

FREDERICKSBURG
ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT
AUTHORITY

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ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY MINUTES (EDA)
September 20, 2018
8:00 a.m. • EDA Special Meeting
Courtyard by Marriott Fredericksburg Historic District, Kenmore Room
620 Caroline St.
Fredericksburg, VA

The Economic Development Authority of the City of Fredericksburg, Virginia met in special session on Thursday, September 20, 2018 beginning at 8:00 a.m. in the Kenmore Room at Courtyard by Marriott Fredericksburg Historic District.

EDA MEMBERS PRESENT. Bob Carter, Chairman, presiding. Will Mackintosh, Beth Black, Hap Connors, Mitzi Brown and Bill Beck.

ABSENT. Tom Crimmins.

ALSO PRESENT. EDA Counsel: Blanton Massey; Department of Economic Development and Tourism: Bill Freehling, Director; Angela Freeman, Business Development Manager; Amy Peregoy, Economic Development Specialist.

DETERMINATION OF QUORUM. Mitzi Brown.

AGENDA.

MOTION by Beth Black, seconded by Bill Beck, the agenda was approved: Ayes (6); Nays (0); Absent from Meeting (1).

PUBLIC COMMENTS. None.

Mr. Freehling requested the board view a recent Freehling Find video on the Pump House owned by Mr. & Mrs. Beck. After the viewing of the video Mr. Beck offered further background regarding the history, current status and future of the Pump House located along the Rappahannock River.

NEW BUSINESS.

EDA Initiatives and Goals.

General Discussion.

Chair Carter stated background regarding the meeting with City Council on the creation of the City of Fredericksburg's Economic Development Strategic Plan approved by the EDA and adopted by Council. Mr. Beck and Mr. Connors began a discussion regarding the city as a whole, Downtown and the main corridors being pleasing to visitors. The City should focus on overall quality and attractions to not sell themselves too short. Ms. Brown noted short term goals such as condos are considered to achieve long term goals. Mr. Mackintosh would like the city to think more urbanely. Mr. Connors commented that affordable housing can be designed well. Chair Carter

noted he preferred workforce housing to serve business's needs. Ms. Brown does not want businesses to suffer due to housing and transportation but also take into consideration the other demographics of the City. Ms. Black spoke to service industry wages. Chair Carter feels there needs to be support of the city and region for all types of housing and it should be an EDA goal. Mr. Mackintosh would like to see an impact for the city of all plans and programs of the EDA, staff and Council with EDA resources. Chair Carter wants the EDA to be more proactive and not reactive which will help get to all goals. Ms. Black thinks a community is only as strong as its weakest members and suggested the EDA needs to assist underserved areas of the city. This may be bigger than the EDA but to involve and align with City Council. Mr. Beck would like to learn from other cities. Mr. Connors suggested bringing in experts to assist with a better understanding of best practices. Chair Carter commented the University is an underutilized resource. Ms. Black suggested a Job Fair to assist city businesses. Mr. Massey gave the board background on previous EDA roles, the JumpStart! Program and redevelopment of the Industrial Park. He stated there was a good energy and ideas from the EDT staff to communicate with staff and City Council. Ms. Brown recognized this is the time to turn a corner and do something with City Council to make a difference in the City. Ms. Brown noted revenue from historical tourism. Chair Carter noted revenue from restaurants and retail.

Chair Carter suggested a review of the Fredericksburg Economic Development Strategic Plan and its 10 goals which he felt the EDA could assist with at least 5.

Mr. Mackintosh requested each member of the board and staff to take a few minutes to present three main objectives of investment.

Objectives.

Mr. Freehling likes the recent ideas of the Liberty Place loan, Stellar One building purchase, and funding of the Urban Slide event. Things that are impactful and focused, big investments that generate a return. He would like to see the facilitation of new businesses/events/projects to grow the asset base and invest in the future.

