Avery County Economic Development Committee

May 20, 2019

Minutes

The Avery County Economic Development Committee (EDC) met at 5:00 pm on Monday, May 20, 2019 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:

Dennis Aldridge (BOC), Clayton Harpold, Dave Smith, Eric Berg (visitor), Susan Siirila, Ken Walter, Phillip Barrier, Melynda Pepple, Tim Phillips, Carmen Lacey, Randy Fedro (visitor) & Kate Gavenus.

Absent:

Jesse Pope & David Pollard.

The meeting began at 5:00 pm and was moderated by chairperson Ken Walter.

A motion was offered by Ms. Pepple to approve the minutes of the March 25, 2019 minutes. A second was offered by Mr. Harpold. The motion was approved unanimously.

Report from Mr. Barrier, County Manager:

--On the Avery County website, under meeting information, the time for the EDC May meeting is noted and it is no longer necessary to post a notice that there is no EDC board meeting on the last Monday of May.

--Broadband: There is a $600 million dollar grant available from the federal government, USDA, labeled "ReConnect." This is new money from the federal government, and is different from the Skybest/Skyline grant. Mr. Barrier reported that he has contacted all the internet providers and encouraged them to apply for the grant money. He noted that Avery County cannot pursue the grant, but can 'cheerlead.' Mr. Barrier reported that because of the ARC grant, LightLeap has added 93 new clients as of this date. Eighteen of these clients have switched from another provider, the rest are new customers. He added that there is the potential for 75 more clients to be served.

--Lowes Foods shopping center: Mr. Barrier recognized Mr. Smith and noted that he had worked hard on getting letters and information out to grocery stores and other entities. Regarding the Lowes property, he noted that it will be auctioned off, and that it is the last of the Faw properties that will be auctioned off. Mr. Smith noted that the sale will occur September 17, 2019 – September 24, 2019.

--Flick Video store will be closing.

--The new Avery County Pool will be opening on Saturday May 25, 2019, with a ribbon cutting at 10:00 AM. Mr. Barrier stated that he expects a great turn out for the event.

Mr. Smith stated that there were three developers looking at the Lowes Foods property. He will continue to work with them and will meet with Dawn Carpenter, at the County Manager's office, to compile a

list of retailers who have already been contacted. Mr. Walter thanked Mr. Smith and Ms. Siirila for adding data to the list of potential retailers who we may seek out to look at the Lowes Foods property.

Mr. Walter stated that the second Junior Achievement program at Avery County High School had been completed. He thanked Ms. Siirila and Mr. Smith for their involvement. He added that EDC members have been invited back, and that we plan to do one, or perhaps two, more Junior Achievement programs in the next school year.

Ms. Gavenus introduced guest speaker Charlie Bradley of the Brian Hamilton Foundation, Raleigh, NC.

Mr. Bradley shared some personal background about himself, and stated that he had been in Raleigh, NC for about a year and a half. He shared information about the Brian Hamilton Foundation and passed out information packets (copies of contents are attached).

The Brian Hamilton Foundation supports entrepreneurs and focuses on the following:

-- Inmates to Entrepreneurs – programs designed to assist former offenders move into entrepreneurial roles.

-- Veterans/Military Transition Readiness – programs designed for individuals transitioning out of military service.

-- Youth Initiative – programs designed for middle school and high school students to encourage movement toward entrepreneurship. Included in this model is the Hamilton Challenge, a 7-day challenge through which youth can strive to get their first customers.

-- Starter U. – programs are offered online, and are college level classes for entrepreneurs.

-- Main Street Loan Fund – a for profit loan program which can help small businesses that need extra capital to grow. The program offers non-collateral loans, with low interest rates. Monies raised through interest are fed back into the program.

The group thanked Mr. Bradley for his presentation.

Mr. Berg raised the issue of the Medicaid expansion bill, and stated that he felt that it was important for our representatives in Raleigh to be made aware of the level of support for the bill. Ms. Lacey stated that Representative Dobson supports the bill. She added that a primary question is: "Where will the money come from?" Mr. Aldridge stated that it may be a difficult program for local agencies, such as DSS, adding that it will be a complex transition that will need to occur. Ms. Lacey stated that it would be necessary to address initial hurdles in the program before discussion expansion, and that Cannon Memorial Hospital was in favor of the expansion.

Mr. Walter stated that in moving toward promotion of Avery County, that he, Mr. Smith and Ms. Siirila have engaged videographer Brent Ramsey to video tape the opening of the pool. He stated that we seek a commitment to similarly video tape other venues in the county, at an approximate cost of $350 - $375 per video. These short videos will be posted on our website and other media outlets, and will feature new or expanding businesses in the county.

