



**Leesburg Economic Development Commission  
REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING MINUTES  
Town Hall – Council Chamber  
February 2, 2022  
7:00pm.**

**Commission Members Present:** Eric Byrd, James Choi, Marantha Edwards, Jason Miller, Britta Neel, 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:** None

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**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 Choi. Motion carried.

**4. Adoption of Member Remote Participation**

Motion by Chair Byrd to approve remote participation in the meeting of Vice Chair Youkers; seconded by Commissioner Neel. Motion carried.

**5. Approval of Minutes**

Motion by Chair Byrd to adopt the meeting minutes of January 5, 2022; seconded by Commissioner Miller. Motion carried.

**6. Petitioners**

None.

**7. Liaison Comments**

None.

**8. Staff Report**

**Small Business Awards**

Director Seymour indicated the event will be held in May 2022, the location of which is to be announced. Information will be provided to the EDC to enable it to vote on each category.

**HUBZone update held January 26<sup>th</sup>**

Director Seymour referenced a virtual HUBZone Informational Session with HUBZone Contractors National Council

representatives Kindra Dionne, Chair, and Michelle Burnett, Executive Director. A total of 55 businesses participated in the meeting. Director Seymour mentioned that shared office space that does not have a separate and designated space will no longer be considered to meet the principal office requirement.

#### **RFP Liberty Lot**

Director Seymour referenced the draft RFP; final changes are scheduled to go out in the next week or two.

#### **Joint Meeting with County DED at Leesburg Innovation**

Director Seymour mentioned a co-working space joint meeting with the County Department of Economic Development and how the two departments may support businesses; discussions included the HubZone and businesses that come in and out to utilize such space.

#### **Burn Boot Camp**

Director Seymour indicated a ribbon cutting event was held on January 28, 2022, for Burn Boot Camp.

#### **EDC Retreat**

Chair Byrd mentioned that the recently scheduled retreat had been cancelled. A new date will be set.

### **9. Liaisons to Other Commissions and Committees**

#### **COPA**

Commissioner Edwards indicated there was nothing to report; next meeting scheduled for February 7, 2022.

#### **Murals on Private Buildings**

Commissioner Miller was unable to attend the recent meeting. The Committee is close to choosing a theme which is scheduled to go to Council in March.

#### **Airport Committee**

Chair Byrd indicated the working group public information session was well attended. Committee will compile recommendations to Council for the March agenda. Discussions focused on the development of the 40 acres at airport.

#### **Diversity Commission**

Commissioner Neel mentioned the successful business visits made by the Diversity Chairman Linda McCray and Mayor Kelly Burk. She noted the recent meeting focused on Black History month; further discussions will be held next Wednesday.

#### **Planning Commission**

Vice Chair Youkers indicated the Virginia Village application was reviewed by Council with no changes.

### **10. Old Business**

#### **Main Street Program**

Director Seymour provided a brief description of the program.

- Regarding the issue of whether all businesses are required to participate, he indicated if one business in a designated area wanted to move forward, then the program could proceed.
- State recommendations for a successful kick-off is to begin in a small area and build from there; the map is a starting point. Of importance to Director Seymour is to include the arts district.
- Virtual informational meetings are scheduled with Kyle Meyer, Community Revitalization Specialist, Department of Housing and Community Development, Virginia Main Street Program for:
  - Monday, February 28<sup>th</sup> from 6-7:30pm
  - Tuesday, March 1<sup>st</sup> from 8:30pm-10pm

Chair Byrd encouraged the EDC's participation in the virtual meeting in a listening role capacity. Chair Byrd inquired as to whether specific short-term budget implications would require EDC recommendations. Director Seymour reported that no fee was imposed for the application. Director Seymour mentioned the request to Council for a new position in the Economic Development Department to focus on the Main Street Program, small and startup businesses and tourism. Chair Byrd recommended for discussion at the March meeting the subject of getting such a program started in Town.

Director Seymour emphasized the importance to educate the business community about the program and determine their interest. He stated it is not his intent to convince the business community either way, but to provide information so that community could decide if the Main Street program was right for them.

Commissioner Edwards mentioned that many positive outcomes may come from this program. In response to Commissioner Miller's inquiry regarding timetables, Director Seymour indicated there is no timeframe for Tiers 1-2, and Tier 2 to 3 takes, on average, one year. Discussions ensued regarding establishing a 501c3 and any benefits of proceeding to Tier 4. Commissioner Edwards asked whether the Main Street manager would be an employee of a corporation with a board of directors made up of investors, or a Town Department of Economic Development employee. Director Seymour indicated upon the establishment of a 501c3, that entity would be responsible for hiring a manager, not the Town.

Chair Byrd mentioned part of the challenge is the initial start, and the availability of some seed funding to have a person to meet with people and sensibly inform them so they can make an informed decision regarding participation. Chair Byrd believes that will enable businesses to work together as a community (the core of what Main Street is about). In response to Commissioner Miller's inquiry as to why the Town would not advocate for the Main Street Program, Chair Byrd indicated that advocating and convincing are different in people's minds.

