



Leesburg Economic Development Commission
REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING MINUTES
October 6, 2021
7:00pm.

Commission Members Present:

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

Commission Members Absent: James Choi

Staff Liaison Present: None

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

Petitioners Present: None.

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 7: 03p.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 Neel. Motion carried.

4. Approval of Minutes

Motion by Commissioner Youkers to adopt the EDC Meeting Minutes of September 1, 2021; seconded by Commissioner Miller. Motion carried.

5. Petitioners

None.

6. Liaison Comments

None

7. Staff Report

ION Job Fair – September 30, 2021

Director Seymour reported that the hiring event attended by 50 employers, and 80 of the 130 registered job seekers. He added that over 90% of the applicants were seeking full-time positions, and that Technology (45%) was the most preferred industry segment. Primarily of interest to applicants were project management/entry-level positions.

Director Seymour mentioned that in September the Loudoun Coalition on Women and Girls (LCWAG) held a job fair at Ida Lee which was attended by 15 employers, and 30 out of 60 registered job seekers. He added that the Loudoun County Workforce Resource Center has plans to partner in a future job fair at Ida Lee Recreation Center.

Liberty Parking Lot

Director Seymour referenced the event to be held at the Liberty Parking Lot on October 7th at 5:30p.m. Director Seymour indicated that the Liberty Lot is a town-owned parcel, Zoned B1, for which discussions are being held regarding its use. A compilation of survey data will be provided to the EDC and to the Council in its entirety.

Virginia Municipal League Conference – October 3-5, 2021

Director Seymour provided an update on the successful conference which, for the first time, was held in conjunction with a Town. Director Seymour expressed his gratitude to Town staff for their excellent job, and specifically commended the efforts of Melanie Scoggins and Kate Trask.

- Over 400 people were in attendance; seven Loudoun County towns were represented.
- A mixer was held at the Marshall House which included a band and food from local vendors.
- Pocket maps of downtown Leesburg were provided to each attendee.
- Locally hand-made clay ornaments and/or bowls were given to each attendee.
- Information on Shocktober was placed into packets.
- Attendees were broken up into small groups who took busses to different areas of Town.
- Busses were provided; 50 attendees were on the ADA, Historic Preservation bus.
- Opportunity for a group walk downtown and speak about redevelopment, the W&OD trail, arts, and K&M.
- Focus was on legislative discussions.

8. Liaisons to Other Commissions and Committees

COPA

Commissioner Edwards provided an update on the idea of holding Fun Saturdays with downtown businesses, and will work with Melanie Scoggins to determine businesses interested in participating. Commissioner Edwards indicated that she will share information presented at the October 26th Council meeting.

Diversity Commission

Commissioner Neel indicated that on September 26th she, Mayor Burk, Melanie Scoggins, Linda McCray, and Devon Carter met with businesses at a local shopping center and their efforts were well received. Commissioner Neel expressed concern that First Fridays are not extended to other shopping centers.

Murals on Private Buildings

Commissioner Miller mentioned that two meetings were held which included conversations with the Town, and that steps are being put in place to safeguard the Town from potential problems. Commissioner Miller indicated it was a productive meeting with the Town Attorney, and that the group is comprised of people with a good understanding of the complexities of publicly sanctioned art.

Planning & Zoning Commission

Vice Chair Youkers indicated that her schedule does not afford her the opportunity to attend twice monthly meetings, and suggested that Brian Boucher and Mike Watkins provide updates. Commissioner Edwards believes that a goal of the EDC is to be considered a resource for Council, have a positive impact on potential jobs and on the Town, and that the EDC should be diligent in obtaining as much information as it can. Vice Chair Youkers believes the EDC needs to ask questions and share information with the Planning Commission, and that the two commissions to work together.

Airport Commission

Chair Byrd indicated that there are three parcels available for development on the airport property, and that the Airport Commission has been asked to provide recommendations to Council on overall use of those parcels. Chair Byrd pointed out development challenges of that property, as it is owned by the Town and paid for by the FAA. Chair Byrd mentioned that several interested businesses have been seen thus far, and plans are in place to meet with several others. A report will be presented to the EDC and Council. Chair Byrd mentioned zoning conflicts and the potential to look at runway extension.

9. Old Business

a. Downtown Street Closures – Kate Trask, Department of Parks and Recreation

Ms. Trask's presentation to the EDC and discussions ensued on topics such as:

- Restaurants erecting tents and installing heaters; related statistics on table usage

- Sunday street closures have not been overly affected by weather
- Some restaurants have chosen not to participate on Sundays, and many are not putting out full a compliment of tables
- Restaurant percentages substantially dropped on Sundays compared to the night before
- Sunday, October 3rd photos indicate low traffic eating downtown or walking on the street
- Questions the benefits of Sunday street closures, i.e., the appearance of a “ghost town”
- Regarding increased traffic in and around King Street, Ms. Trask indicated the greatest concern of Town Police is the number of Uber and Lyft drivers stopping in front of the barricades
- Music will have to be addressed in the Fire Marshall regulations

EDC comments included:

