

Economic Development Authority
Minutes
April 6th, 2023
6:00 p.m.

The Lee County Economic Development Authority met in regular session Thursday, April 6th, 2023 at 6:00 p.m. in the General District Courtroom of the Lee County Courthouse located in Jonesville, Virginia. Present were Chairman Greg Edwards, Board Members A.J. Hatmaker, Ray Blair, Mark Long, Richard Sprinkle Jr., Community Development Director Richard Johnson, EDA Attorney Rick Callahan, Rick Watson with Powell Valley News, and Kathleen Harrell. Board Members Paul Johnson and Chad Hines, and Community Development Secretary Cathy Wilder were unable to attend the meeting.

Chairman Edwards determined that a quorum was present then called the meeting to order.

Approval of EDA Minutes

Chairman Edwards called for a motion to approve the minutes from the March 2, 2023 meeting.

Richard Sprinkle made a motion to approve the minutes from the March 2, 2023 meeting. Mark Long seconded the motion. The motion passed.

Ray Blair entered the meeting.

Public Comment

None

Approval of EDA Financial Report, Bills & Payments

Richard Sprinkle made a motion to approve the financial report and paying the bills for the month of April. Mark Long seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Old Business

Whistle Pig EDF Request

Director Johnson informed the Authority that the project was still awaiting final engineering and was expected to be complete by the end of April having been set back due to an illness on the design team. He also informed the Authority that septic engineering had been finalized and submitted and were awaiting permit, with the expectation to disburse approved funds in the coming weeks.

Dryden Building Maintenance

Director Johnson gave a brief report detailing a letter drafted by EDA Attorney, Rick Callahan, to England INC regarding fire suppression maintenance requirements and responsibilities as well as detailing an engineering task order slated to be executed in the coming week.

Budget

Director Johnson informed the Authority of the Board of Supervisors action to table the request of the Authority to draw down the remaining FY23 operating funds and request additional information relating to expenditures. Director Johnson stated that the requested information had been provided to the County Administrators office and would be taken up at the April 18th meeting of the Lee County Board of Supervisors.

Small Purchase Procedures

Director Johnson stated that this was a follow up on an inquiry from the previous meeting and the previously adopted policy was included in each of their packets for review.

Chairman Edwards went on to state that he was lucky to have found the policy on a computer dating back to when he was acting Counsel for the Authority. Minutes from the time reflect the action of the Authority to adopt.

New Business

Seed Capital Spring Round Support Letters and Discussion

Director Johnson once again made the Authority aware of the changes to the program guidelines and the limited number of businesses that now qualify. He went on to state that there were as many as 24 potential applicants of which only four qualify to submit application in this planning district. He stated that three of the applications were from Wise, one from Lee, and zero from Scott and the City of Norton.

Director Johnson provided the Authority a draft letter of support for Country Buffet application and requested consideration for a motion to allow the Chairman to sign the letter and transmit to VCEDA.

Ray Blair went on to state that the applicant has replaced a large amount of equipment in the facility recently that they were unaware of at the time of purchase.

AJ Hatmaker made a motion to Authorize the Chairman to sign the letter supporting Country Buffets application to the VCEDA Seed Capital program. Ray Blair seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Capital Outlay Consideration

Director Johnson stated that this was added to agenda to request consideration of the Authority to replace the existing Authority owned 2011 Chevrolet Traverse. He went on to state that the Authority had not been in a position to consider this in some time and the vehicle has over one hundred thousand miles on it and significant deferred maintenance to include electrical issues, broken seat-backs, in need of an alignment, and tires. Furthermore, he spoke of issues with the County only allocating \$500 per year in fuel expenditures of which he exhausts in a short period of time leading to utilization of personal vehicles at his own expense. His recommendation was consideration of a more economical and fuel-efficient asset.

Chairman Edwards questioned if the vehicle was used only for Authority purposes or if it was utilized for County work outside the scope of the Authority.

Director Johnson stated that he was the only one with access to the vehicle and because of the limited fuel budget it is utilized for Authority business only.

Chairman Edwards stated that he'd like to have cost estimates on repairs.

Ray Blair suggested getting with Vince at the County garage to determine what the repairs would entail.

Mark Long said that the vocational school's automotive program would be glad to take a look at it.

The consensus of the Authority was to take the vehicle to the vocational school and determine what needed to be done and would then be able to decide to proceed with fuel supplements and repair.

Waste Wood Discussion

Director Johnson informed the Authority of a significant issue plaguing the wood products industry in and around the region with the upcoming closure of the Canton NC paper mill. This closure will ultimately upend the market for residuals and waste wood products in the area due to the distance of the next nearest facility. He went on to state that it has already impacted local producers and mills and he had been in contact with many of them (Gary Russell, Reid Ratliff, and Jeff Gowder) to determine if there could be some sort of short-term solution for our local producers while also focusing on long term solutions through industry recruitment and expansions. He stated that his was a priority for his office moving forward.

Reports & Recommendations of the Board

None.

Reports & Recommendations of the Director SWVA Economic Forum

Director Johnson informed the Authority of the upcoming annual economic forum hosted by UVA Wise on May 25th titled Pursuit of Prosperity. He stated that he would be in attendance and hoped that members of the Authority would participate as well.

Congressionally Directed Spending Support

Director Johnson informed the Authority of a request received from Keith Harless and the Town of Pennington regarding the proposed convention center project. He stated that he provided this letter of support to Senator Kaine's office and a copy was provided in the packet.

Ray Blair made a motion to go into executive session to discuss 2.2-3711 A.3 Acquisition and Disposition of Real Property, 2.2-3711 A.5 Discussion of Prospective Business and 2.2-3711 A.6 Investing of Public Funds and 2.2-3711 A.7 Consultation with Legal Counsel. Mark Long seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Richard Sprinkle made a motion to come out of executive session. Ray Blair seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Chairman Edwards polled the board that they only discussed issues pertaining to the entry of executive session.

Mark Long made a motion to adjourn. AJ Hatmaker seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Community Development Director
Richard Johnson
April 26, 2023