



**Leesburg Economic Development Commission
REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING MINUTES
Town Hall – Council Chamber
March 6, 2024**

Commission Members Present: Robert Cunningham, Robert Cusack, Jason Miller, Angel Miranda

Commission Members Absent: Monica Pindell

Remote Participation: Linda McCray, Tony Tallent

Staff Liaisons Present: None

Staff Present: Russell Seymour, Director, Economic Development
Melanie Scoggins, Assistant Director, Economic Development
Allison Wood, Small Business Development & Tourism Specialist
Elaine Turney, Administrative Associate

1. **Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 7: 00p.m. by Director Seymour.

2. **Roll Call**

Director Seymour conducted the Calling of the Roll; and stated that a quorum was present.

3. **Adoption of the Agenda**

On a motion by Commissioner Cusack, seconded by Commissioner Tallent, the agenda was adopted.

On a motion by Commissioner Cusack seconded by Commissioner Miller, the EDC agreed to remote participation in the meeting of Vice Chair McCray and Commissioner Tallent.

4. **Approval of Minutes**

On a motion by Commissioner Tallent, seconded by Commissioner Cusack, the minutes of February 7, 2024 were adopted.

5. **Petitioners**

None.

6. **The Clothing Closet – Melissa Barton (Presentation)**

7. **Crossroads Music Festival – Amy Bobchek (Presentation)**

8. **Liaison Comments**

None.

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

Zoning Commission – nothing to report.

Chair Cunningham mentioned several liaison vacancies and asked if anyone is interested to let staff know.

10. **Staff Report**

Wayfinding Signs – Director Seymour mentioned staff are working with the Public Works Department to update and add additional locations for the signs.

Youth Career Job Fair – Director Seymour mentioned the extremely successful youth career job fair held at Loudoun County High School on February 20th, 2024. In attendance were 40 employers and 200 job seekers. Staff partnered with other organizations, which resulted in a greatly reduced cost to the Town (\$500).

Quarterly HUBZone Meeting – Director Seymour mentioned the upcoming meeting for March 7th with featured speaker Michelle Burnette. He added that over the years the HUBZone meetings have picked up momentum and expressed his thanks to Commissioner Cusack and Melanie Scoggins for their efforts. Commissioner Cusack mentioned that, during a Department of Energy HUBZone meeting, Michelle Burnette gave a shout out to the Town of Leesburg for its involvement in the HUBZone.

Ribbon Cuttings – Director Seymour mentioned two upcoming ribbon cuttings for The Global Loal and Cycle Love. He added that another new tech-based company has recently leased space in Leesburg.

11. **Old Business**

Public Plaza/Open Space/Walkable Downtown

Chair Cunningham opened the floor for discussions on closing the streets between Market and Loudoun Streets on Fridays and Saturdays.

- Orange and white barriers are not welcoming
- An elevated stage at the crosswalk from the Leesburg Diner towards Delirium
- Allow for benches for performing arts watching
- The Courthouse to become a people’s plaza
- Possibility of people being upset at closing down the “core”
- A number of successful towns that have done this - NYC, Ann Arbor, Greensboro, San Francisco, Charlestown, Old Towne Alexandria, Montreal
- Staffing/funding may be an issue
- Importance of *making it happen*; make sure the actual desire is there
- Provide support to hire staff
- Required staff to close the streets: four individuals and two police officers
- Option of volunteers from the Leesburg Movement
- EDC supports the idea of helping Parks & Rec to allow streets to close Fridays and Saturdays
- If streets are closed, streets become sidewalks
- Cannot have musicians in the streets

MOTION:

On a motion by Commissioner Miranda, seconded by Commissioner Miller, on March 11, 2024 the EDC will present to Council a recommendation to close the streets:

Given the positive economic impact, the Leesburg Economic Development Commission supports the idea of closing King Street between Loudoun and Market Streets on Friday and Saturday between Memorial Day and Labor Day.

Vacancies in the Town of Leesburg

Commissioner Miller inquired as to whether an open house event is held for vacancies in Town. Director Seymour indicated that open houses are not held, but that staff works with each vacant building owner/real estate agencies to fill those buildings. Director Seymour mentioned that, according to Costar, Downtown Leesburg currently has a vacancy rate of 3.2%. Commissioner Miller expressed that, while he does not disagree with the statistics and we are not yet in a crisis mode, the vacancy rate appears greater than 3.2%. Discussions ensued.

12. **New Business**

Leesburg Movement Budget Item - \$1,200

Chair Cunningham is in favor of the funds being used to support the Crossroads Music Festival. Commissioners Miranda and Cusack agree. Commissioner Miller preferred to recuse himself since he is a member of the Leesburg Movement.

2024 Leesburg Business Awards – May 1, 2024

Director Seymour mentioned the upcoming business awards which will be held at Home2 Suites by Hilton. As a result of voting of the members of the EDC, a winner in each of the six award categories has been chosen, and nominations are open to the public for the People’s Choice Awards.

13. **Commissioner’s Comments**

Commissioner Tallent expressed his sadness at the closing of Delirium and urges the EDC to focus on developing ways for businesses to stay in Town.

Commissioner Miranda appreciated the presentations, and thanked Staff for their work. He mentioned the need to push forth the recommendation on closing the streets, and the importance of how to fix it.

Commissioner Miller mentioned the need for a vibrant downtown.

Commissioner Cusack appreciated the presentations. He indicated he will attend next week’s Monday and Tuesday meetings and speak with the Council regarding street closures. Of importance is how it gets done as opposed to not getting it done.

14. **Chairman’s Comments**

Chair Cunningham appreciated the presentations. He referenced recent newspaper articles in which the Town was mentioned (Compass Creek, data center near Luck Stone Quarry, the Leesburg Movement, Loudoun County seeking board members to add to the Visit Loudoun operation). He is in favor of the recommendation to Council to open the streets and of making Leesburg a destination town. Chair Cunningham mentioned the potential positive impact of removing the fence around the Leesburg Court House.

15. **Adjournment**

On a motion by Commissioner Miranda, seconded by Commissioner Cusack, the meeting was adjourned at 8:37p.m.