- Vice Chair Youkers suggested that Chair Byrd, Director Seymour, and Ms. Trask meet with the Fire Marshall before the holidays.
- Director Seymour stressed the importance of knowing which businesses choose not to participate in the program.
- Commissioner Miller expressed his surprise at how few people were downtown on Sunday, and questions whether it is an awareness issue. He added that the Wine Kitchen does not have adequate staff to place tables out on Sundays, and that less usage at night will be evidenced as the weather gets colder.
- Commissioner Edwards questioned whether Sundays on holiday weekends will change as we enter into November/December.
- Commissioner Allred mentioned that Sundays are always impacted by the holidays, that an 11:30am opening time is too early, and fears the lingering impacts of Covid/Delta is the next impending concern. He emphasized the need for a progressive approach on dealing with ride-share issues/loading zones, and seeks data on BPOL numbers and the amount of revenue generated for the Town.
- Director Seymour indicated that data shows Sundays in July outpaced Saturdays; then dropped slightly. He added that August results were consistent, but dropped in September.
- Commissioner Allred mentioned the importance of the business community presenting a consistent experience, and added that the temporary challenge still remains with staffing. He indicated that presently downtown on Sunday appears as it did seven or eight years ago, and he is not in support of taking a step back.
- Commissioner Miller mentioned that the Fire Marshall regulations were clear that there shall be nothing other than dining in restricted areas.
- Vice Chair Youkers suggested exploring whether there is something that can be done for Thanksgiving/Tree Lighting weekend with heavy promotion before shutting down in the winter.
- Chair Byrd indicated consistency is critical for businesses.
- Director Seymour indicated that Staff will implement and find money in the budget for marketing. Director Seymour mentioned the importance of coordinating this with local businesses.

Motion by Commissioner Edwards that the EDC recommend that the Sidewalk Dining Program remain as is through the end of December, and that the EDC encourage the Town to proactively promote that streets are closed to encourage traffic on all weekend days; seconded by Commissioner Miller. Motion passed.

b. Main Street Program Update

Director Seymour provided an update on the Main Street Program, and a request has been made to Council to proceed with an application for Tier 2 level. Director Seymour indicated the goal is to bring people in including a few from DHCD and hold a town hall meeting of local businesses and groups to inquire as to how this works. A public meeting with DHCD and representatives from other Main Street districts will be planned to become better informed and to receive input from the local community.

c. Legacy Leesburg Process Update

Director Seymour indicated that staff is working on it with plans for submission to Council in December 2021. Chair Byrd suggested this is a subject to be considered in a retreat environment in order for the EDC to compile cohesive recommendations to Council. Chair Byrd suggested that a retreat may be scheduled at any time. Chair Byrd and Director Seymour indicated for review would be the chapters which relate to economic development, and Director Seymour

would pull the specific chapters. Chair Byrd recommended holding a combined retreat to discuss the Legacy Plan and subjects for 2022.

d. Home-based Childcare

Commissioner Neel identified steps required for a home-based childcare business for the county and state, and created a Facebook post asking who operates a home-based childcare business in her neighborhood. Commissioner Neel stated that one of the home-based childcare businesses is seeking books, playground items, and toys. Chair Byrd mentioned finding a way the Town may provide support to those starting a home-based childcare business, rather than creating a support program at the County/State level, i.e., zoning permit type requirements. Chair Byrd mentioned that the SBDC may provide financing programs to help start, improve, and expand a business, and how the Town may help streamline the process.

10. New Business

a. Leesburg ED Strategic Plan

Director Seymour indicated Council has approved Staff to initiate the development of an Economic Development Strategic Plan. Discussions ensued relating to the below topics:

- A lot of historical data is now unreliable as a measure of the future.
- Are retail markets doing the same thing?
- Amazon started something that COVID is speeding up the process of shopping from home.
- Delivery services have expedited the process.
- Goal is to create a comprehensive plan with focus on businesses/consumers coming to the area (work closely with Planning & Zoning).

Director Seymour discussed opportunities for including tourism and technology zone initiatives. He mentioned by including tourism as part of an economic development plan, will assist in providing additional opportunities available through the Virginia Tourism Commission.

Additional information will also be included as part of the VA Chamber of Commerce's *Blueprint for 2030* currently under development.

11. Commissioner Comments

Commissioner Allred indicated that public safety cannot be compromised. Commissioner Allred mentioned that content and marketing are key in providing reasons for patrons to come – let them know what there is to come to for businesses in Town to be successful.

Vice Chair Youkers expressed her agreement with Commissioner Allred, and looks forward to speaking with the Fire Marshall on public safety issues, and for discussions on incentives for people to come to Town. Vice Chair Youkers added that Director Seymour and Manager Scoggins have been working diligently to make this happen.

Commissioner Miller referenced the success of the VML conference, and added that all in attendance appeared to enjoy the event. Commissioner Miller added he had the opportunity to speak to a few people about the Main Street idea, and added it was eye opening for them.

Commissioner Neel was pleased at the success of the job fair held at ION, and mentioned that it is a job of the EDC to help identify people who need jobs and what types of jobs they are seeking. Commissioner Neel is glad that Street closures will remain open until December. She added that the Diversity Commission plans to go out again to businesses in October.

Commissioner Edwards appreciates working with the EDC, and commended Director Seymour and Manager Scoggins on their efforts. Commissioner Edwards encouraged members to view the HousingForward VA presentation on the basics of affordable housing. For more information, see

[https://housingforwardva.org/news/apa-virginia-affordable-housing-webinar-2020.](https://housingforwardva.org/news/apa-virginia-affordable-housing-webinar-2020)

12. Chairman's Comments

Chair Byrd expressed his thanks, encouraged the EDC to attend the Liberty Lot meeting, and referenced the October 27th Boards and Commissions Networking Event at Ida Lee. Chair Byrd expressed his gratitude on the EDC's commitment to their important work, and appreciates sharing of expertise and knowledge.

13. Adjournment

Motion by Commissioner Edwards to adjourn the meeting at 9:00p.m.; seconded by Commissioner Neel. Motion carried.