

Minutes

Economic Development Commission

August 22, 2022

A meeting was held by the Economic Development Commission on August 22, 2022 7:00pm. Attended by Commission members Linda Morgan, Bob McNally, Ryan Csajko, and LeAnne Tennant, in addition to the members, Commissioner Michael Bailey, Communications Specialist Ashley Bailey, and 6 members from the public.

1. Approval of minutes from June 27th 2022
 - LeAnne approved, Ryan Csajko seconded. Motion passed 4-0
2. Guest Speaker, Tony 'C' Checchia
 - Linda Morgan introduced Tony and asked what he looks for from the EDC to help move business along
 - Tony has been in real estate for 34 years who has a small bouquet commercial real estate company. Tony shared multiple properties that he worked on in the Walkersville area.
 - Tony suggested to create a list of inventory and understand the zoning coordinates
 - Tony suggested to have an application online and streamlined for tenants to apply for certificate of occupancies, if applicable.
 - Linda Morgan stated that we want to get out to meet businesses and we have open vacancies; how do we help with that? Tony stated user friendly is key.
 - Tony stated that new businesses that were recently created are not outlined in the categories associated with zoning. More usages in our zoning will attract more businesses.
 - Tony stated that outside storage facilities are high demand.
 - LeAnne asked what are the top 5-10 items that are important to businesses when shopping for real estate. Tony stated location, budget (either sqft or gross rent basis), condition or cost to set up their business, recommended low interest loans or grants for new businesses or/for tenant buildouts, demographics, parking, and/or ADA accessibility.
 - Linda asked if Tony has dealt with a space that has been occupied again and again by the same type of business that has not succeeded, and how have you encouraged a different type of business to occupy that space. Tony stated that's a tough situation. He stated if economics don't align, then it will come down to the product and overhead. Tony suggested to partner with the business resource center and that most businesses don't have a business plan. Any kitchen space is on high demand. Sometimes you also have property owners that expect more out of the offers presented.
 - What do you do with that owner who's expecting more than really they can get? questioned Bob Sussman. Tony stated it can take persistence, time, sometimes it's personal or emotional. The City of Frederick passed a vacant registry ordinance where

property owners must occupy the property or the property owner receives a fine after vacant for so many years. Tony suggested rather than apply fees, the town/cities should economically incentive businesses.

- Commissioner Bailey highlighted everything Tony stated, breaking down large vs small businesses listed below
 - i. Small businesses- help to reduce the burden to locate to Walkersville, and reduce the burden for them by reducing the processing times to get their permits, decentralize the decision making, and partnering with the SBA to provide grants and/or loans. Ryan also heard Tony state Town should have step by step process on how to open a business here in Walkersville.
 - Commissioner Bailey asked how to we think forward in marketing the town. Tony stated the town of Mt. Airy hosted a tour to the brokerage community to stop light vacant properties.
 - Tony stated that the market is high demand for outdoor storage to service most of the trades.
3. ARPA process and forms
- Commissioner Bailey stated that EDC will remove from the instruction page annual operating budget amount.
 - Instructions and applications available by website as well
 - Commissioner Bailey suggested to have the burgess review, make instructions/applications available, close out the application process at the end of September, review in October, and checks out in December.
 - Listening session #1 September 19, 2022 @ 7 pm
 - Listening session #2 October 24, 2022 @ 5 pm (open for public comment as well)
 - Workshop to review applications October 17th @ 7pm
 - All discussed sharing the ARPA information on the Town and EDC's FB page.
4. Scissors for Ribbon cutting
- All agreed to purchase scissors and create our own with nice stickers
 - Owner from Abloom invited EDC for a ribbon cutting September 22nd at 8am.
5. Questions
- EDC was invited attend WBPA meeting by Bob Sussman