



**Leesburg Economic Development Commission
REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING
25 West Market Street
Council Chamber
October 6, 2021
7:00p.m.**

- 1. Call to Order**
- 2. Roll Call**
- 3. Adoption of the Agenda**
- 4. Approval of Minutes**
 - a. September 1, 2021
- 5. Petitioners (5 minutes each)**
- 6. Liaison Comments (5 minutes)**
- 7. Staff Report**
- 8. Liaisons to Other Commissions and Committees**
- 9. Old Business**
 - a. **Downtown Street Closures** – Kate Trask, Department of Parks and Recreation
 - b. **Main Street** – update
 - c. **Legacy Leesburg** - update
 - d. **Home-based Childcare**
- 10. New Business**
 - a. **Leesburg Economic Development Strategic Plan**
 - b. **Tourism Zone**
- 11. Commissioner Comments (5 minutes)**
- 12. Chairman's Comments (5 minutes)**
- 13. Adjournment**

If you require any type of reasonable accommodation, as a result of a physical, sensory or mental disability, to attend and/or participate in this meeting, please contact Russell Seymour at 703-771-6530. Three days advanced notice is requested.



**Leesburg Economic Development Commission
REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING MINUTES
September 1, 2021
7:00pm**

Commission Members Present:

Eric Byrd, Marantha Edwards, Jason Miller, Britta Neel

Commission Members Absent: Curtis Allred, Brittany Youkers, James Choi

Staff Liaison Present: Council Member Ara Bagdasarian

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

Petitioners Present: None.

AGENDA

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 7: 01p.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 Edwards to adopt the Agenda; seconded by Commissioner Miller. Motion carried.

4. Approval of Minutes

Motion by Commissioner Neel to adopt the EDC Meeting Minutes of August 4, 2021; seconded by Commissioner Miller. Motion carried.

5. Petitioners

None.

6. Liaison Comments

None.

7. Staff Report

Labor Shortages

Director Seymour mentioned state and national level reports indicate businesses are experiencing labor shortages, and added that many localities have made repeated attempts to improve the situation by hosting hiring events. Commissioner Edwards inquired as to the root cause of not finding employees. Director Seymour indicated that some were finding it to be more beneficial to be unemployed and receive state or federal government money than working their regular job, and as a result businesses have put in place hiring bonuses. Commissioner Edwards suggested a different approach to communicating the message in addition to holding job fairs, and anxiously awaits the September 30th job fair results. In response to Commissioner Edwards' inquiry regarding restaurant employee health benefits, Commissioner Miller indicated that his establishment has tried providing such benefits, shortening business hours, etc., and is still unable to hire employees even at \$30 an hour. Commissioner Miller added that he does not receive applications from job fairs, and many applicants do not report for work. Director Seymour stated that has been the biggest surprise in talking to businesses, and Commissioner Miller indicated that factor has always been a part of business, now double that. Commissioner Edwards was curious whether other jurisdictions had any success.

September 30, 2021 Job Fair – ION Training Facility

Director Seymour indicated that job fair registrants consist of local businesses and others from a broader scale, and mentioned that focus will be placed on Leesburg-based businesses to ensure space availability. Commissioner Miller indicated that if businesses were able to pay employees higher wages they would, and this would aid in getting people to report to work. In response to Council Member Bagdasarian's inquiry as to whether this situation is due to Covid or is a long-term shift, Chair Byrd expressed his uncertainty. Commissioner Miller believes in terms of resources it does not make economic sense to hold a job fair. Chair Byrd mentioned that job fairs will continue to be offered for those who may take advantage. Director Seymour confirmed that the annual student-focused job fair will continue to be held in the spring.

Northern Virginia Economic Development Alliance

Director Seymour indicated that this initiative was created when northern Virginia localities attempted to get Amazon, and added that the state economic development office sees northern Virginia as its own state. Director Seymour mentioned a conversation with the new chair of the Alliance Board in which they discussed reviewing the certain groups, and whether it is population-driven.

