

Avery County Economic Development Committee

August 27, 2018

Minutes

The Avery County Economic Development Committee (EDC) met at 5:00 pm on Monday August 27, 2018 at the Avery County Commissioners Board Room at the Avery County Administrative Complex, located at 175 Linville Street, Newland, NC 28657.

Present for the meeting were: Ken Walter, Larry Hazen, Susan Siirila, Carmen Lacey, Kate Gavenus (guest), Tim Phillips, Phillip Barrier, David Pollard and Mike Reese (guest).

Absent were: Trey Oakley, Jesse Pope.

The meeting began at 5:05 pm, and was moderated by Chairperson Ken Walter.

Ms. Siirila introduced guest Mike Reese. Mr. Reese shared his education and work experience with the group.

Mr. Hazen indicated a change that was needed in the August 13, 2018 meeting minutes, regarding the purchase of photographs. Ms. Siirila will change the minutes accordingly and will make available revised copies of the minutes from that meeting. A motion for this to occur was made by Carmen Lacey, seconded by David Pollard and approved unanimously.

Mr. Barrier indicated that on the matter of the high speed internet grant, an agreement should be in place by Friday, August 31, 2018. He stated that he is hopeful that an announcement regarding this can be made on Monday, September 3, 2018. He indicated that a public hearing is scheduled for Tuesday, September 4, 2018. At that public hearing, the matter of funding for the following EDC projects will be discussed: (1) half-page ad in the Chamber of Commerce Business Guide (2) video re-construction, and (3) Junior Achievement.

Mr. Hazen asked, regarding the advertisement in the Business Guide, what the difference was between that and the advertisement in Carolina Mountain Life

magazine. He noted prior issues of advertising in the local area brought up by Avery County Commissioners at the joint meeting held in July 2018. Mr. Barrier and Ms. Pepple responded, noting that there is a larger distribution area for the Business Guide, and that Carolina Mountain Life magazine is a quarterly periodical. Ms. Pepple added that the Business Guide has a one year shelf life, is distributed in over 80 locations in the High Country, 90 visitors' centers & chambers in North Carolina, as well as many surrounding areas and in airports. Ms. Lacey added that the Business Guide is geared toward tourism, whereas Carolina Mountain Life magazine is designed for tourists and local readers. Mr. Barrier stated that we need to get the public hearing behind us before moving ahead with plans for advertising in the Business Guide.

Mr. Walter discussed the article in the Avery Journal newspaper that appeared after the EDC's joint meeting with the Avery County Commissioners in July 2018. He stated "we cannot afford another article like that." He stated that some individuals remember negative information that came about from the practices of former EDC boards, and that we do not want the same thing to happen again. Mr. Hazen stated that individuals had said to him "sorry that happened" regarding the negativity projected on the EDC via the Avery Journal newspaper article. Mr. Walter noted that the article that appeared in the Avery Post newspaper was more favorable.

Mr. Barrier stated that the cost of an advertisement in the Business Guide would be a one-time cost of \$500.00. Mr. Walter asked if we could run this expenditure, and the other expenditures, by the Commissioners before the public hearing. Mr. Barrier stated that he would do so. Ms. Pepple will put together a list of how advertising in the Business Guide would differ from advertising in Carolina Mountain Life magazine.

Mr. Barrier reported that the old Cannon Memorial Hospital building has changed hands, and that there will be a press release forthcoming.

He stated that he and Mr. Walter attended a forum with the NC State Economic Development Prosperity Zone for Western NC. He was allowed to present information on four available commercial properties. The properties that he presented information on were (1) Charles Cannon building in Newland, (2)

Pineola property on Hwy. 181, (3) the Mike Aldridge Trucking property and (4) the J.C. Faw (old Lowes Foods) property. He noted that there is one representative of the above-noted group that looks at retail properties only. He stated that the representative will be advised as to how much we need another grocery store in the area. Mr. Hazen asked if we would continue to pursue the creation of a list of available commercial properties. Mr. Barrier stated that he would continue to work on same, as he has time. He noted that in preparation for the forum, he reached out to 12 commercial property owners for permission to discuss their property, and only heard back from 4. Mr. Pollard asked about the Sluder Floral property. Mr. Barrier stated that he could not reach the property owner, and that he had not heard back from the owners of the IRC property in Newland. Ms. Gavenus asked if the website for the High Country Council of Governments listed available commercial properties. Mr. Barrier stated that it did, and that such a list could be shown on the Avery County website as well for those who may wish to relocate to the area could see. He gave an example of a doctor wishing to relocate to the area, seeking office space, being able to access the list of available property from the websites.

Mr. Walter stated that in terms of our partnership with Allen Cook, MCC's Small Business Center Director, he had learned that one of the businesses that had been looking to relocate to Avery County had fallen through, but that a second employer looking to relocate to Avery County may still be going forward.

Mr. Barrier shared that a down payment had been made on the old U.S. Textiles property, but that it would be at least a year before an announcement would be made about it.

Mr. Walter asked for input on the images to be superimposed on the logo, as the data needed to go to Alex Amaya, graphic artist. The group reviewed the video. Mr. Barrier noted that permission must be sought for use of a photograph from the person who took the photograph. He noted that none of the photographs shown in the current video belong to us. The group agreed that we should advise Amaya that we wish to see the photograph shown on each of the logo images bleed downward to show in the wording below the logo. For example, on the photograph showing autumn/pumpkins, that the photograph of autumn leaves & pumpkins should stretch down into the lettering of the words beneath the logo.

