



**Leesburg Economic Development Commission
REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING MINUTES
August 4, 2021
7:00pm.**

Commission Members Present:

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

Commission Members Absent: None

Staff Liaison Present: None

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

Petitioners Present: Michael McLister, McLister Enterprises, LLC

Presenters Present: Brian Cullen, Keane Enterprises

AGENDA

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 7:04 p.m. 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 Allred to adopt the Agenda; seconded by Commissioner Choi. Motion carried.

4. Approval of Minutes

Motion by Vice Chair Youkers to adopt the EDC Meeting Minutes of July 7, 2021; seconded by Commissioner Choi. Motion carried.

5. Petitioners

Michael McLister, McLister Enterprises, LLC, provided to the EDC his views on a current proposed project for which he has been seeking Town Council action. Mr. McLister presented a review of his proposal for a small conglomerate of working units where people may live and work in the Town.

Mr. McLister indicated that the units would be complimentary, standalone office and residential space with emphasis on making the space green. Mr. McLister seeks guidance from the EDC on his proposal to Council which includes the office of the future, a small conglomerate of working units where people can live and work in the Town. Mr. McLister indicated potential benefits of his proposal:

- Parking will be available for every unit
- No tax on public parking
- Offered to separate a lot; provide town with new taxable property
- Create green, live/work units on the same property
- Way of people living/working from home
- Studies show 70% of people will be living/working from home in the next three years
- Price range for units would be \$1,500, below average for Loudoun County

Vice Chair Youkers inquired as to how a guarantee can be obtained that people will live and work from home. Commissioner Edwards asked whether the proposal went through the Town Planning Commission and what were its benefits. Mr. McLister indicated that the proposal would include eight commercial units, and one office space unit. Mr. McLister indicated the Town will gain extra revenue and have taxable property going forward; with increases of 300% in year one, 3,000% in year ten, etc. Mr. McLister mentioned that the problem lies with blurred regulations between commercial/residential. Mr. McLister indicated that the current office spaces were left empty on purpose. Discussion ensued.

6. Liaison Comments

None.

7. Staff Report

Virginia Municipal League (VML)

Director Seymour indicated that the VML annual meeting reception will be held on October 3, 2021 at Dodona Manor and that the focus will be on providing opportunities to draw attendees to downtown businesses. Director Seymour mentioned that two maps will be provided with layout of downtown and information on local businesses; a pocket map will be included in each attendee bag; staff will inform businesses of the event, and will seek additional incentives businesses may wish to provide. Director Seymour added that a three-hour window goal to transport attendees will be scheduled, with busses running until 11p.m.

September Job Fair

Director Seymour mentioned that staff is working on a job fair to be held at ION on September 30, 2021. Director Seymour indicated that this job fair would not replace the Spring Youth Fair, and will focus on adults. Director Seymour added that job seekers are down 50% from 2019.

Historic Downtown Loading Zone Management Study

Director Seymour indicated that Town staff has been meeting every other week with Cambridge Systematics on the loading zone study, and added that staff is awaiting the final version of an online business survey/questionnaire to be distributed to local businesses.

Joint Tours with Loudoun Dept. of Economic Development

Director Seymour mentioned that staff has been working with Loudoun Economic Development on an initiative to jointly work closer with each of the shared workspace centers, with staff from both

the Town and County jointly touring each site. Director Seymour added that feedback has been extremely positive.

2022 Small Business Awards – Spring 2022

Director Seymour indicated plans have commenced for the event, and the EDC will be involved in the selection of a business as has been done in the past.

Director Seymour mentioned the April Council retreat addressed items upon which the EDC should place focus in the upcoming year:

2022 Council Work Sessions

- February 22 – Business Recovery Update
- May 10 – Liberty Lot
- May 24 – Main Street Program
- June 6 – Arts/Cultural/History Promotion
- June 21 – C-PACE (Commercial Property Clean Energy Program)
- July 13 – MEC Interim MOU and Lease

September 27, 2022

- Economic Development Strategic Plan
- Economic Development Authority
- Main Street Program
- Promotion of Leesburg Arts/Cultural and History

8. Liaisons to Other Commissions and Committees

COPA

Commissioner Edwards mentioned a meeting for August 11, 2021 which will be focusing on the Crossroads event, a downtown music festival.

Airport Commission

Chair Byrd indicated that meetings will start in several weeks, and added that he, Commissioner Choi and Director Seymour will be in attendance.

Diversity Commission

Commissioner Neel mentioned that positive responses to in-person visits to minority businesses were received, and suggested that Melanie Scoggins participate in future visits. Commissioner Neel suggested design of a more eye-catching flyer to be distributed to the businesses. Director Seymour indicated that staff would design a flyer to leave with local businesses.

