



**Leesburg Economic Development Commission  
RETREAT MEETING MINUTES  
November 29, 2021  
8:30a.m.**

**Commission Members Present:** Eric Byrd, Marantha Edwards, Britta Neel, Brittany Youkers

**Commission Members Absent:** Curtis Allred, James Choi, Jason Miller

**Staff Liaison Present:** None

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

**Petitioners Present:** None

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**1. Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 8:30a.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 Vice Chair Youkers. Motion carried.

**4. Welcome Introduction**

**5. Discussion – Legacy Leesburg Town Plan**

Chair Byrd brought to the floor for comments and discussion the review of the EDC suggestions to the Legacy Leesburg Town Plan, and mentioned that, for the most part, the initial suggestions made remained pretty much intact. Discussions ensued relating to the following points:

- Commissioner Edwards suggested the commission not miss the opportunity to reference Councilmember Bagdasarian’s comments.
- Chair Byrd suggested the wording “providing opportunities to residents of the Town” but put back.
- Section 2.1 – Vice Chair Youkers indicated that the words “jobs for residents” were removed for purposes of enhancing tourism.
- Vice Chair Youkers inquired as to whether there is a section on tourism in the document?
- Commissioner Edwards indicated that dollars and cents is the primary area unless the section is on historic preservation.
- Manager Scoggins indicated the word “tourism” was found five times in the document.
- Page 109 - Director Seymour referenced “collaborating with local business groups, marketing and initiatives....to building the Leesburg brand.”
- Chair Byrd referenced wording generating revenue and hotel tax.
- Chair Byrd referenced Section 2.3.1 Diversity Town Tax Base – should tourism be mentioned in this section?
- Commissioner Edwards indicated it is important that the tourism industry be encouraged.

- Wording to be included such as “encourage and promote a strong tourism industry within the Town and tourism contributes to the overall tax base in multiple ways.”
- Vice Chair Youkers mentioned to define the term “day trippers.”
- Commissioner Edwards mentioned that residents are tourists in their own communities.
- Chair Byrd mentioned the importance of focusing on tourists both inside and outside of Loudoun County.
- Vice Chair Youkers mentioned “leveraging Leesburg’s unique brand.”
- Director Seymour indicated he will incorporate into the document discussed comments and changes.
- Chair Byrd is in favor of the term “visitors,” and mentioned that tourists come from out of town.
- Director Seymour indicated that the VTC uses the term “visitors,” and that tourism may take on a very narrow/wide definition when the economy ebbs and flows; and focus will be placed on local and out-of-town “day tripper” visitors.
- Chair Byrd noted that tourism is a specific, significant industry in the Town and cannot be ignored.
- Chair Byrd indicated that in Section 2.1.2 (page 108) suggestions the EDC made were included.
- Commissioner Edwards mentioned the importance to promote the ability of entrepreneurs to startup businesses.
- Chair Byrd indicated the importance of continuing to work with programs to help small businesses grow.
- Commissioner Edwards referenced “flex space” is missing and it does not tie into zoning.
- Vice Chair referenced “maintain a strategy” and to prepare an Economic Development strategy.
- Chair Byrd mentioned the last bullet point of working collaboratively and experientially; Director Seymour indicated this was tweaked a bit to “collaborating with local business groups.”
- Commissioner Edwards asked whether any changes were made to development capability in site transitions; Director Seymour indicated no changes were made.
- Section 2.1.2 – Director Seymour indicated the word “develop” was changed to “encourage.”
- Chair Byrd mentioned that “promote” means to encourage somebody else to do it; “develop” means you do it. He added that it also encourages public/private partnerships; that the Town has an active role in what is developed.
- Vice Chair Youkers believes the word “encourage” takes ownership of the Town rather than develop it.
- Director Seymour referenced the words “develop, encourage, and promote” in the tax base section.
- Vice Chair Youkers inquired as to whether the word “sustainability” would be better; promote and sustain?
- Chair Byrd believes the section referencing “Development and Capability” was all intact.
- Commissioner Edwards referenced the Liberty Street Lot redevelopment and whether comments will be made regarding compatibility with surrounding buildings.
- Commissioner Edwards believes that the Crescent District Master Plan needs to be referenced.
- Section 2.2 – Chair Byrd is in favor of this paragraph and referenced Main Street and diversifying local jobs.
- Section 2.2.1 – Chair Byrd indicated everything was intact.
- Director Seymour concurred, and that language regarding food trucks was added.
- Vice Chair Youkers suggested to add back into the document the words “consider expanding areas in Town for food trucks to brick and mortar locations.”
- Commissioner Edwards mentioned that a half dozen restaurants started up as food trucks; and that should be included in Section 2.2.1 in place of “consider expanding areas of Town for food trucks.”
- Section 2.2.2 – discussions were held regarding promoting economic equality, women, and minorities.
- Director Seymour mentioned the words “continue to identify local opportunities;” Commissioner Edwards believes the words “local” or “primarily local” would suffice.
- Manager Scoggins believes, from a standpoint of working with the business community, the Town needs to develop, work, and promote business.
- Commissioner Neel does not wish to limit opportunities and focus should be on both in and out of Leesburg.
- Vice Chair Youkers desires to keep this broad in the Economic Development strategy; and to break out into goals of local and non-local opportunities.
- Vice Chair Youkers mentioned numerous comments but only one change was made to Section 2.2.2 to the last bullet where “small women and minority owned businesses” was added.
- Director Seymour thought the words “Light and industrial flex space in Town” were important and indicated “primarily in the arc” was broadened to cover the Town.
- Section 2.3.2 regarding the words “invest town funds strategically in areas where town can grow to commercial tax base” were changed to “property tax base.”

