENDA

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 7:03pm by Chair Byrd.

2. Roll Call

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

3. Adoption of the Agenda

Motion by Commissioner Choi to adopt the Agenda; seconded by Vice Chair Youkers. Motion carried.

Motion by Chair Byrd that the subject of Tent and Delivery/Drop-Off Spacing and Street Closings on Sunday be added to the July 7, 2021 Agenda; seconded by Commissioner Youkers. Motion carried.

4. Approval of Minutes

Motion by Commissioner Youkers to adopt the EDC Meeting Minutes of June 2, 2021; seconded by Commissioner Choi. Motion carried.

5. Petitioners

None.

6. Liaison Comments

None.

7. Staff Report

Historic Downtown Loading Zone Management Study

Director Seymour indicated that Town staff held a meeting with Cambridge Systematics (6/23/2021) regarding the downtown loading zone study. Director Seymour mentioned plans for an online business survey/questionnaire which will be distributed to local businesses within the study area. Director Seymour mentioned that a list of similar localities developed by the team will be used by the consultants for comparison.

Technology Zones

Director Seymour indicated that staff is pursuing establishing a Technology Zone Program in the Town. Director Seymour noted that there are currently 34 localities with established zones as tracked by the State, and he is of the opinion a program of this type would benefit the Town in attracting one of its target industries. Director Seymour added that this is an opportune time to pursue this with the upcoming new Economic Development website.

Tourism Zone

Director Seymour noted interest in the development of a Tourism Zone. Director Seymour added that this would allow the Town access to other State programs and draw more attention to the area. Director Seymour mentioned that the Arts and Cultural District name would remain for the current area, but be incorporated into the new, larger zone.

VML - Annual Meeting

Director Seymour indicated that a reception will be held with hopes to draw as many people as close to downtown as possible, and that discussions are being held to lower the \$75 ticket price to \$50. Director Seymour added that bus service will run near the Marshall House from 3pm to 11pm. Director Seymour mentioned that the Clay and Metal Loft is excited to have been selected to produce two gifts for the event.

Economic Development Website

Director Seymour indicated that staff held a kick off meeting with the Meridian Group regarding the development of the new website, and that work will tie in to the development of the new Economic Development Strategic Plan.

Business Visits

Director Seymour indicated that Linda McCray, Diversity Commission Chair, is seeking information that the Economic Development Department could provide to local businesses. Director Seymour provided to Ms. McCray a letter which includes information and contact information for Melanie Scoggins.

Statistics

Director Seymour indicated that the Town has been using Costar to pull statistical information, and that Costar relies heavily on the brokerage community to keep its product updated. Director Seymour added that brokers often do not pull space off the market after it has been leased. Director Seymour mentioned that localities pull information from the State (VEC), Weldon Cooper (UVA) and the US Bureau of Labor Statistics. Director Seymour added that the information is tracked at the County/City, Statistical Area or Planning Region level, but not tracked at the Town level.

Mayor Burk inquired as to why the downtown businesses are stronger and more stable as opposed to the Village of Leesburg. Director Seymour indicated that while office space is full, retail space is suffering. Commissioner Allred added that retail rent rates are higher in the district, and are greater in the historic district now as compared to three or five years ago. Director Seymour mentioned that similar patterns are seen in vacancy rates.

Director Seymour mentioned that Leesburg retail market average rents are up to \$34 per sq. ft., and that Loudoun County rents are \$1 or \$2 less. Director Seymour mentioned that for vacancy, retail in the Town and Loudoun County almost match each other. Commissioner Edwards mentioned the term “experiential retail” and Director Seymour added that Leesburg is interested in the types of full experience businesses such as Top Golf and I-Fly, which are located in Ashburn.

8. Liaisons to Other Commissions and Committees

Diversity Commission

Chair Byrd indicated that the Diversity Commission is focusing on a communication with the business community to keep them in the loop.

COPA

Commissioner Edwards reported on the following COPA related events:

- A successful weekend exhibit of the Virginia Fine Arts Museum
- The NAACP expressed interest in bench art on Harrison Street in support of a memorial on the W&OD trail
- Environmental/school project on arts
- Arts and cultural district moving along well; banners are up
- Black history mural is planned for the museum; a rendering will first go to COPA, then to the museum, and then to the BAR
- Sagetopia is working on a mural; King Street mural is going well
- August 14th will be the Taste of Leesburg (with vendors from FOPA and COPA)
- Council has on its future agenda a conversation on private/commercial property
- Also working the niches on Lassiter Way (two more artists)
- Arts & Cultural launch discussed to decide whether to work it through on Dec. 18th (music festival)

Commissioner Allred inquired as to Council guidelines regarding commercial/private property murals. Mayor Burk indicated Council discussion will begin on Monday, and suspects that

they will define what is meant by certain types of commercial buildings. Commissioner Choi, a business owner in the Town, expressed interest in a mural on the side of his building. Mayor Burk stated that she will keep the EDC advised of Council findings.