- Manassas Park - 18,000 residents
- City of Manassas – 43,000 residents
- Falls Church – 15,000, residents
- Leesburg – Over 50,000, residents

Director Seymour indicated that presently all are operating off of an MOA with no legal binding. Director Seymour mentioned options of each locality paying a number at a per-capita rate, and the creation of a public/private partnership (501c6). Director Seymour anticipates further discussions on this within the next few months, with a goal to include Leesburg. Discussions ensued.

8. Liaisons to Other Commissions and Committees

COPA

Commissioner Edwards mentioned the upcoming COPA meeting, and added that Council Member Bagdasarian will provide the EDC with an update.

Airport Commission

Chair Byrd indicated that he and Commissioner Choi will participate in an Airport working group. Chair Byrd mentioned that the group is being established to look at the airport as an overall entity including several parcels with an opportunity for minor development. Chair Byrd mentioned meetings are being held every other week.

Diversity Commission

Commissioner Neel provided an update on the successful visits to East Market Street businesses by herself, Mayor Burk, Linda McCray, and Melanie Scoggins. Commissioner Neel indicated that several businesses fared well during the pandemic, and that no negative feedback was received. Manager Scoggins indicated that several businesses requested updates regarding projects such as zoning.

Arts & Cultural District

Council Member Bagdasarian mentioned that, on September 18th, COPA and FOLPA will partner with the 2021 Crossroads Music Festival, which will include 25 artists with performances in nine Town venues. Council Member Bagdasarian indicated that with the festival taking place within the Arts & Cultural District, attendees will have the opportunity to participate in an interactive art display, a BINGO challenge, attend a public art tour, and learn more about the district and upcoming plans.

9. Old Business

Main Street Program

Director Seymour indicated that the application is in process and is awaiting an official agreement by Council.

10. New Business

Leesburg Economic Development Strategic Plan

Director Seymour indicated that the Plan is a guide which will be looked at over a five-year window with updates every 24 months. Director Seymour mentioned critical factors to be considered such as marketing and business support, opportunities for growth, business attraction targeting specific sectors, and providing local jobs. Director Seymour indicated also to be considered are zoning, land use, and remaining space, workforce development, boundaries, and redevelopment.

Director Seymour indicated work is proceeding, and will be monitored closely in the next six to eight months. Chair Byrd suggested the EDC share topics for discussion with Director Seymour as plans are being developed. Director Seymour mentioned the overall philosophy of working with other Town departments so that it will fit together well. Director Seymour asked that questions be directed to him, and that he will be available to provide any required data. Commissioner Edwards indicated she will review Chapter 8. Chair Byrd mentioned that these discussion topics be included in each meeting agenda until completion, and encouraged the EDC to discuss such topics between regular

meetings. Chair Byrd mentioned that the strategic plan will lead the Town from an Economic Development standpoint, and important issues such as marketing, existing business growth, and workforce development should be considered.

Council Member Bagdasarian indicated the first 35 pages of the Town plan sets the stage for input of community aspects/concerns, and added that different Town commissions should look through this lens. Commissioner Edwards pointed out that the 2003 Town plan was implemented differently, and an unprecedented number of people participated, i.e., leadership groups, through input meetings at Ida Lee, and people on the street. Chair Byrd indicated that the Town plan includes interesting and important long-term business, and emphasized the EDC present to Council important factors to be included in the Plan.

Home-Based Childcare Incentive/Training Program

Topics of discussion included:

- EDC participation and the formation of a committee.
- Determine people interested in opening a home-based day care.
- Provide support to small businesses to get started and operate in the Town.
- Research of state-level programs focused on opening a center (different from small in-house business in terms of compliance).
- Determine specific training requirements.
- SBDC involvement in providing training support.
- Town incentives such as a small grant, a reduction in fees, streamlining zoning (more complicated than zoning for an office).

Commissioner Neel inquired as to the possibility of the Town to communicate an email to seeking people interested in opening a home-based childcare business. Commissioner Neel mentioned that it may be easier to first focus on home-based childcare, and second on parties interested in opening a daycare business. Chair Byrd indicated the Mayor's primary focus is to promote and assist individuals who wish to open home-based childcare; then streamlining the process, and determining available grant funds. Chair Byrd is seeking a method of communication to people who might be interested.