Ms. Gavenus and Mr. Pope will attend a workshop/program in Boone and will give an update at the next meeting.

Mr. Walter reviewed information about the Avery County High School Culinary Arts program, and reviewed a list, received from Lesley Platek, showing monetary needs for the program. In an earlier meeting, funding the program with EDC monies had been discussed. He stated that funding this program would be important because of two primary reasons: (1) it encourages students to stay in the area as employees, and (2) it encourages students to become employers as chefs, entrepreneurs, etc.

A motion was made by Ms. Lacey that we fund the program at the amount of $1,000.00. A second was offered by Ms. Pepple and approved with six votes. It was determined that we would basically leave it up to Ms. Platek on how the money was to be used, or what products were deemed most needed for the success of the program.

Mr. Barrier raised the issue of funding the culinary arts program at the high school and how it might impact us if other school groups such as the drama club or band approached us and requested funding. Ms. Lacey responded by noting that we can explain how the culinary arts program has the potential to produce employees and/or entrepreneurs, and that we can allow other school groups to make presentations setting forth their requests which will be examined individually.

Mr. Walter noted a submission by Ms. Siirila that our next interaction with the Board of Commissioners be a presentation to the BOC, for information sharing, rather than being conducted in a meeting format.

Ms. Lacey reported the following:

-- Groundbreaking will occur at Cannon Memorial Hospital, for their new addition, on June 4, 2019 at 11:00 AM. The hospital expansion will add 60 new jobs, as well as new hospital beds and a behavioral health unit.

--Dr. Charles Baker will retire on June 19, 2019. A reception for him will be held at the Chapman Center on June 20, 2019 from 4:00 pm until 7:00 pm.

-- Ms. Lacey was appointed to a three-year term on the EDC in 2018. However, due to her increased work responsibilities because of the hospital construction project, she advised that she will not be able to complete her term and intends to submit her resignation accordingly. She stated that she does wish to remain involved with the EDC, and will attend meetings as her time allows.

Rural Counts (see attachment)

Mr. Barrier stated that regarding broadband, healthcare and small business development, that it was important to look at how Avery County can get support to address these issues, specifically through advocacy at the state level. He noted the great number of counties in North Carolina that are considered rural, and that more rural counties need a greater voice. Example: Mecklenburg County can out-vote 14 rural counties on issues and an emphasis on changing this needs to occur. He added that work continues on changing Avery County from a Tier 2 county to a Tier 1 county.

Ms. Pepple invited the group members to a ribbon cutting on the newest Habitat for Humanity house, located at Trice Fork Mountain Road. This will happen Wednesday (5/22/19) at 6:00 pm. She also noted that the June After-Hours gathering will occur at Avery Heating and Air Conditioning.

A motion to adjourn was offered by Ms. Pepple, seconded by Ms. Lacey and approved unanimously.

The meeting ended at 6:10 pm.

The next meeting will be on June 24, 2019.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan P. Siirila

Attachments

BRIAN HAMILTON FOUNDATION

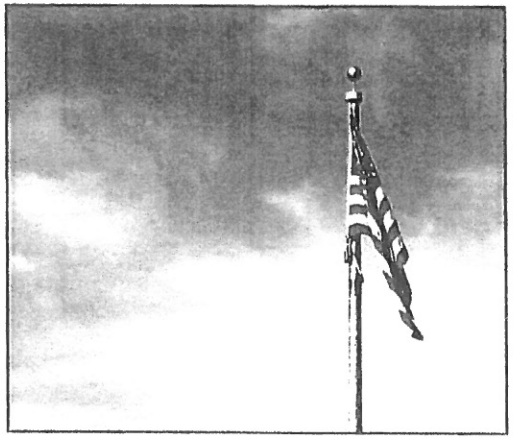
Entrepreneurship for all

brianhamilton.org

Youth Entrepreneurship Initiative

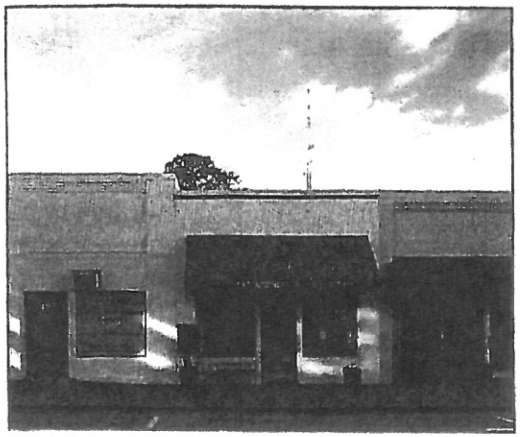
Through our youth initiative, we work in schools to plant the seed of entrepreneurship in the minds of students while connecting them to resources needed to succeed.

