

Avery County Economic Development Committee
October 28, 2019
Minutes

The Avery County Economic Development Committee (EDC) met at 5:00 pm on October 28, 2019 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: Melynda Pepple, Jesse Pope, Eric Berg, Dennis Aldridge (County Commissioner), Dave Smith, Clayton Harpold, Kate Gavenus and Susan Siirila.

Absent were: David Pollard, Phillip Barrier (County Manager) and Ken Walter.

The meeting was moderated by vice-chairperson Clayton Harpold, in Ken Walter's stead.

Mr. Harpold called the meeting to order at 5:04 p.m.

(1) Approve and/or amend the September 30th meeting minutes

(2) Recognition of the EDC by the Avery County Board of Commissioners

Mr. Harpold reported that the Avery County Board of Commissioners will recognize the EDC at the next regular meeting on November 4, 2019 at 3:30 p.m. All EDC members were encouraged to attend.

Mr. Aldridge stated that Speaker Tim Moore, of the North Carolina House of Representatives, will attend a function on November 14, 2019 for the counties of Avery, Mitchell and McDowell. A location has not been set. Mr. Aldridge stated that he expected that the function would be held in Mitchell County. He stated that representatives of each county would have approximately ten minutes to share concerns or ask questions of Representative Moore, and to discuss matters related to economic development.

(3) Strip Mall Property Development Status

Mr. Smith indicated that there are few new developments. He stated that letters have gone out to interested parties to let them know where we are, and that the same corporation in Edinburg, Texas is the agency overseeing the matter. Food Lion is still interested in the property. Mr. Pope asked about a construction site on Hwy. 194 in Newland near Mountain Glen Golf Course. Mr. Aldridge advised that the recently graded property belongs to Blue Ridge Propane and that they will be expanding on the property. He also noted that there are recently erected storage units in Altamont near Grumpy's Auto Repair. Ms. Siirila asked if the property at Altamont was also slated for RV storage. Mr. Aldridge stated that it was.

(4) Unfinished Business

A. March 2020 Retaining Employees Workshop

Mr. Harpold reviewed the information set forth on the agenda. He reiterated that the workshop is scheduled for March 19, 2020, with March 26, 2020 as an alternate/weather date. Discussion followed regarding securing and scheduling speakers. Ms. Pepple has contacted Fallon Boland of Grandfather Golf and Country Club. She has also spoken with Talia Freeman of Beech Mountain Resort. Mr. Pope stated that if he was not available for the workshop, that Harris Prevost of Grandfather Mountain Stewardship might be someone to consider as a speaker. He also stated that he was not sure about David Pollard's availability for participation. Mr. Harpold indicated that he had not been successful in reaching Josh Smith, of Elk River Club, but that he would continue to try to do so. Mr. Harpold stated that it was his opinion that if the workshop will only last from 11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., that the above noted individuals plus Pat Mitchell of the NC Department of Commerce, was enough.

Mr. Pope stated that we needed to develop an agenda or matrix about what needs to be covered and when. He shared information from another similar workshop that he worked on with Jim Swinkola of Grandfather Home for Children and Samuel Stephenson of Lees-McRae College. He stated that at the workshop, tables were set up, one presenter at each table, and that guests could move around the room and talk with presenters who gave specific information that interested them. He suggested that a similar format may work for the workshop that the EDC is planning.

Ms. Siirila will put together a proposed schedule.

Ms. Gavenus joined the meeting at 5:22 p.m.

Catering for the workshop will be done by Old Hampton Store, and will be arranged by Ms. Siirila. Guests at the workshop will pay \$10.00 for admittance, which will cover the cost of their lunch. The group agreed that advertisements could indicate that a registration fee of \$10.00 would be required, which would cover the cost of lunches for guests.

No other tasks were assigned.

B. Cooperative Extension & Avery County Fair Video

The release of the video is on hold pending the signing of releases.

C. Main Street America

Discussion occurred regarding the Main Street America organization, which assists qualifying rural areas with community development. Ms. Gavenus stated that Beech Mountain did not qualify for the program, but that Newland would. She stated that she would be willing to go to their next grant meeting. Mr. Smith shared examples of Main Street America projects that he was aware of from previous participation and spoke of what a good program it is. The group agreed that if the Town of Newland wished to participate, that a committee would have to be formed.

(5) New Business

A. Discussion occurred regarding expanding the length of regular EDC meetings involving guest speakers. Since the inception of the EDC, monthly meetings have taken place on the last

Monday of the month, from 5:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. It was proposed that the meetings be extended to 6:30 p.m. on dates when the group has a guest speaker.

Mr. Pope moved to set the time of the meetings at 5:00 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. on dates that the EDC group has a guest speaker. Mr. Smith seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

B. The group discussed the addition of new members on the EDC group. Ms. Gavenus shared information about Jessica Wiseman of the Linville Falls Winery, and the reasons why she may be a good addition to the EDC. She will contact Ms. Wiseman to learn if she would be interested. Mr. Aldridge reviewed the procedure for placing an individual on a county board. Discussion occurred regarding Mr. Pollard's absences from meetings. Mr. Pope agreed to reach out to Mr. Pollard to learn about his interest in continued participation on the EDC. Ms. Siirila reviewed written policy regarding the number of participants for the EDC and criteria set forth for removal of an individual from the group. Specifically, the matter would have to go before the Avery County Board of Commissioners and cause shown for removal of a member.

(6) Education Sub-Committee

Ms. Siirila reported that the Junior Achievement program is underway at Avery County High School, with two training sessions remaining with the current class.

(7) Outdoor Recreation Sub-Committee

Mr. Berg stated that he is in the process of collecting information on organizations involved in the recreational business in the area. He advised that a goal needs to be connecting recreational opportunities in the area with attracting new business to the area. He noted that the Avery County Chamber of Commerce is a primary resource for learning about existing recreational activities in the area. Also, it was noted that there are no unified tourism groups in the area, while there are some TDA's. Mr. Berg stated that his next goal is to take inventory of what we have in the area, look at what they are doing and see if there are things that we can begin to help work on. He intends to compile a list of 'who does what' and then go around and talk to the businesses or agencies. Discussion occurred regarding various recreational enterprises in the area such as rafting, fly fishing and delayed harvest fishing. Mr. Harpold and Mr. Smith indicated an interest in working with the Outdoor Recreation Sub-Committee; Mr. Pope offered assistance as needed.

(8) Marketing Sub-Committee

Ms. Pepple secured an agreed upon photograph from Sallie Woodring Photography for use in the Chamber of Commerce brochure. She will email a copy for review after the ad is put together.

(9) Agricultural Sub-Committee

No report.

(10) Other

Ms. Gavenus will attend a North Carolina Economic Development Plan Review in Lenoir, NC on October 29, 2019.

Ms. Pepple reminded the group of the upcoming Chamber of Commerce Dinner at the Best Western in Banner Elk, NC on November 7, 2019. Individuals who are interested in attending must RSVP no later than Friday, November 1, 2019.

Ms. Gavenus noted a free upcoming workshop at Beech Mountain entitled "Build Your Business Through Instagram." This will be held on November 5, 2019 at the Beech Mountain Club recreation building, and will run from 11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

The next meeting is scheduled for November 25, 2019.

Mr. Pope made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Smith seconded and the motion carried unanimously. Mr. Harpold adjourned the meeting at 6:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan P. Siirila