

Avery County Economic Development Committee

July 31, 2017

Minutes

The Avery County Economic Development Committee (EDC) met at 5:00 pm on Monday July 31, 2017 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:

Mark Parlier	Ken Walter
Roy Reynolds	Susan Siirila
Phillip Barrier	Carmen Lacey
Larry Hazen	Matthew Pierce (visitor)

The meeting convened at 5:05 pm and was moderated by Ken Walter.

A motion was made by Ms. Lacey to approve the minutes of the June 26, 2017 EDC meeting. The motion was seconded by Mr. Hazen. The minutes were unanimously approved.

Roy Reynolds communicated his decision to step down as committee chairperson via email on July 26, 2017. The EDC group discussed Roy's movement away from the position of committee chair. A motion was made for Mr. Walter (former vice-chair) to assume the position of committee chair by Mr. Hazen. The motion was seconded by Ms. Lacey, and approved unanimously. A motion was made by Ms. Lacey for Mr. Parlier to move into the position of vice-chair. The motion was seconded by Mr. Hazen and approved unanimously. Mr. Parlier stated his intent to accept the position of vice-chair on a temporary basis.

The first item on the agenda to be addressed was EDC actions, reporting responsibilities, handling of available funds and level of independence.

Mr. Parlier stated that from his communications in sub-committee meetings that he had seen concerns raised about needing direction from the county commissioners on the role of the EDC. Ms. Lacey suggested that what she understood that what the county commissioners wanted from the EDC group was recommendations, and that the county commissioners could thereafter determine what they wanted to do with said recommendations. Mr. Hazen stated that he saw a function of the EDC group as community facilitators, i.e. getting out in the community and talking with people. Mr. Hazen raised the question of whether or not doing so was acceptable. Mr. Barrier stated that he believed a solution would be to put talking points on paper, which he could then take to the county commissioners. Mr. Parlier stated his concern

that passing everything the EDC group does by the county commissioners could “take forever” before the EDC could see forward movement.

Mr. Parlier stated that he had talked with representatives of Tarheel Capital (Wendy’s Restaurants). His goal was to learn from them what they look for in an area when determining whether or not to build a fast food restaurant in a particular area. Mr. Parlier asked if doing so was acceptable.

Mr. Barrier spoke to what the EDC budget of \$10k could be used for. He stated that the EDC should have the authority to spend the money as necessary. Mr. Hazen inquired as to what talking points could be approved. Mr. Walter stated that the EDC group members should be able to communicate with representatives of the chamber of commerce and others (representatives of other agencies). Mr. Hazen reiterated his previous statement of the fact that EDC representatives need to be out in the community, and that the EDC team members needed clarification of what we can and cannot do, e.g. luncheon meetings with individuals in the area.

Mr. Barrier stated that the EDC is still trying to identify itself.

Ms. Siirila stated that a disclaimer of some kind needs to be prepared for use before EDC team members begin to interact with members of the community. The purpose of which would be protection from legal liability if a statement were to be made that could be construed as a verbal contract.

Mr. Pierce (visitor) stated that the current EDC group is the only such group he has seen with no point person. Mr. Parlier offered his thoughts on the hiring or placement of a county economic development representative.

Regarding the EDC available funding (\$10K) Mr. Barrier stated that he would seek clarification from the county commissioners regarding use thereof, but stated also that the money was for use by the EDC and therefore should be used as the team deems appropriate.

The second agenda item for discussion was an update from the Marketing sub-committee (Hazen, Lacey & Walter).

Mr. Hazen spoke first for the marketing committee. He stated that the group knew what they wanted to do, but were afraid to do anything. He stated that a goal of the marketing committee was talking with people in the community/county and pursuing the umbrella concept. Mr. Hazen stated that he had talked with individuals already. He stated that he learned through doing so that due to past history/failures of the former EDC representative and group, that we were already in a hole and needed to dig ourselves out. To that end, he suggested that the EDC group develop a marketing plan and move forward. Mr. Hazen stated that he has already talked with an individual who he considered a community leader. That

individual had said of the EDC “they’re not going to do anything.” Mr. Hazen reiterated a need or incentive to sell the EDC.