Technology Commission

Chair Byrd was contacted by Technology Commission and plans on having a conversation on how the EDC may work with that commission in the future.

Airport Commission

Commissioner Choi has been in contact with Council Member Steinberg regarding plans to meet with the Airport Commission. Chair Byrd mentioned future plans and things going on at the airport.

Planning Commission

Vice Chair Youkers indicated she has not yet been able to get on the Planning Commission Agenda. Vice Chair Youkers expressed her concern in the Commission making decisions without data and facts, and seeks a process of formulating more calculated decisions in the future.

Commissioner Edwards suggested consideration of a motion that Vice Chair Youkers, as liaison to the Planning Commission, be given the opportunity to respond and correct inaccuracies. Mayor Burk emphasized that if the Planning Commission were to take information and make a decision based on solely on Economic Development, they may be sued.

Vice Chair Youkers will continue her efforts to be placed on the Planning Commission agenda. Director Seymour indicated that Council is the decision making body, and that the Planning Commission makes recommendations as can any other commission. Chair Byrd indicated that the EDC will encourage the public to speak about the positive aspects of the Plan, and encouraged EDC commissioners to make Council members aware of the EDC's position thus allowing corrections to misinformation.

9. Old Business

July 4th Weekend

Director Seymour indicated that many people visited the Town for the parade and fireworks display, and added that the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts Mobile Unit yielded 750 visitors. Director Seymour mentioned an official unveiling of the Arts and Cultural District banners is planned for September 2021.

Vice Chair Youkers requested an update on the Liberty Parking Lot. Director Seymour indicated that the Town Attorney will be sending out a package within the next few weeks which will solicit ideas.

Main Street Program

Director Seymour mentioned the opportunity to present to Council options and opinions to move the Town into a Tier 2 position with DHCD. Director Seymour indicated that a Tier 2

application is a simple/non-competitive application and would allow the Town to become eligible for several grants, including a DHCD Community Vitality Grant which could be used to research and establish a designated program.

Chair Byrd suggested that discussions be held on evaluation of the program, and of potential problems. Chair Byrd mentioned how long term opportunities may tie into a new plan, and is in favor of conducting a study to gain information on the grant. Director Seymour encouraged the EDC to invite people to talk about what they are doing in other localities (i.e., Frederick, MD). Commissioner Miller indicated that in Frederick, businesses have a direct voice with City government.

Commissioner Allred mentioned that with the new Council, the business scape in the historic district of Leesburg and the mindsets are presently different. Commissioner Allred mentioned that if businesses have one collectivized voice, that it is easy for Council and staff to understand its message. Commissioner Allred indicated that the message should be conveyed that it is grant-funded study, and will bear no cost until a decision is made. .

Chair Byrd mentioned that opinions of naysayers may come out of the study, however, these opinions are important. Director Seymour indicated the next step is to fill out the Tier 2 application, and more information will be provided to the EDC to make an educated recommendation to Council for a study/grant application. Chair Byrd emphasized the necessity to control the information in the communication. Commissioner Choi inquired as to the criteria to join the program, and whether it is specific to pedestrian-driven businesses in the King Street area. Chair Byrd mentioned that is an important factor to determine.

10. New Business

Downtown Street Closings

Director Seymour provided a history regarding the present street closings on the King Street block in Town:

- Friday and Saturday - 4pm to 10pm
- Sunday - 10am to 4pm

Director Seymour indicated that most businesses are in favor of the present program, and suggests to continue with Friday and Saturday hours. Director Seymour opened the floor for discussion regarding the possibility of eliminating for the summer street closings on Sunday due to traffic concerns from local residents. Discussions ensued.

Motion by Commissioner Edwards that Street Closings continue from 4pm-10pm on Friday and Saturday, and from 10am-4pm on Sunday; seconded by Commissioner Choi.

Tent and Delivery/Drop-Off Spacing

Director Seymour opened the floor for discussion on whether the Tent and Delivery/Drop-Off Spacing program should be continued. Director Seymour noted that concerns have been raised by restaurateurs whose parking spaces are being utilized by patrons of venues with tents. Vice Chair Youkers indicated no change management plan is in presently in place, and suggested that if changes are instituted a communication be provided to help ease back into things. Commissioner Allred is concerned with why this issue is part of the EDC agenda, and

stated that he is unaware of any business that expanded their outdoor dining as part of COVID that would want to give that up.