9. Old Business

Virginia Village Presentation – Brian Cullen, Keane Enterprises

Chair Byrd introduced Brian Cullen to the EDC and Mr. Cullen provided a presentation on Virginia Village. Chair Byrd indicated that discussions by the Planning Commission will begin tomorrow, and that no action will be taken by the EDC at this meeting. Commissioner Edwards recused herself from the presentation due to her participation with Virginia Village.

Mr. Cullen's presentation included the following topics:

- Crescent Design District - the future of Leesburg
- Importance of connecting with downtown; move people easily between these places
- Unique approach driven by open space
- Virginia Village Vision
- Concept Vision Ours Overlook
- Farmer's Market
- Concert Area
- High Street Park
- Transportation Effects
- Gap in Housing Products - Need for studio and one bedroom apartments
- Creating an affordable product
- Fiscal Impact
- HubZone

Chair Byrd emphasized the important of rezoning the Crescent Design District, and that the idea behind the ordinance is to make it look like a town. Chair Byrd expressed his concern with the lack of work in the live/work/play goal, and inquired on the business model. Mr. Cullen mentioned he feels comfortable with the retail/food/fitness/specialties/services, and that co-working spaces and shared work environments will be included in the apartment buildings. Chair Byrd inquired as to who will be living in phase one, where they come from, and where they work. Mr. Cullen indicated a niche is being filled for people who work in Town which includes Town government and Town employers. Mr. Cullen added one bedroom and studio units are the target market.

Chair Byrd indicated that workforce housing is an important issue in Loudoun County and the Town. Mr. Cullen mentioned the demand for the ability of residents to walk to work in downtown Leesburg. Commissioner Allred indicated the importance of walkability within the historic district, and inquired whether there has been discussion regarding the intersection of South King and Fairfax Streets. Mr. Cullen indicated that particular section is owned by a car dealership. Commissioner Allred inquired as to existing sign guidelines and the opportunity for internal facing businesses. In response to Commissioner Allred's inquiry as to whether push back has been received from the Town on parking, Mr. Cullen indicated that parking in the Crescent Design District needs to be addressed, as parking studies resulted in many spaces not being utilized. Presently Mr. Cullen could not provide information on the pricing projections for two-over-two townhomes and one bedroom units.

Commissioner Choi mentioned an undeveloped cul-de-sac near Madison Court that is presently Zoned R22. Mr. Cullen indicated this property would 105,000 sq. ft. of office space, and 65,000 sq. ft. of retail space. Commissioner Miller mentioned that this solves many needs in one central space, and basically built two times the size of downtown Leesburg. Commissioner Allred indicated that businesses who will benefit the most are located along Harrison Street and Crescent Place, and transformative for those businesses is the stretch in front of Raflo Park.

Vice Chair Youkers indicated residents may not be in favor of seeing office space. Discussions ensued regarding the present Farmer's Market. Chair Byrd expressed his concern with the amount of retail space given the uncertainty future retail needs, and emphasized his interest in commercial office space. Mr. Cullen indicated that housing, not retail, is driving financing, and mentioned that office buildings will do very well. Mr. Cullen indicated that the Crescent Design District presents

greater flexibility on what can be done with retail, food, fitness, specialty, and services.

10. New Business

Murals

Director Seymour indicated that Council directed staff to present information regarding changes to Town land use regulations and policies allowing murals on private properties. Director Seymour mentioned relating specifically to Economic Development would be a private property mural ad hoc group to work with staff regarding impacts, costs, and benefits of a private program in the community. Director Seymour requested that the EDC consider such a committee which would include one EDC member.

Resolution 2021-101 July 13, 2021

Commissioner Allred questioned the EDC's involvement in an area that is clearly arts-related; Commissioner Neel concurred. In response to Vice Chair Youkers' inquiry of the goal of such subcommittee, Director Seymour mentioned the Town is seeking an overall direction. Director Seymour is of the opinion that Council will seek EDC advice on items which may impact downtown and local businesses. Director Seymour indicated that this area includes the Town in general and private buildings. In response to Commissioner Choi's inquiry of whether business owners may commission a specific artist, Director Seymour indicated that it would be the role of this committee to inquire and provide answers.

Director Seymour added that Council looks to COPA and the EDC to assist in determining the impact on this decision. Director Seymour indicated that eligible properties must be located outside of the H1 district. Commissioner Allred mentioned that existing publicly commissioned murals are located on government-owned properties, and that it is not the EDC's directive to look into utilization. Chair Byrd senses the reason the EDC is being included is that Council recognizes the importance of seeking the economic impact. In response to Vice Chair Youkers' inquiry regarding the level of effort, Director Seymour indicated that will be determined by the committee over a four-month period.