Military Transition Readiness



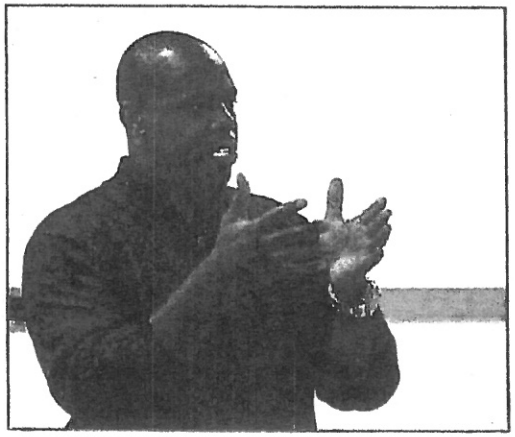
We believe veterans are natural entrepreneurs. We help ease the transition by providing targeted programing, skill development and mentorship needed for them to launch their own businesses.

Main Street Fund



The $100 million lending fund drives job creation and economic growth. We give quick, honest answers to cash flow positive businesses.

Inmates to Entrepreneurs



I2E provides resources and mentorship to help people with criminal backgrounds start, grow and run low-capital businesses. We offer 8-week courses, in-prison classes and national seminars.

BRIAN HAMILTON FOUNDATION

Entrepreneurship for all.

brianhamilton.org

Youth Entrepreneurship Initiative

The Brian Hamilton Foundation believes students should know entrepreneurship is an option. Through speaking events and online education, we empower students with the skills to recognize opportunities and launch their own businesses.

Future Entrepreneur School Tour

Middle and high schools host Brian Hamilton as part of their strategy to prepare students for the future. He inspires students to expand their options by exploring the principles of starting their own real businesses, and he focuses on the values of entrepreneurship: a strong work ethic, honesty, and commitment.

The Hamilton Challenge

The Hamilton Challenge is a youth initiative focused on opening the door of entrepreneurship for all. During this 7-day journey, young people take the first steps to launch their own business. The Foundation partners with teachers and schools to incorporate the Challenge into their classes and clubs.

"Mr. Hamilton's engaging style captivated the audience. As a result, Caleb went home and designed his own business cards. He was motivated to begin thinking about various career options and how to make his dreams a reality. Mr. Hamilton showed our students that dreams are possible for any socio-economic level or regardless of your background." - Parent of West Wilkes Middle student Caleb H.

To learn more, visit brianhamilton.org/youth-entrepreneurship or email Scott Kelly at scottk@brianhamilton.org

BRIAN HAMILTON FOUNDATION

Entrepreneurship for all.

brianhamilton.org

Starter U

Starter U is a free online course aimed at teaching the basics of starting, running, and growing a business. It is available to anyone, anywhere. Learn from successful entrepreneurs and move past the fear of failure.

Youth Entrepreneurship Initiative

Through our youth initiative and The Hamilton Challenge, we work in schools to plant the seed of entrepreneurship in the minds of students while connecting them to resources needed to succeed.

Military Transition Readiness

We believe veterans are natural entrepreneurs. We help ease the transition by providing the targeted programing, skill development, and mentorship needed for them to launch their own businesses.

Inmates to Entrepreneurs

I2E provides resources and mentorship to help people with criminal backgrounds start, run, and grow low-capital businesses. We offer 8-week courses, in-prison classes, and national seminars.

BRIAN HAMILTON FOUNDATION

Our mission is to open the door of entrepreneurship for all Americans by sharing with them the tools and training necessary to start, run, and grow successful businesses.

About Brian Hamilton

Brian Hamilton co-founded Sageworks, the country's first fintech and largest provider of software to U.S. banks. He sold the company to a leading private equity firm in 2018.

He is also the founder of Inmates to Entrepreneurs, a national program that helps people with criminal records start their own small businesses. Inmates to Entrepreneurs is supported by the Brian Hamilton Foundation, which provides access to entrepreneurship to people who wouldn't otherwise have it.

Hamilton holds multiple patents for his work in automating financial analysis. He is a regular guest on CNBC and Fox and is regularly quoted in and writes for all major national media publications. He is also a contributor to Inc. and Entrepreneur magazines.