Ms. Lacey stated that branding alone could use up the available funding for the EDC group. Mr. Hazen stated that decision should be made as to how to use the budget. Mr. Parlier stated that once decisions are made on a matter, it should be presented to the county commissioners, and then it would be for them to cover the costs. Mr. Barrier stated that the EDC group should have clear use of the available budget. Mr. Walter suggested that regarding the county logo, the logo the EDC decides upon should be presented to the county commissioners, and the county thereafter could pay for having the logo set where it needs to be. Mr. Barrier stated that he believed that business cards should be printed as soon as possible after a logo is approved. Discussion followed regarding putting personal telephone numbers and contact information on business cards.

EDC team members passed around a sign-up sheet, which showed contact telephone numbers for each member.

Ms. Lacey presented copies to the EDC group of a logo that she had designed. Mr. Pierce pointed out that the size of the logo is important, in that it must be shrinkable to fit on business cards, letterhead, etc. He suggested that we secure feedback from other counties, and continuity with email addresses and telephone numbers used on business cards. Mr. Pierce discussed use of an RFI (request for information). He suggested that the team look at the people we are trying to draw, or reach, via use of a logo. He also suggested coming up with two or three versions of a logo, and perhaps survey respondents prior to the selection of a logo.

A copy of the logo submitted by Ms. Lacey is included with minutes for the July 31, 2017 EDC meeting as an attachment.

Mr. Walter submitted that he believes the logo submitted by Ms. Lacey is scalable. Mr. Barrier stated that he believes it would be best to have something on the logo that one could see and immediately recognize as Avery County.

Mr. Parlier stated that the logo submitted by Ms. Lacey reminded him of a logo currently in use by a tree grower in the county. Mr. Hazen stated that the logo submitted by Ms. Lacey was created from internet clipart. Ms. Lacey suggested that graphic artist (county employee) could work on the logo and present another version to the county commissioners for feedback.

Mr. Pierce suggested that if clipart is used, that legal rights for the use thereof be secured. Ms. Siirila requested permission to share a copy of the logo submitted by Ms. Lacey to Don Baker, a graphic artist who was formerly employed by the County of Avery, for review and suggestions. The group agreed that same was acceptable.

Mr. Pierce suggested that the EDC group reach out to students, perhaps ASU students, for work on the logo. The group agreed that this was a good idea, and that same may be pursued with

school starts in a few weeks. Mr. Parlier suggested Imprints in Boone for graphic art suggestions for the logo.

Mr. Parlier will secure information about contact person(s) at ASU and will email that data to EDC group members later. Mr. Hazen discussed repurposing abandoned buildings in Avery County, and stated that his first thought about same was the possibility of tax incentives for individuals who may want to revamp an existing but abandoned building for new business purposes. Mr. Barrier stated that the matter has been addressed before, and that owners of existing but struggling businesses have been opposed to the idea in the past. Mr. Barrier stated that the matter may be revisited again. He cited the old hospital building in Banner Elk, noting that the land lost value because of the building upon it. Mr. Hazen asked Mr. Barrier if he would float the idea of tax incentives for potential new businesses to the county commissioners. Mr. Barrier stated that he would.

Mr. Pierce suggested that the EDC group check for programs available through ARC, grants which may be available, etc. and stated that before floating ideas, such as tax incentives, that it would be helpful to have examples instead of abstract ideas.

Ms. Siirila stated that Bill Slagle would be a good person to talk with about possible grants, and reminded the group that Mr. Slagle serves the Avery County area as an economic development representative.

Mr. Reynolds cited an example, shared during a sub-committee team meeting, in which the entire EDC fund of \$10k was used for a potential business that never came to fruition. Mr. Parlier stated that he felt it impossible to be fair to everyone, noting that nothing will get accomplished if you try to keep everyone happy.

Mr. Pierce stated that he felt there was power in numbers in terms of trying to bring more people to the Avery County area.

The third agenda item for discussion was from the Youth Athletics sub-committee (Oakley, Parlier, Reynolds). It was determined that an email dated July 31, 2017 from Trey Oakley serve as the discussion notes from that meeting. A copy of the above-noted email is attached to this document as an attachment. It was noted that Oakley is investigating using Grandfather Mountain as a possible venue for tournaments, possibly a soccer tournament.