On the issue of a solid “A” on the logo, or having the various photographs bleed down in to the lettering below the logo, a motion was made to have the photographs continue into the lettering by Mr. Hazen; it was seconded by Ms. Lacey and approved unanimously. It was determined that we would allow the graphic artist to use judgment on what to do with the photographs that would not blend well, for example white on white in the photographs showing snow.

Mr. Hazen note that we cannot use the video because we do not own the photographs. Ms. Pepple and Mr. Barrier discussed waivers. Ms. Pepple stated that many of the photographs in the possession of the Chamber of Commerce come from submissions from their members.

Mr. Walter noted that if monies are approved for our use at the public hearing, that we will have \$650.00 with which to pay Amaya. He stated that since Amaya’s time goes at roughly \$20.00 per hour, we should not have him continue to work until we are sure of the way we want to proceed, use up the \$650.00, and have to go back for more funding.

Mr. Walter asked Mr. Barrier and Mr. Phillips if the EDC would continue with the current number of members, or if we would seek to add one more member due to the vacancy left by Roy Reynolds’ departure. Mr. Barrier stated that we would have to take applications from those who may be interested, and that it would be approximately a three month process. So, we would be looking at the first of 2019 for the addition of a new EDC member. He stated that he would be open to taking applications for the position.

Mr. Barrier stated that he has learned from the Town of Newland that they will sponsor a Home and Harvest Festival in October. He will attend, and look at who is there in the way of crafts people, and see who might want to participate in other venues. He suggested that a vendor site, possibly manned by volunteers, would be worth pursuing. He suggested a building where vendors, artisans, crafts people could sell their products without actually having to be on-site. Mr. Walter noted that among crafts people, there is a network in place through which information can be shared. An example was given on a gallery in Blowing Rock which is manned by artisans who basically ‘take a turn’ at operating the gallery.

Mr. Walter stated that we may have a guest speaker, David Huskins.

He asked Mr. Pollard if there was other information he could pass along following his presentation to the group at the last meeting. Mr. Pollard advised that he has spoken with Charles at Nutrien (formerly CPS) in Newland. This is the agency that will print the Christmas tree tags showing the logo. Mr. Pollard asked about putting a website address on the tags. Mr. Barrier stated that the Avery County website address should appear on the tags. Mr. Walter will ask Dennis (County IT Manager) to send the logo to Mr. Pollard.

Mr. Hazen asked if band concerts at the band shell on Riverwalk had been discontinued. Ms. Pepple and Ms. Lacey advised him that they had been discontinued.

Mr. Walter asked Ms. Lacey what her ideas were on marketing. She responded that she had none at this time. Mr. Walter asked if we should tell Frank Ruggiero (Marketing Rep. at Grandfather Mountain) that we are in a holding pattern. Ms. Lacey stated that she wanted to wait until we had Mr. Pope available before proceeding with Mr. Ruggiero. She suggested that this may happen at the September meeting, if having Mr. Huskins speak was not locked in yet. Mr. Walter stated that we could possibly bring Mr. Ruggiero in for assistance in fashioning the half-page advertisement for the Business Guide if the money we seek is approved at the public hearing.

Mr. Walter asked when the community kitchen at the new agriculture building would be available. Mr. Barrier stated that it is currently available. Mr. Hazen stated that he had made Dick Larson of Feeding Avery Families aware of the availability of the community kitchen and linked him with Jerry Moody, agricultural extension agent.

Mr. Barrier stated that the Avery County Fair starts tomorrow, August 28, 2018.

Mr. Hazen stated that since the logo had been developed, that we need to do something in the way of marketing-that we need both a short term and long term marketing plan, or to get a plan in place to get the logo out to the public. Mr. Phillips asked about doing a press release. Mr. Hazen, Mr. Barrier and Ms. Pepple noted that the logo is now shown on our websites. Ms. Lacey stated that Babette

McAuliffe could do an article in the Carolina Mountain Life magazine. Mr. Walter added that when the video is complete, that it will be made available on the county's website.

Ms. Pepple stated that she has been advised by their marketing person that to include the County of Avery logo and the Chamber of Commerce information on the cover of the Business Guide would be too confusing, and should not be done. If we purchase an ad in the guide, however, it would be fine to show the County of Avery logo and the wording as planned.

Mr. Hazen asked about grants that might be available to assist with marketing. He stated that grant money should be available from various sources. Ms. Siirila will pursue this with Rebecca Bloomquist, High Country Council of Governments.

Mr. Pollard asked for permission to visit wineries in the area and pursue having the logo included on labeling on wine bottles. It was agreed that would be acceptable.

Mr. Hazen reported on recent activity with Leadership Avery, and shared that the Leadership Avery group had recently had a day in which they visited government entities in the area such as the jail, courthouse, etc. He stated that it was a very beneficial outing.

Mr. Walter asked the committee members to think about inviting the Avery Journal and Avery Post newspapers to do articles regarding the EDC and what areas we are targeting.

The next meeting is scheduled for September 24, 2018.

A motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Hazen, seconded by Ms. Pepple and approved unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 6:05 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan P. Siirila