The first in his family to attend college, Brian holds an undergraduate degree from Sacred Heart University, where he served on the Board of Trustees, and an MBA from Duke University.

INMATES TO ENTREPRENEURS

The Problem

- **70 million** Americans have a criminal record
- People with a criminal record are **50 percent** less likely to get an interview callback
- **67 percent** of formerly incarcerated individuals will wind up back in prison within three years
- On average, it costs **$32,000 a year** to hold an inmate in custody

What We Offer

Entrepreneurship allows people to be their own boss and overcome their criminal background. We offer a variety of services including:

- **Eight-week Course:** In-depth course on the fundamentals of starting a business
- **Correctional Facility Trainings:** Two-hour seminar on where to start when starting a business
- **Individual Mentorship:** Individual guidance for current or aspiring business owners
- **One-Day Seminars:** Crash course on how to turn your business idea into a business reality

Start Your Business

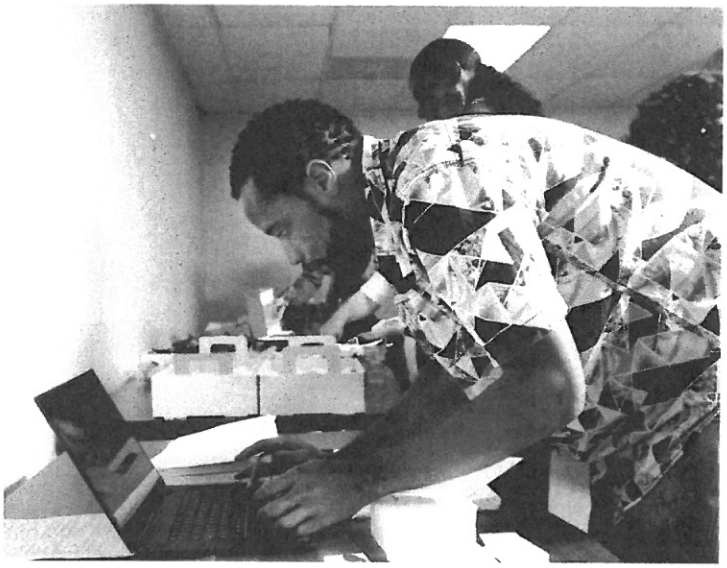
To learn more about Inmates to Entrepreneurs and our programs email us at info@inmatestoentrepreneurs.org or visit us at inmatestoentrepreneurs.org

INMATES TO ENTREPRENEURS

Our mission is to provide people with criminal backgrounds a second chance through entrepreneurship.

Who We Are

Inmates to Entrepreneurs provides resources and mentorship to help people with a criminal background start, grow, and run low-capital service businesses. Our vision is to reduce the rate of recidivism in the United States by providing an alternative path to financial stability and success.



Our History

1992 — Brian Hamilton begins teaching in correctional facilities.

2008 — The program is formally named "Inmates to Entrepreneurs"

2017 — I2E launches eight-week course for individuals with criminal backgrounds.

2018 — I2E expanded to Charlotte, Durham, Greensboro, and Wilmington.

2018 — I2E goes national, launching its first seminar in New York City.

Start Your Business

To learn more about Inmates to Entrepreneurs and our programs email us at info@inmatestoentrepreneurs.org or visit us at inmatestoentrepreneurs.org

RURAL COUNTS

2019 RURAL COUNTS Advocacy Priorities

BROADBAND

- Provide additional, recurring funding to the GREAT (Growing Rural Economies with Access to Technology) program.
- Clarify the ability of local governments to partner with private and non-profit partners on broadband infrastructure projects.
- Implement a state-level "dig once" policy to cut costs and increase efficiency in laying broadband infrastructure.
- Explore an internet adoption initiative to promote competition, enhance digital literacy, and make broadband affordable.

HEALTH

- Close the health insurance coverage gap in North Carolina.
- Expand efforts to recruit and retain rural health providers in underserved areas of the state.
- Implement recommendations for a state telemedicine policy made by DHHS in 2017.
- Explore solutions for the substance abuse crisis that address both prevention and treatment.

SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

- Balance state economic development efforts with an added emphasis on supporting entrepreneurs and retaining existing firms.
- Address regulatory barriers that hinder entrepreneurs from starting and growing businesses.
- Increase funding and coordination of technical assistance for rural communities nurturing small business development and downtown revitalization.
- Support long-term disaster recovery through improving small business support and strategic planning.