

Economic Development Authority
Minutes
May 5, 2022
6:00 p.m.

The Lee County Economic Development Authority met in regular session Thursday, May 5, 2022 at 6:00 p.m. in the General District Courtroom of the Lee County Courthouse located in Jonesville, Virginia. Present were Vice-Chairman Paul Johnson, Secretary/Treasurer Liz Myers, Board Members Chad Hines and Ray Blair, A.J. Hatmaker, and Mark Long, Community Development Director Richard Johnson, Community Development Secretary Cathy Wilder, EDA Attorney Rick Callahan and Rick Watson with Powell Valley News. Chairman Greg Edwards was unable to attend meeting.

Vice-Chairman Paul Johnson determined that a quorum was present then called the meeting to order.

Approval of EDA Minutes

Vice-Chairman Johnson called for a motion to approve the minutes from the April 7, 2022 meeting.

Ray Blair made a motion to approve the minutes from the April 7, 2022 meeting. Chad Hines seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Public Comment

None

Approval of EDA Financial Report, Bills & Payments

Liz Myers made a motion to approve the financial report, bills & payments for the month of May. Mark Long seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Old Business

Community Roundtable-Chamber of Commerce

Director Johnson provided the Board with two date options 5/23 and 5/24 pending approval from Mark Long with the Vocational School being the selected location.

Director Johnson requested that the Authority authorize an expenditure to advertise the event in the Powell Valley News.

Chad Hines made motion to authorize the advertisement of the event. Ray Blair seconded motion.

Ray Blair suggested that an agenda be formed for the meeting so that there were talking points to engage with those in attendance.

Director Johnson suggested the formation of a committee to develop an agenda prior to the meeting.

A.J. Hatmaker volunteered Chairman Edwards. Ray Blair volunteered himself.

Letters of Support

Director Johnson provided the Authority with correspondence between he, Jonathan Belcher, and other local developers in the VCEDA coverage region in regard to the Seed Capital Matching Grant program. Director Johnson announced his displeasure with the actions taken by the VCEDA Board to prioritize applicants with the largest number of jobs created and largest personal capital invested after applications were submitted because of limited funding and a large number of applicants while providing no equity component. He discussed how this would ultimately cause one of the applicants the Authority provided a support letter for to be ranked too low to receive their anticipated award. Director Johnson then suggested that the Authority consider making a request to VCEDA to transfer \$10,000 from the Lee County VCEDA account to the Seed Capital account to enable the other project to be funded if the VCEDA Board would make no other accommodation.

Ray Blair made the motion, A.J. Hatmaker duly seconded to “begin discussion”.

A.J. Hatmaker then posed the question how the funds would be recovered to the county account?

Director Johnson stated that they would not be recovered since the program was a grant rather than a loan.

Vice-Chair Paul Johnson then questioned if that changed the thoughts of the Authority?

Vice-Chair Paul Johnson then called for a vote, hearing no response the Chair announced a failed motion.

VaCorp 2022-2023

Director Johnson stated that Chairman Edwards asked him to check with VaCorp about the sewer backup policy. Director Johnson stated that this was a covered peril and could be submitted for coverage within 120 days of occurrence.

Newsletter

The Authority held a brief discussion related to the development of a newsletter produced in collaboration with the vocational school and clarified intent to produce, how content would be shared, and how often updates would be received.

Dryden Building Issues

Director Johnson informed the Authority that the England Furniture building had emergent heat pump issues that the Authority would have to remedy. In collaboration with the Chair

and the County Administrator, the Director had Mid-Mountain Heating and Cooling come out to determine the cause of the issue after contacting NorWell (original installers) to diagnose the problem. NorWell suggested reaching out to the local technicians because of the travel time they would incur for what could potentially be a minor issue. Director Johnson let the Authority know that the compressors would still be within the 5-year warranty if that were the issue.

Vice-Chair Paul Johnson directed Mr. Johnson to have the technicians check the compressors on each of the units since the warranty was nearing the end of the covered term.

New Business

Luncheon- Virginia Secretary of Commerce & Trade, President & CEO VEDP

Director Johnson informed the Authority that each of them should have received an email with an invitation to the aforementioned event and encouraged them to attend.

Produce Auction Interest Meetings

Director Johnson reminded the Authority of the scheduled interest meetings for next Tuesday 2:00 & 6:00 in Jonesville and the Western end of the County.

Director Johnson also informed the Authority that he and Amy Byington have traveled to sites of identified potential purchasers in Lee, Bell, Scott, and Wise counties to help spread the word.

PV News Graduation Advertisement

Liz Myers made a motion to place a graduation ad in the Powell Valley newspaper for the cost of \$126.00. Chad Hines seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Heart of Appalachian Mountain Job/Resource Fair

Director Johnson made the Authority aware of the aforementioned event and included a flyer in the packets. He also mentioned that his office had been contacted by a representative of SRK-TN to determine if there was potential interest in hosting a Job Fair within the County.

Reports & Recommendations of the Board

Mark Long made the Authority aware of his previous two absences being related to educational trips. He also discussed the success of a Job Fair hosted at the school.

Vice-Chair Paul Johnson suggested that these hiring event flyers be included on any of the newsletters that are produced by the EDA.

Reports & Recommendations of the Director

VEDP Meeting- Adam Watkins

Director Johnson indicated that he met with Mr. Watkins earlier in the week and hopes that the discussions about VEDP policy related to matching components and an increased need for educational sessions for authorities and elected officials would be heard.

Second Chance Employer Informational Session

Director Johnson stated that the turnout to the event was not as large as they had hoped, however the businesses that did show up reiterated that they are having significant issues with employment and success rates of hiring incarcerated individuals was near 50% in their case.

VTC Study Tour

Director Johnson informed the Authority of the Study Tour and provided a schedule of events across seven counties in three days. He encouraged anyone that could to show up and join them on their tour. He reiterated that Lee County was among the first stops on the tour and Axe Handle Distilling hosted the group while being catered by Charly's.

7th Annual SWVA Economic Forum

Director Johnson reminded the Authority of the event scheduled for 5/25 and encouraged attendance.

Business Appreciation Month

Director Johnson announced that May was traditionally Business Appreciation Month and that the Authority had previously hosted event and should consider doing so in the future if funding allows having heard from a couple of entities in requesting information for any events that were being planned.

Board Appointments

Director Johnson informed the Authority that he was appointed to the Ninth District Development Financing Inc. Board as well as the Regional Improvement Commission related to gaming tax revenues to be redistributed to localities within the Bristol Transportation District, so that if there were initiatives the Authority wanted to progress through these entities he could facilitate that.

Executive Session

Chad Hines made a motion to go into executive session to discuss Section 2.2-3711A.4 (Protection of The Privacy of Individuals) and Section 2.2-3711 A.6 Investment of Public Funds (Contracts). A.J. Hatmaker seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Chad Hines made a motion to come out of executive session. A.J. Hatmaker seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Vice-Chairman Johnson polled the Board that they only discussed issues pertaining to the entry of executive session.

Ray Blair made a motion to allow the Chair to sign the modified note drafted by attorney C.M Callahan discussed in executive session. Liz Myers duly seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Ray Blair made a motion to adjourn. Mark Long seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Community Development Secretary
Cathy Wilder
May 6, 2022

Community Development Director
Richard Johnson II
May 26, 2022