Director Seymour noted that buy-in from local businesses is very important to the success of a program. It is critical that businesses understand and make their own decisions. Director Seymour indicated it is important to convey factors that play into the program, and if the local business community chooses to move forward the Town will do everything to support it. Commissioner Miller mentioned to point out we are *not* convincing businesses to join. Chair Byrd concurred so there are no misunderstandings.

Commissioner Miller inquired as to the amount of grant money available for various tiers of the program. Director Seymour mentioned a grant is set specifically for the development of the program which may be utilized to hire a professional organization to develop the plan. Vice Chair Youkers is pleased this important issue is being discussed.

**ACTION ITEM:** Chair Byrd requested specifics on the grant process be presented at the March meeting.

## **11. New Business**

### **Small Business Support Options**

Chair Byrd mentioned the need for conversations regarding support for small businesses, the incubator ending in June, Main Street Program, tourism zones, arts and cultural district, and technology zones. He added that Council will be seeking EDC recommendations. Chair Byrd elaborated on identifying the businesses and the types of support they may require (needs and marketing).

Commissioner Edwards initiated discussions regarding skilled employees. She referenced an individual who has not gone to college that could be hired by a business in Town, and whether funds are available to pay a business to provide training; important for the future of kids coming out of high school that are not on the college track. Chair Byrd mentioned the vocational approach. Director Seymour referenced a previous Manufacturing Day event with local school students which focused on employment opportunities in Town. Director Seymour mentioned a recent meeting with Amy Wycks, Director of Utilities, and Loudoun schools expanding upon that program. Director Seymour noted it was interesting to learn the number of Town jobs that pay \$50,000+ that do not require a college education. He referenced two-year colleges which offer training programs, and the importance of parents understand children do not necessarily initially require a four-year degree to be successful. Chair Byrd mentioned positive feedback was received on the event, and indicated companies look to recruit people who seek a long-term career in hospitality.

Commissioner Edwards mentioned the great work of the Diversity Commission and Manager Scoggins and the importance of small business support. She mentioned providing translating materials and making an interpreter available. Chair Byrd indicated that the SBDC put a person in place to translate to businesses. Commissioner Miller noted a hurdle is that businesses in Town have little input and cited the example of a non-English speaking individual would have a difficult time going through health department documents. He added that to speak to existing and potential businesses would be extremely valuable. Commissioner Neel mentioned the importance of determining gaps that need filling.

Chair Byrd mentioned the possibility of an advisory group for businesses. He pointed out the difficulty of providing coaching, and that advising/having a mentor is an entirely different thing. Chair Byrd mentioned the county EDA has a similar program, whether that type of program would work in Town, and ways for the Town to get involved. Commissioner Edwards questioned whether an amount should be placed in the budget for the SBDC, and whether that amount should be increased for these programs (a budget line to support small businesses). Director Seymour indicated that the Town's portion of the SBDC is to provide a physical location. The County is responsible for providing the state match. The FY23 County budget includes \$139,000 for the SBDC.

#### **EDC Retreat**

Chair Byrd opened the floor to schedule an EDC Retreat and discuss specific areas of focus such as liaison structure. Motion by Chair Byrd to schedule an EDC Retreat for February 24, 2022, from 8am-12pm; seconded by Commissioner Neel. Motion carried.

#### **12. Commissioner Comments**

Vice Chair Youkers thanked the Commission for allowing remote participation and is excited to see movement on Main Street Program. She is looking forward to discussions at the retreat.

Commissioner Choi mentioned to be courageous and tackle new things at the EDC, and the benefit of educating people on economic input. He is in favor of providing checkpoints of where a business should be in one to three years and expressed his excitement about the Main Street Program. He indicated with hard work he hopes for a successful tournament with a goal of great economic impact to Leesburg.

Commissioner Neel believes the Main Street Program is great and that planning for the next step is good. She is in favor of the inclusion of medical coverage, and the idea of helping retain new and existing businesses in Town. Commissioner Neel appreciates how the Commission thinks outside the box and in a positive direction.

Commissioner Miller referenced the opportunity to discuss the big picture, what the EDC can do, and that it does what it talks about doing. He mentioned the positive energy around the Main Street Program and is confident the EDC can make it happen despite the mechanics.

Commissioner Edwards was happy to secure a date to hear from Kyle Meyer, and the benefits of the Main Street Program. Commissioner Edwards pointed out that missing on Eastbound Route 7 is a historic district sign and inquired whether Director Seymour or Manager Scoggins could reach out to Calvin to obtain a replacement. Additionally, she inquired as to whether the Planning Commission held conversations regarding shared parking concepts, and believes this would be helpful in discussions regarding historic downtown or when small businesses come in. Commissioner Edwards expressed her appreciation for the opportunity to work with the smart people on the EDC.

#### **13. Chairman's Comments**

Chair Byrd appreciated the dialogue and ideas and the Commission showing up to do this work. He added that much work can be done if the EDC chooses important things, and its key function is to move forward whenever possible.

#### **14. Adjournment**

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