Mr. Connors would like to see more of a focus on organic business growth with assistance from experts. He would like to see students and young people stay in the City with the assistance of workforce development. The EDA can be a thought leader of good/creative ideas and bring in consultants to assist. Start becoming proactive with financial incentives. The location of the City can bring in assets from Washington D.C. and Richmond as well as military bases.

Ms. Black would like to see focus on businesses with a proven track record or medium sized for expansion, start-ups can be too risky. She stated to look to the community to fill job openings and not students who will leave the area. Encourage discussion with City Council and the public regarding EDA goals.

Mr. Beck stated the EDA should filter everything they do through the enhancement of community character and improve the quality of the community. He wants the EDA to not assist a well-to-do businesses but work with smaller businesses. The EDA should be effective with their funds.

Ms. Brown wants to invest in existing businesses but take a risk in the future of new businesses. She also suggested debt financing for historical, vacant and neglected buildings in the City. Fredericksburg tells a broad beautiful story to visitors through architecture. Economic development plays a role in the character of the City and it should be protected. She also understands smart cities. Anything that creates revenue for the EDA.

Discussion led to educating new businesses through Germanna and the University of Mary Washington's Small Business Development Center.

Mr. Mackintosh stated he would like to see grants or low income loans for entrepreneurship. The program should have set asides or specific criteria for minority and women owned businesses. He hopes the City uses tradable density credits to go towards focusing on workforce housing which will increase jobs and quality of life. The EDA budget should set aside funds for transformative developments which are within the goals and create revenue. Resources should be proactive and transformative.

Ms. Freeman wants to see a focus on the growing need for regional leadership. Businesses tend to look at the region's assets as well as the locality. We need to learn how to collaborate on projects to create joint revenues. State programs should be leveraged for the enhancement of the economic development infrastructure. Business incentives are important and identifying the needs for the community.

A discussion began on attracting businesses, BPOL taxes and if the EDA could assist businesses.

Ms. Freeman noted the quality of existing office space in the City may become a challenge in the next 5-10 years. Workforce development programs are needed. Economic development drivers are important and new ones need to be created in which the EDA could assist.

Mr. Carter stated he would be working from the goals that a lot of time was used to create. The first being #3, Be a business-friendly city which should be the number one goal. If we can do that a lot of other goals will fall into place. Goal #4, Enhance the City as a tourism destination. Tourism is one of the biggest revenue generators through meals and lodging taxes. The City is rebranding which will make the City a place people want to visit. Supporting these goals will shape our future.

There was a brief discussion on tourism.

Ms. Peregoy noted her concern over the current public art program funding and would prefer a public art walk or park. She would like to see some type of grant program return to the EDA. Lastly, the big box vacancies and future of Central Park.

There was a brief discussion of permanent public art and retail vacancies.

Mr. Mackintosh would like to end the meeting with a couple decisions or create working committees

Mr. Carter would like Brain Baker to attend the November meeting to present so the EDA may have a basis for business development. Mr. Connors would like to hear from Linda Decker and CIT.

There was an overall discussion of general economic development items from above.

Mr. Freehling explained to the board that the Tourism and Technology Zones should be citywide with different criteria but it has not been supported by City Council. It would an effective recruiting tool.

Chair Carter requested a letter be drafted to City Council in support of the Tourism and Technology Zones being made citywide.

MOTION by Mitzi Brown, seconded by Hap Connors, Mr. Freehling will draft a letter for Chair Carter's review and execution on behalf of the EDA board supporting the Tourism and Technology Zones being made citywide: Ayes (6); Nays (0); Absent from Meeting (1).

Ms. Black requested a joint work session with City Council to discuss overall city initiatives and goals. Mr. Freehling will include in the above letter.

ADJOURNMENT. There being no further business to come before the Economic Development Authority at this time, Chair Carter declared the meeting officially adjourned at 10:58 a.m.

A detailed recording of this special meeting is on file in the Department of Economic Development and Tourism.


Mitzi Brown, Secretary