



**Leesburg Economic Development Commission
REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING MINUTES
Town Hall – Lower Level Conference Room 2
December 8, 2021
7:00pm.**

Commission Members Present: Eric Byrd, Marantha Edwards, Jason Miller, Britta Neel

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

Staff Liaison Present: Council Member Ara Bagdasarian

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 7:04p.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 Edwards to adopt the EDC Meeting Minutes of November 3, 2021; seconded by Commissioner Neel. Motion carried.
- 5. Petitioners**
None.
- 6. Liaison Comments**
Council Member Bagdasarian mentioned key issues such as the Mason Enterprise Center, the SBDC, the Main Street Program, and the Legacy Leesburg Town Plan. He added that Council will seek input from the EDC on economic development issues.
- 7. Staff Report**
 - Economic Development Website**
Director Seymour indicated work continues on the new website. The website will be the primary marketing and informational tool.
 - Korean Consulate**
Director Seymour mentioned that he, Mayor Burk and Council Member Steinberg attended a luncheon with the Korean Consulate General which focused on opportunities for the groups to work together. Director Seymour mentioned plans

for a cancer fund raising Tae Kwon Do tournament with international competitors to be held at the Ion International Training Center. Grand Master Eung Gil Choi and Master James Choi, of United States Tae Kwon Do Martial Arts Academy (USTMA) will collaborate on the tournament with Leesburg Economic Development, Visit Loudoun, and Ion International.

Main Street Program

Director Seymour indicated that Leesburg has been designated a Tier 2 locality, and that several town-hall style meetings are planned to allow businesses to hear from the State. Director Seymour indicated staff will be attending future Main Street training programs. Council Member Bagdasarian believes this is an opportune time to form a downtown Main Street organization.

Liberty Lot

Director Seymour indicated an RFP is currently being developed the by Town Attorney and is scheduled to go out in January.

8. Liaisons to Other Commissions and Committees

COPA

Commissioner Edwards was unable to attend the recent meeting.

Murals on Private Buildings

Commissioner Miller indicated that progress is being made and a decision is very close.

Airport Commission

Chair Byrd mentioned recent meetings with interested developers and businesses, and that discussions will be held regarding the next steps and providing a report to Council.

Technology Commission

Chair Byrd was invited to the Technology and Communications Commission meeting to share information regarding the EDC. John Binkley has been appointed liaison to the EDC.

Diversity Commission

Commissioner Neel indicated the commission joined the Leesburg Kiwanis Halloween parade for the first time and won the Best Interpretation of the Halloween Theme. She mentioned that several law firms are planning to arrange racism training, and whether the Diversity Commission may participate in such training. Commissioner Neel mentioned the positive feedback of recent visits to Leesburg businesses. Commissioner Edwards believes that a visit to Echo, a nonprofit that offers lifelong support for adults with disabilities, would provide an opportunity to understand how they may hire persons with handicaps.

9. Old Business

a. Virginia Village – Update

Commissioner Edwards recused herself from the discussion on the Virginia Village application agenda item because she has a professional, paid relationship with the applicant. Chair Byrd read the following statement prior to discussion on this item:

"For the record, Ms. Edwards has recused herself from the discussion and any action that the Commission may take on the agenda item related to the Virginia Village land development application, due to an employment relationship she has with the applicant. For the same reason, Ms. Edwards should not have solicited a particular position on this item, as she did in the postscript to her email correspondence to the full commission last evening. I trust that the remaining members of the Commission who will be participating in this discussion will disregard the postscript to Ms. Edwards' email, and that you will act on this agenda item in accordance with your own assessment of its merits.

I would also like to take this moment to remind us all that it is critical that the EDC maintain the highest ethical standard as we do our work. Protecting the integrity of the Commission's recommendations and feedback to Council is of utmost importance. That integrity is what enables the citizens of Leesburg to trust our findings, suggestions and input on matters that affect the businesses and residents of the town. Without that trust we cannot effectively advise and be taken seriously. Since I joined this body six years ago, the entire group has worked very hard to be

thoughtful, transparent, and credible. It is imperative that we continue to do so as we discuss important issues and items now and in the future."

Director Seymour indicated that the item has now gone from the Planning Commission to Council. He added that minutes have been provided to EDC members, along with a presentation to the Council Work Session. Chair Byrd mentioned that it is up to Council to request an official opinion from the EDC.

Chair Byrd indicated the consensus is that a message will be conveyed to Council. Council Member Bagdasarian recommended watching the public hearing, as Council may request feedback on how the economic impact aligns with the economic portion of the Town Plan. Chair Byrd indicated further discussions will be held at the January 5th EDC meeting.

Director Seymour mentioned that the Town usually requests the ROI financial impact, and that Town staff had compiled the project's estimated economic impact on the Town. Director Seymour suggested that Cole Fazenbaker, Town Finance, be invited to the meeting.

b. MEC/SBDC – Update

Chair Byrd recused himself from the discussion of the MEC/SBDC agenda item because he is an employee of GMU, who operates the MEC & SBDC programs, as the manager of the SBDC program being discussed.

Commissioner Edwards indicated that the Town and County of Loudoun have come to an agreement that the MEC will not continue, and will no longer fund the Mason Enterprise Center (MEC). Council Member Bagdasarian indicated the County economic development initiated withdrawing of funding, however, the Town cannot provide support after years of expressing concerns regarding the directory of the MEC and the involvement of the University. He emphasized that this is an opportunity to develop and implement programs to serve those businesses.

Commissioner Edwards indicated that the SBDC has been operating virtually for some time, and questioned should the SBDC begin to see clients in person will that occur at that business or would the County wish the SBDC be located in eastern Loudoun? Discussions ensued on how to grow the entrepreneurs (technical/medical technology) and focus to continue to grow small businesses.

Director Seymour indicated that joint Town and County meetings with each business will continue. Director Seymour believes that several functions of that building should not be lost, including the SBDC, and focus be placed specifically on entrepreneurs and small, start-up businesses.

Director Seymour indicated that Loudoun County did not receive the representation from George Mason that others have received, such as Arlington and Fairfax. Council Member Bagdasarian suggested determining a new model for the SBDC by taking the best of the programs of Mason and aspirations for the MEC.

Director Seymour pointed out the success of the SBDC, including their development of virtual programs. Commissioner Edwards mentioned the importance of the Town being distinguished as a launching pad to attract businesses and added that it is critical to try and keep the SBDC in Town. Director Seymour suggested looking at the successful Williamsburg launch pad/incubator. Council Member Bagdasarian encouraged having connectors, mentors, and advisors and that organizing events/creating opportunities for entrepreneurs such as One Million Cups and happy hours is invaluable.

10. New Business

a. Small Business Focus

Chair Byrd indicated that any budget implications items need to be brought forward. Director Seymour mentioned that the budget process is currently underway. Chair Byrd believes January retreat topics include short term budgeting priorities, present requirements of businesses, achievement goals, determining partners required, sponsors to be pulled in, and grants for which to apply.

Motion by Chair Byrd for an EDC retreat in January to discuss 2022 focus, and to include discussions on short term impact and a long-term small business support plan; seconded by Commissioner Edwards. To enable staff participation in the retreat, Commissioner Edwards suggested that a facilitator other than ED staff lead the meeting.

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.