Commissioner Edwards enumerated several steps regarding this issue such as an EDC subcommittee to establish required zoning ordinances. Commissioner Edwards indicated that the Mayor seeks to identify helpful Town incentives such as waiving of fees, micro-grants, and federal money received by the Town.

Commissioner Miller expressed his support of small businesses and the initial investment of the EDC's time in providing an information checklist to assist in the process. Commissioner Miller believes a huge importance is creating a place where people want to come and work, a "lifestyle" which is an important factor.

Chair Byrd indicated that the above recommendations were a result of a conversation with Mayor Burk. Chair Byrd mentioned a major aspect was whether an individual who must remain at home with children would have the ability to seek employment; and added that presently there is not enough daycare available in the Town.

Commissioner Neel emphasized the importance of home-based childcare moving up the chart, and

if it can help people apply for jobs then answers regarding incentives/start-up costs should be provided. Chair Byrd stated the first step is the formation of a group to tackle such issues, with zoning being the first place to start (SBDC can help). Chair Byrd is in favor of a recommendation to Council on action items, budget, and funding. Commissioner Neel indicated she will initiate that conversation with the Diversity Commission.

Chair Byrd mentioned that a task force is a focus group with a specific project, and that a subcommittee is more ongoing every year. Chair Byrd asked the EDC whether it would consider the formation of a task force with an ultimate goal to make a recommendation to Council. Commissioner Edwards indicated that she would participate in such task force, but she cannot take the lead. Commissioner Edwards stated that she is available to look at the zoning ordinance.

Motion by Chair Byrd to establish a home-based childcare incentive training program task force with a goal of making a recommendation to Council by December 31, 2021; seconded by Commissioner Edwards. Chair Byrd indicated that Commissioner Neel will assume the role of task force lead. Chair Byrd anticipates interested parties will receive support from the SBDC.

Business Forum

Chair Byrd mentioned the previously held spring and fall business forums were part of an ongoing effort to stay connected to the business community, and opened the floor for discussions on a timeframe and topics for a future event. Potential topics to be considered:

- Home-based daycare business.
- How did your business change?
- Opportunity to talk to people who work from home.
- How is the working from home environment changing?
- Development and redevelopment.

Director Seymour mentioned that business forums had been held in the fall to provide the EDC with direction in January. Director Seymour recommended a spring business forum due to the difficulty of businesses to attend events at the present time, as well as a different Covid situation in the spring. Director Seymour pointed out discussions with employers that included how to remain open. Commissioner Neel is in favor of a spring business forum. Commissioner Miller suggested to consider an email including a survey with questions, and added that a follow-up phone call might be more impactful and provide a direction. Chair Byrd indicated the consensus of the EDC to hold a spring 2022 forum, and suggested the creation of a survey with specific questions.

Chair Byrd recommended that future networking events be included in the budget plan. Commissioner Neel suggested the survey be sent in different languages. Chair Byrd indicated a new project will be to put together a survey which will include a language component.

11. Commissioner Comments

Commissioner Edwards indicated this evening's meeting was productive with interactive conversations on important topics.

Commissioner Neel mentioned numerous topics were covered, and she likes what the EDC is doing, and added that she and Chair Byrd will discuss how to structure a home-based business.

Commissioner Miller mentioned the key in terms of education is to support a home-based childcare business from the ground level; with a holistic approach on whether government can actually help.

Commissioner Miller added that these are really good ideas which need to get from the page as soon as possible.

12. Chairman's Comments

Chair Byrd expressed his gratitude to the EDC for their questions, and added that the commissioners are smart people who care about the Town. Chair Byrd expressed his excitement regarding the business visits being made by Mayor Burk, Commissioner Neel, and Manager Scoggins, and thanked the EDC and Staff for their hard work.

13. Adjournment

Motion by Commissioner Neel to adjourn the meeting at 8:40p.m.; seconded by Commissioner Edwards. Motion carried.