- Chair Byrd pointed out the rationale of commercial property tax; and added if there is a residence whomever owns it pays property tax. That property is not responsible for any other tax the Town and no longer generates revenue. Chair Byrd added that a business/commercial property does generate revenue, and that several other taxes are generated from that property. Chair Byrd indicated this needs to be changed back to “commercial tax base.”
- Section 2.3.2, Commissioner Edwards inquired as to Town intention to invest funds in the Liberty Street Development.
- Director Seymour indicated Council was specific in its directive to focus on commercial/tourism.
- Vice Chair Youkers inquired as to whether Sections 2.3.2 and 2.3.3 may be combined?
- Chair Byrd is happy with Section 2.3.4.
- Chair Byrd inquired as to adding a Section 2.3.5 that focuses only on tourism.
- Commissioner Edwards noted branding is important for the Town to realize it is about the experience.
- Commissioner Edwards added there is more talk in the draft plan about data centers than tourism.
- Chair Byrd is in support of adding a Tourism Section 2.3.5 that says one of the strongest industries in the Town is tourism and is in favor a keeping a strong a strong tourism industry with dollars from outside the area.
- Director Seymour reviewed the Utilities section; Vice Chair Youkers does not believe it requires any changes.
- Chair Byrd did not see any required changes on Sections 2.4 and 2.4.1.
- Section 2.3.5 – Commissioner Edwards believes the words “should not be converted to allow” seem strong and suggested changing it to the Town not wanting exclusive residential development.
- Director Seymour referenced Lee Gate, as an example, and preventing this from happening again.
- Chair Byrd is in favor of the words “existing commercially zoned or planned land should remain commercial”.
- Chair Byrd did not see anything on Section 2.4 – Utilities.
- Director Seymour indicated that the HubZone section has to be updated.
- Chair Byrd mentioned he does not want to lose emphasis on the HubZone and to retain entrepreneurs.
- Commissioner Edwards referenced that the Planning Commission talked about solar and wind power, and the importance to specifically call out at a minimum solar power; believe the Town Plan should recognize it. She is in favor of adding the word “solar” before “internet.”
- Chair Byrd indicated that his comments were included in Section 2.6.1.
- Regarding the Economic Development section, Commissioner Edwards inquired as to whether the new fiscal analysis section was passed. Commissioner Edwards suggested adding “This strategy should follow the guidelines provided as part of the Town’s fiscal impact model.”

**ACTION ITEM:**

Motion by Chair Byrd to provide the aforementioned comments to Council; seconded by Commissioner Edwards. Motion carried.

**6. Wrap Up**

Commissioner Edwards referenced discussions at a recent Town Council meeting regarding the trailer park, and this is something which the EDC should be aware of. Chair Byrd indicated he is not in opposition. Commissioner Edwards suggested that Director Seymour be present in these discussions, as it ties back to Leesburg not just being a community of \$600,000(+) homes. Director Seymour indicated that the Town has reached out to the County and to his knowledge has not gotten back on setting up that to work on this issue. Director Seymour is of the belief that addressing affordable housing should be addressed by a committee, and that Council has requested, and staff has reached out with no response back from the County.

Commissioner Edwards recommended that Director Seymour and Staff work with the Planning Commission to inform the business community of the public hearing on the Town Plan.

**ACTION ITEM:**

Director Seymour indicated Staff will send out to the business community a Notice of Public Hearing on the Legacy Leesburg Town Plan.

**7. Adjournment**

Motion by Vice Chair Youkers to adjourn the meeting at 11:00a.m.; seconded by Commissioner Neel. Motion carried.

**b. Legacy Leesburg Town Plan**

Director Seymour updated the EDC on items to be presented to the Planning Commission and ultimately to Council. He indicated initial mark-up comments of the EDC were provided and that additional EDC comments will be provided to the Council.

**11. Commissioner Comments**

Commissioner Neel indicated that the EDC has accomplished a great deal, looks forward to the January retreat to continue its work, and thanked the commission and staff.

Commissioner Edwards thanked the commission and expressed her appreciation to staff for their hard work. She suggested that an update on the Technology and Tourism Zones be discussed at the January meeting.

Commissioner Miller is grateful for the chance to play any part in shaping what the Town becomes and is grateful for the work the EDC has done.

**12. Chairman's Comments**

Chair Byrd thanked the commission for their work and for volunteering their time and is pleased with the contributions of everybody. He added he is fortunate to work with a fantastic staff and is blessed to be working with the EDC.

**13. Adjournment**

Motion by Commissioner Miller to adjourn the meeting at 8:54pm; seconded by Commissioner Neel. Motion carried.