The fourth agenda item for discussion was from the Lodging/Food services sub-committee (Siirila, Reynolds, Parlier). Ms. Siirila shared information from said sub-committee meeting which occurred on July 20, 2017. One of the items discussed in that meeting involved the collection of data from lodging providers in the area. Specifically, working toward collection of data regarding their busiest times of the year. The same could be done with food service providers. Additionally, Ms. Siirila noted that the sub-committee had discussed searching for small successes with the team, and a possible letter writing campaign to secure necessary data.

Mr. Pierce spoke of the EDPNC (Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina). He noted that Bill Slagle works with this agency, and may be able to assist with a retail analysis. He also noted that for research, one person needs to be a point person. Additionally, he advised that Google can show busy times for businesses.

The fifth agenda item for discussion was high speed internet.

Mr. Barrier stated that there is currently an ARC grant pending for high speed internet in the area, which would come with matching money for expansion of area coverage. He also noted that Skyline/Skybest has a \$4 million dollar grant pending at this time.

Mr. Barrier noted that Tommy Burleson (Avery County Inspections Dept.) has talked with two individuals who are looking at the IRC building in Newland, and one individual who is looking at the old hospital building in Banner Elk. Also, he noted that a request for a round-about for traffic flow has been submitted to the state. Mr. Barrier also stated that he had a discussion with the owners of Blind Squirrel Brewery regarding expansion to Avery County, as well as with representatives of PlowShare, a company that may look to renovate or use the Tarheel Mica facility in Plumtree.

Issues with staffing new and existing businesses was discussed, specifically that staffing remains difficult due to the low number of active job seekers in the county.

The next meeting was scheduled for August 15, 2017 at 5:00 pm.

The meeting adjourned at 6:35 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan Siirila  
August 2, 2017

## Siirila, Susan

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**From:** Trey Oakley <treyo@ymcaavery.org>  
**Sent:** Monday, July 31, 2017 3:45 PM  
**To:** Ken Walter; Vance, Blake; Barrier, Phillip; Roy Reynolds; Carmen Lacey; Larry Hazen; Mark Parlier; Siirila, Susan; Phillips, Tim  
**Subject:** RE: Agenda for our 5:00 PM, 7/31 EDC Meeting

My apologies but I will have to miss this evenings meeting. My wife and I are selling our house and I have a showing tonight that just scheduled. Mark, Roy and I have met regarding recreation and opportunities to bring more people into our community. We are working with Grandfather Mountain to secure a location on the mountain for a "Mile High Soccer Tournament" in partnership with the Y, the Rec Department and Avery County Schools. This will be a Spring Project.

I would also like to know from Tim and Blake what their thoughts would be in improving the baseball and softball facilities in an effort to grow recreation and tourism in those areas as well. The Recreation Sub Committee would like to work in improving those facilities not only in Newland, but Green Valley and Cranberry as well.

We had very productive discussions but would like input as well from Tim and Blake on their thoughts. From the County's perspective should we be focusing on facility improvement that directly impacts individuals moving to and staying in Avery County or recreational opportunities that increase tourism?

Mark will you expand on anything that I may be leaving out?

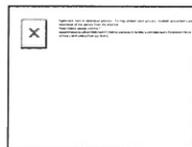
Again, I apologize for my absence and hope this will be the only one.

Best,

Trey

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**From:** Ken Walter [mailto:[kwalter1@bellsouth.net](mailto:kwalter1@bellsouth.net)]  
**Sent:** Sunday, July 30, 2017 8:28 AM  
**To:** Blake Vance <[blake.vance@averycountync.gov](mailto:blake.vance@averycountync.gov)>; Phillip Barrier <[phillip.barrier@averycountync.gov](mailto:phillip.barrier@averycountync.gov)>; Roy Reynolds <[roybreynoldsjr@gmail.com](mailto:roybreynoldsjr@gmail.com)>; Carmen Lacey <[clacey@apprhs.org](mailto:clacey@apprhs.org)>; Larry Hazen <[hazenfam@aol.com](mailto:hazenfam@aol.com)>; Mark Parlier <[parlierm@skybest.com](mailto:parlierm@skybest.com)>; Susan Siirila <[susan.siirila@nccommerce.com](mailto:susan.siirila@nccommerce.com)>; Tim Phillips <[tim.phillips@averycountync.gov](mailto:tim.phillips@averycountync.gov)>; Trey Oakley <[treyo@ymcaavery.org](mailto:treyo@ymcaavery.org)>  
**Subject:** Agenda for our 5:00 PM, 7/31 EDC Meeting

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