

Avery County Economic Develop Committee
September 25, 2017
Minutes

A meeting of the EDC was held on September 25, 2017 in the Avery County Commissioners Board Room at the Avery County Administrative Complex, located at 175 Linville Street, Newland, NC. This meeting occurred following a joint meeting with the EDC and the Avery County Commissioners.

Present for the meeting were:

Ken Walter – Chairman
Roy Reynolds
Larry Hazen
Carmen Lacey
Tim Phillips
Susan Siirila
Mark Parlier
Phillip Barrier – County Manager

Absent:

Trey Oakley

The meeting was called to order at 6:15 PM by Ken Walter.

A motion was made to approve the minutes of the July 2017 meeting as follows:

Motion: Ken Walter, second: Larry Hazen. Approved unanimously.

A motion was made to approve the minutes of the special meeting, August 2017 as follows: Motion: Larry Hazen, second: Roy Reynolds. Approved unanimously.

Mr. Barrier stated that the county lacks the authority to offer tax incentives for prospective employers. He noted that grant money can be offered, and added that there are no tax incentives in North Carolina. He stated that taxes are taxes, and that same must be fair and equitable.

Mr. Walter inquired about employer training programs. Ms. Siirila relayed information about training programs administered by locally by Mayland

Community College. Specifically, OJT (On the Job Training) and WOTC (Worker Opportunity Tax Credit) were two programs reviewed briefly.

Mr. Barrier stated that the grant for high speed internet expansion in the area has not been awarded. He noted that Blackpoint, a development in the Linville Falls, NC area, has indicated an intent to pursue high speed internet, potentially from the Linville, NC area.

He stated that he had received a letter from Charter Communications (cable provider). The letter, as paraphrased by Mr. Barrier, indicated that their agency has elected to phase out their overseas call centers, and work toward bringing similar jobs back to the United States. Also noted in the letter from Charter Communications was information regarding low cost services for low income elderly individuals and low income families living in the areas served by Charter Communications.

Mr. Hazen expressed a desire to move ahead with processing/printing business cards for use by EDC members. Mr. Barrier collected data from committee members and stated that he would proceed with having a start-up batch of cards printed.

Mr. Walter raised the issue of his position of chairperson. Committee members indicated unanimously their wish to have him continue in the position.

Mr. Barrier advised the group to be mindful of the fact that when an email is sent to him, that upon his receipt, the document become public record.

Mr. Barrier addressed the issue of transparency. He indicated that he felt it was in the best interest of the committee to have two (2) individuals participate in any meetings or outreach efforts with potential employers or representatives. He stated that having a second committee member as a witness or 'backup' may be helpful if misunderstandings occurred regarding the material discussed.

Mr. Barrier shared a booklet – Map Book. Mr. Parlier emailed a link to all committee members for use in reviewing the information set forth in the booklet.

Sub-committee reports:

Youth Athletics – no report

Lodging/Food Services – no report

Ms. Siirila shared a copy of a potential logo with members of the marketing sub-committee. The logo was prepared as a courtesy to the EDC group by former county manager, Don Baker. Ms. Siirila requested that same be included along with the logos developed by ASU students for consideration by the commissioners.

Mr. Reynolds remarked about signage present for the town of Morganton, and apps available for use by retailers and business owners in that area. Mr. Barrier stated that similar signage might be a good thing to pursue. He also shared examples of logos (Appalachian Regional Healthcare, Mission Health, etc.) and reiterated the importance of simplicity and recognizability in logos.

The next meeting is scheduled for October 30, 2017.

The meeting adjourned at 7:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Susan P. Siirila

Attachments:

Employer Assistance with New Hire Training Costs On the Job Training Fact Sheet

Work Opportunity Tax Credit Information Packet (partial packet without enrollment forms included).