

Avery County Economic Development Committee
November 20, 2017
Minutes

The Avery County Economic Development Committee (EDC) met at 5:00 pm on Monday November 20, 2017 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:

Larry Hazen	Phillip Barrier	Roy Reynolds
Ken Walter	Susan Siirila	
Carmen Lacey	Mark Parlier	

Absent were: Trey Oakley, Tim Phillips

The meeting convened at 5:05 pm and was moderated by Ken Walter.

Mr. Walter asked for a motion to approve of the minutes of the September 2017 meeting. Ms. Lacey made the motion, a second was offered by Mr. Hazen & same was approved unanimously.

Regarding the position of EDC vice president. A motion was made by Mr. Hazen for Mr. Parlier to continue as vice president, a second was offered by Ms. Lacey & same was approved unanimously.

Templates of new business cards for EDC members, showing the new county logo, were presented to members. Mr. Barrier stated that new business cards will be printed and available later.

Mr. Barrier addressed the issue of a disclaimer or waiver for use by EDC members during exchanges with community or business representatives. Mr. Walter asked "how do we handle this when we are out and about?" Mr. Barrier stated that he had stated earlier his thought that two (2) EDC team members be present during interactions with others should be adhered to. He stated that he was comfortable with that, and that nothing needed to be written on paper, no involvement or direction from lawyers was necessary, etc. Ms. Lacey stated that she felt EDC team members should articulate that we can make no promises, and note that all decisions would ultimately come back to the county commissioners in discussions with individuals. Mr. Hazen and Mr. Walter noted that they had shared a copy of the EDC mission statement with Tommy Burlison, and that he agreed the statement should be sufficient. Mr. Barrier asked Ms. Siirila if she agreed with the consensus on the issue of a disclaimer. Ms. Siirila deferred to Mr.

Reynolds. Mr. Reynolds stated that EDC members need to identify themselves as volunteers, information gatherers and suggested that the wording “advisory board” appear on EDC team members’ business cards.

Mr. Barrier spoke on the issue of high speed internet. He stated that the matter did not initially look good with High Country Council of Governments, but that later Gov. Roy Cooper said “yes” to Avery County having high speed internet. He noted that Avery County is at stage 2 on getting grant money for high speed internet. He also stated that the grant to private sector providers had still not been granted—the deadline was June 30, 2017, and the funds have still not been allocated. Mr. Barrier noted that if we get money from the other grant, we might be in good shape for high speed internet provision.

Mr. Barrier noted that in the way of new business development, the IRC building in Newland has been sold. The purchaser was Structall, based in Florida. Mr. Barrier stated that they may spend some money winterizing the building soon, but that in the spring they will necessarily spend \$100k plus on building renovations. Mr. Barrier stated that the company representatives will not commit to how many jobs may be created in Avery County, and that it may, or may not be, a distribution center. Mr. Barrier stated that information that appeared in the local newspaper actually should not have appeared. EDC team members agreed that when the business owner is ready, that we will offer support.

Mr. Barrier stated that he had attended an open house at the new Beech Mountain facility, purchased by Eagles Nest (Eagles Nest Marketplace). He stated that there is no restaurant there, no retail, etc. He stated that it had been rumored that the facility would be open by the beginning of ski season, but that it does not appear that will happen. He noted that the same group had purchased the old Time Square building in Elk Park, and that a restaurant is slated to open there soon. Mr. Barrier noted that they are to have a reasonably priced menu, and a drive-thru for doughnuts and coffee.

Mr. Hazen indicated that he had heard there was talk of a hotel in Banner Elk. Mr. Barrier replied that there has been talk going on for quite some time. He stated that Tommy Burlison had suggested the old hospital building, but that the hotel chain that may be interested in a Banner Elk location favored the old Hardees location, across the road from the Best Western.

Mr. Barrier stated that he had driven by the new location for the State Employees Credit Union, and that it appears to be coming along well. He stated that he has seen the drawings for the building which will be erected at the site, and that it will have a modern appearance. Mr. Barrier also stated that he has contacted Faw Properties, owners of the Newland Lowes Foods location, and that there is nothing happening with the property.

Regarding the employment of an EDC consultant, Mr. Barrier stated that the EDC team has money and that it can be spent as the team wants. He noted that the gentleman from Mars Hill may be considered.

Mr. Walter spoke about a link from the Avery County web page to an EDC page. Mr. Barrier stated that once the logo is approved, he can speak with Dennis (Dennis Holland, Avery Co. IT Coordinator), and pass along to him the data we want on a web page. Mr. Hazen is working on the same project, and the flow will basically be Hazen to Barrier to Holland. Mr. Hazen noted that one of the things we can put on the page is a list of available buildings in the area.

Mr. Barrier spoke about the new county logo. He stated that we needed to know how to manipulate the image, how to superimpose pictures, etc. Mr. Hazen will coordinate conversations in which this data can be secured from the ASU students involved in the logo-making process. Mr. Walter suggested that Dennis Holland be involved in conversations about how to use and manipulate the logo. Mr. Walter stated that we needed a motion for budgeting money as a reward to each of the ASU students involved in the logo-making process. Such a motion was set forth by Ms. Lacey and seconded by Mr. Hazen. A \$500.00 payment will be processed for four (4) ASU students as noted above. Mr. Barrier stated that he will need the names and addresses of the students for finance purposes.