Commissioner Allred expressed his belief that it is one of mixed-use, large-scale property owners in the Town. Commissioner Allred indicated he is torn whether any business in one of the developments greatly benefits by a personal investment in public art, and added that he would be willing to solicit inquiries on the subject. In response to Vice Chair Youkers' question on how the mural subject arose, Director Seymour indicated that a number of businesses and commercially developed areas had been asking what the Town allows to be painted on the walls. Director Seymour mentioned that Council is presently looking at this as a priority.

EDC Member for Task Force on Murals on Private Buildings

Commissioner Miller volunteered to represent the EDC on the task force; and was granted without objection and with EDC consent.

Home-Based Childcare Incentive/Training Program

Chair Byrd mentioned the lack of home-based childcare and the challenge it presents for people being able to work. Chair Byrd added that he and Mayor Burk are discussing concepts statewide and that the SBDC is looking at initiatives/programs for people with interest in opening childcare centers. Discussions ensued with talking points such as:

- Home-based businesses not being addressed
- Suggestions for development/training programs in conjunction with the SBDC
- Town Licensing Department involvement in waiving fees/opportunity for people desiring to open childcare businesses
- Whether this is something the EDC desires to work on
- The formation of a subcommittee of one or two people
- Chair Byrd is working on this on behalf of the SBDC

Chair Byrd opened the floor for discussion. Vice Chair Youkers is in agreement with the idea, and would welcome home-based childcare. Commissioner Neel is in favor of the idea and asked what would be the step in reaching out to these people who have some interest and from where would this information be pulled. Chair Byrd believes there will be multiple components in recruiting interested people. Chair Byrd indicated logical areas for the EDC to be involved with are what the program would look like; how to identify interested people; offer a training program; identify the process; provide training on how to run the business. Chair Byrd seeks a way the Town can support entrepreneurs who want to start a business in their home. Commissioner Neel mentioned zoning and state licenses for home-based businesses. Commissioner Neel asked whether there is a way to streamline that process, and if it would be helpful for current daycares as well. Chair Byrd indicated that the EDC could reach out and identify State grants.

The Home-Based Childcare Incentive/Training Program shall be included as an item for discussion in the September 1, 2021 EDC Agenda.

EDC Subcommittees

Chair Byrd initiated discussions regarding other subcommittees to be considered, and mentioned that the Crescent Design Subcommittee consists of Chair Byrd and Vice Chair Youkers. Commissioner Allred suggested an EDC component to the Planning & Zoning Commission. Chair Byrd mentioned the subject remains an open item as conversations arise and of consideration be the idea of a working group task force.

Vice Chair Youkers suggested that all perspectives be looked at before recommendations are made, and that conversations be held as things arise. Commissioner Neel indicated the ease for the EDC to overlap on some issues. Chair Byrd believes that there is not an immediate need, and the EDC may form groups as things are presented. Chair Byrd emphasized the importance of the EDC's advisory role to Council, and that issues may be looked at especially if ordinance-related and the EDC feels they are creating a challenge/problem and can offer guidance. Director Seymour mentioned that the EDC provides comments at the Council level as opposed to the Planning & Zoning Commission Level, since Council is the final decision-making body.

Director Seymour mentioned that the Planning & Zoning Commission follows set guidelines and regulations. Director Seymour added that the EDC has an opportunity to provide comments at the Council level, and Council takes into consideration all aspects and what is best for the citizens and businesses in the Town. Chair Byrd indicated that since the EDC has an advisory role, it provides an opinion when asked upon and added that the EDC will consider the economic impact as these decisions are made.

11. Commissioner Comments

Commissioner Miller expressed his pleasure that Sunday street closures remain in effect, and added

that that Sundays are still really great. Commissioner Neel mentioned she loves the Crescent Design Plan, and added that she will create residential areas of what people need. Commissioner Neel indicated that she does, however, fear pricing will be an issue. Vice Chair Youkers expressed her thanks to the EDC, and appreciated the great dialogue and questions presented. Vice Chair Youkers indicated her concern is that development of commercial space is going to take such a long time to develop, and the need to be cognizant of that. Commissioner Choi enjoyed the meeting, and added that the presentation was an exciting one. Commissioner Choi mentioned that over the weekend he enjoyed walking downtown, and that he thoroughly enjoyed his visit to the new Unitea tea shop. Commissioner Allred indicated that it is awesome to be at the big kids table, and he is happy to see everybody. Commissioner Allred mentioned the importance of a way to achieve maximization of economic opportunity and being able to provide affordable residences.

12. Chairman's Comments

Chair Byrd thanked the EDC for their hard work, and added that he is very pleased with how the commission has been working together. Chair Byrd added the challenges presented with creating a good working group of thoughtful and talented business people.

Director Seymour inquired of the EDC their preference to hold several EDC meetings in the Lower Level Conference Room. The EDC will consider this option on a case-by-case basis.

13. Adjournment

Motion by Commissioner Choi to adjourn the meeting at 9:40 p.m.; seconded by Vice Chair Youkers. Motion carried.