



MEETING MINUTES
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY OF THE COUNTY OF BEDFORD, VA
and the TOWN OF BEDFORD ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
Bedford County Administration Ground Floor Training Room
122 E. Main Street
Bedford, VA 24523

July 15, 2021
5:30 p.m.

Economic Development Authority:

Present: Vicki Gardner - Dist. 2; Wyatt Walton - Dist. 3; Kristy Milton - Dist. 5; James Robertson - Dist. 6; Jim Messier - Dist. 7

Absent: Rhonnie Smith - Dist. 1; Matthew Braud - Dist. 4

Staff Present: Pam Bailey – Economic Development Acting Director; Amanda Kaufman - Deputy County Administrator

Staff Absent: None

Town of Bedford Economic Development Authority:

Present: Chairman Jonathan Buttram, Liz Brown, Ryan Kirkpatrick, Lynn Scott, Kevin Turner

Absent: Michell Crumpacker, David Sensening

Staff Present: Bart Warner - Town Manager, Mary Zirkle - Town Director of Planning and Community Development

Transcriber: Julia Peters

Guests: Thomas Messier, Intern

(1) INTRODUCTIONS

Chairman Messier thanked everyone for attending the meeting and noted the opportunity for both EDA's to work together as a group with the goal of bringing economic development to both the Town and the County of Bedford. Attendees introduced themselves and shared a little about their backgrounds and experience.

(2) BEDFORD CENTER FOR BUSINESS

A. Review County EDA S.W.O.T. Analysis

Chairman Messier reviewed the handout regarding the SWOT project and the focal points identified in the working draft for the Bedford Business Center and asked for any input from attendees. Discussion followed. Subjects of the discussion included broadband and high-speed internet, renewable electricity, and data centers.

B. Review Existing Protective Covenants and Restrictions Document

The latest handout was adopted in 2003 with revisions made in 2008. The EDAs reviewed the covenants for recommended changes. Ms. Milton will work with Mr. Skelley and read through the document and suggest any updates. The plastics company that owns property in the Bedford Center for Business will have the opportunity for input as well. The Town can provide some incentives to businesses located in the park. Discussion followed regarding the business center tenants and prospects, and marketing to those businesses that would be interested in the specific lots available.

C. Property Goals

Costs for the rough grading of the available lots in the Bedford Center were discussed as well as options for the future development due to the bad soil on these lots and the need to move this soil. Covenants may need revisions to allow for some new uses. Discussion continued regarding what small businesses would be suitable for the Bedford Center, including office incubators, contractor condos, or small/medium startups. Renewable electricity could also be a selling point. More analysis is needed and Mr. Robertson will delve further to obtain more information and feedback. Leasing property in other Bedford locations to generate more revenue and existing building limitations were discussed as well.

(3) TOWN PRIORITIES - Town EDA Presentation of Strategic Plan

A. Business Development Center

Chairman Buttram directed attendees to the strategic plan handout containing the economic parameters for the Town of Bedford. The full plan is available online. He noted three priorities for the Town: a business development center in downtown Bedford with offices to rent for people working from home; a new business park for manufacturing or job-creating businesses; and the need for a business class hotel. Discussion followed regarding these priorities.

B. Town Business/Industrial Park

Because the Bedford Center for Business is owned by the County EDA, the Town does not have a business park to market. However, a sizable project is being talked about in closed session and may be news in the future. Chairman Buttram will notify the County EDA if or when a project is announced.

C. Business Class Hotel

a. Strategy for Attraction

Plans were made in the past but nothing developed out of it. The Tobacco Commission has advised that this type of project should be a joint project with the County. Ms. Scott is the contact person for the Town and Mrs. Gardner will look into some information and fact finding. Discussion followed and touched upon the need for a large conference center in the area as well.

b. Develop Draft Framework if a Joint EDA Project

Discussion will continue as preliminary information is compiled.

(4) TRAIN STATION

A. Latest Update from Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT)

Ms. Zirkle reported that there is a ridership market for a train stop in Bedford and the Town is pursuing identifying possible sites.

a. Norfolk-Southern Study - November 15, 2021

Norfolk Southern is on task from the General Assembly to prepare a report of how one particular site can be used. The report is due by November 15, so the Town is in a holding pattern until the study is completed. Ms. Zirkle speaks regularly with DRPT staff for updates. Funding will also need to be explored for the stop.

b. Bus

Ms. Zirkle said the bus from Bedford to the Lynchburg train station is a component of the project until a train stop can be launched here. It was noted that a bus was provided in the past from the Welcome Center to the Lynchburg train station but it was discontinued. If and when the bus is brought back, it is not known how many people would actually ride it.

(5) INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

Ms. Zirkle reported that the Town's USDA revolving loan fund was extended until July 2022. It provides a loan of \$5,000 for every job created or retained. The EPA brownfields grant will be kept until September of 2022.

Ms. Bailey said a grant is available retroactive to June 1 for any company with less than 100 employees that hires up to 25 unemployed individuals. An incentive bonus up to \$500 to each unemployed new hire can be reimbursed.

The Town is undertaking a parking study as part of a facilities assessment for the police department which will determine a better use of what the Town has or if a parking garage is feasible.

There have been no complaints so far regarding the tree project at Elba's.

Action items for the attendees were summarized and reviewed.

Numbers and contact information for each EDA member will be disseminated.

Annual joint meetings were suggested but not determined.

(6) ADJOURNMENT

7:22 p.m.