It was proposed that an awards ceremony be held, at which all EDC team members could be present and pass out the award checks to the students. Ms. Lacey noted that time is of the essence, as the current school semester is coming to an end, and that exams will happen soon, followed by students leaving for holiday break.

Mr. Walter suggested that EDC members make the awards presentation rather than the county commissioners. Mr. Hazen will work toward getting press coverage for the awards ceremony. Mr. Walter and Mr. Hazen will work out logistics for the presentation. It was also noted that discretion regarding the amount of the payments, and the issuance of payments at all, will be important to remember.

Mr. Barrier shared information with the EDC team regarding the High Country Impact Fund. This is funding for small business start-up projects. Mr. Barrier and Mr. Walter attended a meeting in Boone at which they learned about the program. Examples of individuals who have benefited from the program were discussed, including a gentleman whose start up business was trash collection, and one who developed and sold software related to beekeeping.

Ms. Siirila stated that her former colleague, Allen Cook, who is now employed by Mayland Community College, offers assistance to small-businesses. Specifically he offers services in the way of developing and writing business plans for small businesses. These services are offered free of charge and may correlate well with High Country Impact Fund.

Mr. Hazen discussed a meeting that he and Mr. Walter had with Tommy Burleson. He noted that Mr. Burleson suggested that the EDC team needs to do mentoring. Mr. Burleson had also talked with them about an individual who wished to start a small business, but who lacked a business plan.

They had also met with Ken Townsend, Avery County Schools (following contact with David Burleson, former ACS superintendent). Matters that they had discussed involved keeping children in Avery County, and that such a process needed to start with the parents.

Additionally, that emphasis needed to be put on offering support to children/students and making them aware of what is available in the area. One of the ideas suggested was the Junior Achievement program.

Mr. Barrier shared that Avery Co. Schools teacher Marilyn Phillips brought her 7th and 8th grade students to the county offices recently. He shared that they role-played and learned about how meetings are conducted, minutes collected, etc. and that it was a good learning experience. Ms. Siirila shared that Ms. Phillips had brought her students to the NCWorks Career Center as well, and will do so again on November 30, 2017. The purposes is to learn about applying and interviewing for jobs, etc. Mr. Walter may be available to volunteer.

Mr. Parlier joined the meeting at 5:42 pm.

Mr. Hazen questioned Mr. Barrier about the logo used by Avery County Parks and Recreation. He noted that it appeared to be out of date. Mr. Hazen indicated that we will need to compile a list of all the locations where the new county logo will go. Mr. Barrier noted that we now have a county seal and a logo. Mr. Barrier stated that he hopes to see the logo branded on cars, business windows, and perhaps billboards used to attract visitors. Mr. Barrier noted that some county agencies have their own logo, which they will continue to use in conjunction with the new logo, for example: Avery County Transportation, which will continue to use their ACT logo, and have the new logo branded somewhere on their vehicles as well.

Mr. Hazen asked how we interface with the Avery County Chamber of Commerce. Ms. Lacey noted that the Chamber is primarily focused on tourism. It was suggested that members of the EDC could meet with Melynda Pepple, director of the Avery County Chamber of Commerce.

Mr. Hazen spoke of his and Mr. Barrier's participation in a webinar. Mr. Barrier stated that some good ideas for business development from the webinar and gave the example of a craft brewery. Mr. Barrier reminded the group that the economic development representative for western North Carolina is Bill Slagle.

Mr. Barrier stated that Toyota is currently looking at North Carolina or Alabama for placement of a new manufacturing facility.

Mr. Reynolds has agreed to participate with the Newland Planning Board. He stated that the Town of Newland had imposed a sixty day moratorium on business development. Mr. Barrier noted that they are not overwhelmed by requests currently. Mr. Reynolds will continue to participate in meetings with the Newland Planning Board and will attend the Sugar Mountain meeting on November 21, 2017.

Mr. Parlier indicated no report from the youth/athletics sub-committee. It was noted that Trey Oakley had been extremely busy with activities at the YMCA. Discussion followed about the newly constructed athletic complex. Mr. Hazen suggested that we have a link on the web page to the YMCA's site.

Mr. Reynolds noted no report from the lodging/food service sub-committee, but he did note that Mr. Barrier has been advised that we will go to any businesses, etc. that he needs us to.

Mr. Parlier shared information with the team from a conference in New Bern, North Carolina that he recently attended. Specifically, he discussed Work Keys testing and Career Readiness Certification (CRC). He noted that high school students are given the work keys test currently, and that the scores could be used by potential employers. Additionally, regions in the state can be designated Work Ready Communities. He noted that Watauga County is starting on this path, and that it does take the interest and involvement of businesses in an area to make it work. Ms. Siirila noted that the NCWorks Career Center can assist with administration of Work Keys, but that for Career Readiness Certification, candidates who seek same through NCWorks are referred to Ted Ollis, Mayland Community College, for testing and assistance. Mr. Parlier will email links to team members where they can read more about the program.

Mr. Hazen posed the question as to whether or not the EDC team wants a Facebook page. He noted that he tends to several Facebook pages, and would likely be the one to tend to an EDC Facebook page if it is developed.

Mr. Hazen left the meeting at 6:20 pm.

Mr. Barrier shared that he had participated in training, and that one of his classes covered Economic Development and the Law. He will email a PowerPoint presentation on the topic to team members.

After discussion, it was determined that the November 27, 2017 EDC meeting would be cancelled.

The next EDC meeting will be held on December 11, 2017.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:40 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan P. Siirila

11/22/17