



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

<u>Commission Members Present:</u>	Eric Byrd, Robert Cusack, Marantha Edwards, Jason Miller, Brittany Youkers
<u>Commission Members Absent:</u>	Linda McCray, Britta Neel
<u>Staff Liaison Present:</u>	None
<u>Staff Present:</u>	Russell Seymour, Director, Economic Development Melanie Scoggins, Business Development & Retention Manager Allison Wood, Small Business Development & Tourism Specialist
<u>Petitioners Present:</u>	None

1. **Call to Order**
The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.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 Cusack. Motion carried.
4. **Approval of Minutes**
Motion by Commissioner Cusack to adopt the meeting minutes of October 5, 2022; seconded by Commissioner Edwards.
5. **Petitioners**
None.
6. Motion by Commissioner Edwards to move visiting speaker Kevin Ash to Item 6 the agenda; seconded by Commissioner Edwards. Motion carried.

Proposed Boutique Hotel

Chair Byrd introduced Kevin Ash, of Ellisdale Construction and Development. Mr. Ash acquired the property at 208 South King Street and mentioned that he retains a buyer’s right to use to redevelop the property for a 42-44 room boutique hotel. Mr. Ash reviewed details for the project, presented a first rendering of the hotel, and described the hotel’s planned amenities. Topics of discussion included height restrictions, a site plan process, zoning ordinance modifications, options for the lobby/bar/food service, a rooftop bar, and meeting space. Mr. Ash indicated that a higher weekend occupancy rate is expected, and that parking is an obstacle. Valet parking is planned for Friday, Saturday, and Sunday.

Mr. Ash indicated that an application with rendering is expected in November, and a presentation for a Certificate of Appropriateness will be brought before the BAR on December 18th. Mr. Ash encourages support of the EDC for this project, and if the opportunity arises that the commissioners speak with Council. Mr. Ash believes there will be much support to move forward on the project.

Chair Byrd mentioned the consensus is the group is in favor of the use of a hotel. Commissioner Cusack believes the Town could benefit from a hotel and that there will be much support for the project. Commissioner Miller indicated that if the Town wants and needs a hotel the difficulty in developing it in assembling parcels.

7. **Liaison Comments**

None.

8. **Staff Report**

Tourism/Technology Zones

Director Seymour indicated that a presentation was made to Council at its recent work session. Topics of discussion included incentive programs, gap financing (what taxes are being paid by what businesses). Director Seymour noted that a tourism zone can apply for a gap financing program; one of ten requirements from the State before an application may be made. He added that the Director of Business Development for VTC oversees the gap financing program. Over a period of ten years the program has had ten successful applications, and the process may take six months to three years. Director Seymour indicated that there are 74 tourism zones in multiple zones throughout the State, and 39 technology zones.

DED Strategic Plan

Director Seymour indicated that five responses were received on the RFP. Proposals are being reviewed and it is anticipated that a consultant will be on board by the end of December. He indicated that a six-to-nine-month turnaround is expected.

Main Street Program

Director Seymour indicated that the program is scheduled to be presented to Council in January for recommendation. Successful outreach meetings have been conducted with businesses by Allison Wood and Stephanie Slocum. Ms. Wood elaborated on the conveyance of information to the groups, information sharing sessions, and open floor discussions. An overwhelmingly positive consensus has been received, and minor negative feedback has been assuaged. Ms. Wood indicated that two large group meetings targeted at businesses and residents are scheduled for November 9th and 14th, at 7pm, at the Ida Lee Recreation Center.

Tourism

Ms. Wood mentioned the benefit of tying downtown Leesburg into the Harry Potter Forbidden Forest Experience at Morven Park. Four selfie stations have been set up to draw attendees into downtown. The selfie-stations are branded with the Locally Leesburg logo, as well as having a QR to take visitors to the website page. The website page has information and a map, as well as a list of businesses promoting themed specials. The goal of the campaign to drive tourism to downtown throughout the holiday season.

Downtown Parking

Director Seymour indicated that parking meters are being phased out to a phone app system and mentioned that a quarterly status report is provided to Council by the Deputy Town Manager.

Tents/Shade Structures

Director Seymour indicated that the tent/shade structure ordinance approved by Council is continuing. Staff will provide information and direction to Council as to the number of tents downtown and guidelines/regulations for aesthetic and height issues.

Retail Office/Flex Vacancy Rates

Director Seymour presented a report on retail office and flex vacancy rates. He referenced the Costar report, which is a platform of commercial real estate information, and analytics across office, industrial, retail, multifamily, hospitality and land sectors. Discussions ensued regarding the future of office space and how flex space is part of the answer.

- Interesting fact that the retail rate is low
- The future retail business model (reinvent itself)
- Repurposing of retail space
- Significant decrease in office space vacancy rate over a ten-year period
- Market rates have risen since 2012
- Office vacancy rate of 9.5% - lowest point in 12 years
- Town retail vacancy rate is 4%
- Loudoun County vacancy rate is 6.6% (lowest it has ever been)
- Flex office space (multi-use) is the largest producer of use of space
- Currently there is a shortage of flex office space in the Town

9. **Liaisons for Other Commissions**

Airport Commission – No update per Chair Byrd.

COPA – Meeting to be held next week.

Commissioner Cusack mentioned that his partners have helped research Triangle Park and are willing to come and talk with the EDC.

10. **Old Business**

Compass Creek Self Storage Project

Director Seymour mentioned that the Town hopes this project will tie into the hotel industry. The developer has submitted a project

request to build a large self-storage facility on the parcel; the Planning Department has been working with the three submissions. The Town is looking towards capital investment/hospitality, and that the Planning and Economic Development departments are on the same page. The subject will be placed on the December 2022 agenda for recommendation to Council.

11. New Business

Commissioner Edwards brought to the attention of a BAR member the conditions various buildings around the Town. The façade grant subject came up, and she indicated it would be an interesting time particularly with the Main Street Program (an opportunity for the EDC and BAR to bring up the levels of the buildings). Chair Byrd expressed interest in how that could be done and mentioned that only an Economic Development Authority may provide a grant, but *not* the Town.

Commissioner Miller inquired as to what type of enforcement the Town has over privately-owned public buildings. Commissioner Edwards believes there is no enforcement. Chair Byrd suggested the subject be noted for future discussion.

12. Commissioner Comments

Commissioner Edwards expressed her thanks to the Staff and mentioned that she attended the Halloween Parade, and it was well attended.

Commissioner Miller mentioned the EDC would benefit from a quarterly generated parking report for its review. He also provided photographs of the Personal Property Mural at Virginia Village. Commissioner Miller expressed his intention to speak with a representative from the Town to obtain a free self-defense class for employees.

Vice Chair Youkers thanked Staff for its amazing work and looks forward to the Main Street Program.

Commissioner Cusack mentioned a lot of good information was discussed at the meeting and he looks forward to Main Street Program.

13. Chairman's Comments

Chair Byrd informed the EDC of his resignation as Chairman, and that the December 2022 meeting will be his last. Chair Byrd expressed his thanks and appreciation and added that he has enjoyed his tenure as Chair.

14. Adjournment

Motion by Commissioner Edwards to adjourn the meeting at 8:33p.m., seconded by Commissioner Cusack. Motion carried.