Motion by Chair Byrd that because restaurants are continuing to struggle from the pandemic and given that this is a long process, the EDC recommends to continue allowing tent and delivery/drop-off spacing; seconded by Vice Chair Youkers. Motion carried.

Vice Chair Youkers expressed her desire not to return to prior practices, and the importance to shape something new in the future.

Possible EDC Sub-Committee Discussion

Chair Byrd indicated that the EDC Sub-Committee discussion be added to the August 4, 2021 Agenda.

11. Commissioner Comments

Vice Chair Youkers indicated it was great to see the EDC in person. Vice Chair Youkers inquired as to the old Walmart property and its plans to be a floor and décor store. Director Seymour provided background on the upcoming retail store and its plans for a future opening.

Commissioner Choi expressed his pleasure at returning to an in-person meeting. Commissioner Choi pointed out the signage on the Battlefield Parkway intersection bridge directing people to Cardinal Park is not adequately visible when travelling West on Route 7. Director Seymour indicated that this may be a VDOT issue, and that he would research the specifics.

Commissioner Allred mentioned it was amazing to see the return of frequent visitors to the historic district, as well as so many more new visitors. Commissioner Allred inquired as to recent changes made to Town ordinances and amendments. Director Seymour indicated that he will provide to the EDC a list of changes in town ordinances and amendments.

Commissioner Miller mentioned he is learning much by participating in the EDC. Commissioner Miller offered to become a contact source for businesses who wish to express a complaint on the Main Street Program.

Commissioner Edwards indicated she is working with Virginia Village, and provided an overview of the project. Commissioner Edwards conveyed that Virginia Village is seeking conversations with individual EDC members, and she will be happy to coordinate such conversations.

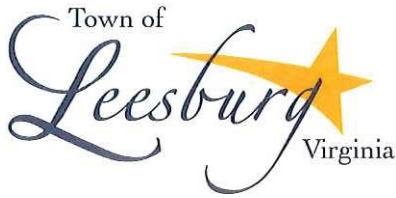
Commissioner Edwards mentioned that she was contacted by a gentleman regarding an ordinance which prohibits redevelopment downtown because of B1 (cannot build on a lot less than 10,000 sq. ft.). Commissioner Edwards indicated that the gentleman would like to speak with the EDC about his case, and believes it would be beneficial for the EDC to hear. Commissioner Edwards added that she is happy to be part of the EDC, and associated with a group of really smart people.

12. Chairman's Comments

Chair Byrd mentioned that he has been on a staycation for several weeks, and that his walks around the Town have been eye-opening. Chair Byrd added that he is thrilled with the work the EDC is doing, and expressed his gratitude for the time and efforts of the commissioners.

13. Adjournment

Motion by Commissioner Choi to adjourn the meeting at 10:00pm; seconded by Commissioner Allred. Motion carried.



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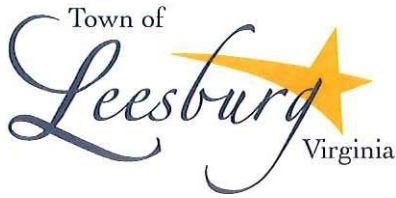
Leesburg Mayor and Members of Town Council,

During their meeting on Wednesday, July 7, 2021, the Economic Development Commission (EDC) had a follow-up discussion regarding the current Sidewalk Dining program, focusing on the need to continue with the current Friday, Saturday and Sunday schedule. Following a lengthy discussion, the EDC makes the following recommendation to Town Council:

The Leesburg Economic Development Commission supports keeping the current Sidewalk Dining Program in place as it presently exists, given the vibrancy it adds to the Town. This includes continuing to close the section of King Street between Loudoun Street and West Market Street on Friday and Saturday from 4pm to 10pm and on Sunday from 10am to 4pm.

Respectfully,

Eric L. Byrd, Chair
Town of Leesburg Economic Development Commission



Leesburg Mayor and Members of Town Council,

During their meeting on Wednesday, July 7, 2021, the Economic Development Commission (EDC) had a discussion regarding continuing to allow local restaurants to place tents in their parking areas for outdoor dining and maintaining specially designated delivery and drop-off spacing for curbside service. The EDC makes the following recommendation to Town Council:

The Leesburg Economic Development Commission the continued struggles facing our local restaurants. As such, the Economic Development Commission supports continuing to allow the utilization of tents in parking areas by local restaurants for outdoor dining. Additionally, the Economic Development Commission supports the continued designation of selected parking spaces as delivery and drop-off spacing for curbside service.

Respectfully,

Eric L. Byrd, Chair
Town of Leesburg Economic Development Commission