FRONT ROYAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY (FREDA) MEETING MINUTES
Monday, March 4, 2024, at 12:00pm
Town Hall Upstairs Conference Room

The following minutes are a summary of items on the agenda.
This meeting may be viewed in its entirety by accessing the video of the same date online via the Town's website at www.frontroyalva.com.

ROLL CALL PRESENT: Chairman Richard M. Novak
Director Aiden Miller
Director David Gedney
Director Frank Stankiewicz
Director Nicholas C. Bass
Director Robert Elliott
Director Thomas Eshelman

SUPPORT STAFF PRESENT: Town Manager Joseph Waltz
Director of Community Development and Tourism Elizabeth Lewis
Executive Administrative Assistant Hillary Wilfong
IT Director Charles Hutchings

Approval of Minutes
Director Stankiewicz moved to approve the minutes from the February 5th meeting and the work session on February 12th, seconded by Director Bass.
Vote: Yes- Novak, Eshleman, Miller, Gedney, Stankiewicz, Bass, Elliott
No-N/A
Absent- N/A
Abstain N/A

Old Business
Mr. Waltz shared that Town Council approved the MOU for FREDA, and Chairman Novak will need to officially sign the document.

Mr. Waltz advised that some changes still need to be made to the Bylaws and Town Code Chapter 16, he his actively working on the by-laws and will submit to the Board before the next meeting of the revisions.

<u>Continued Goal Setting</u>
Ms. Lewis reviewed the goals from the initial goal setting work session; and asked if anyone had anything else to add, Ms. Lewis started with the first goal; Infrastructure. Continue to support the growth of the Inland Port as it relates to the Town. Chairman Novak brought up parking downtown, Ms. Lewis advised that in 2019 a parking study was done and will provide the Board with the study prior to next meeting.

Director Eshleman discussed having an analysis of traffic flow, as there is specific intersections where during peak times, it makes traveling difficult, and our roads do not accommodate our current traffic flow and concerns for future growth in our town.

Next, Ms. Lewis discussed existing business goal, the Board agreed that we need to formulate questions to survey current businesses, Ms. Lewis asked the Board to submit questions to her prior to the next meeting, allowing her to have the Boards questions combined to initiate the draft of the survey. The Board also agreed that having a “tool kit” for new businesses, with a step-by-step plan, along with startup incentives. Chairman Novak asked if we could determine what other EDA Boards are doing and build from theirs. Ms. Lewis advised that is a great idea, we can also use our survey to assist with our resources.

The next goal Ms. Lewis reviewed is new businesses, which the Board agreed that the survey and tool kit will assist with new businesses, also providing information on our website.

Workforce is the fourth goal that Ms. Lewis broached the Board for discussion. Director Stankiewicz shared that he is unsure what the technical centers and college courses offer and their availability, he also shared that he knows from being a small business owner the struggle it can be to find trained staff locally. Ms. Lewis will work on setting up tours for Blue Ridge Technical Center and Laurel Ridge Community College allowing the Board to see what courses they offer.

Lastly, the Board reviewed their asset development goal as being a supportive role from FREDA. The Board agreed it is important and from the survey they will gain vital information regarding what the businesses are looking for.

Chairman Novak proposed to the Board to have meetings every two weeks as opposed to monthly to help complete the goals.

Mr. Waltz advised that the Board start working on a survey for the existing business owners, and for the workforce development, the next step would be the touring the local workforce training facilities such as Blue Ridge Technical Center and Laurel Ridge Community College. Mr. Waltz advised that he would provide the parking study prior to the next meeting, and lastly the reviewing of the inventory of current properties in Front Royal which Ms. Lewis has started working on.

Ms. Lewis distributed a list of properties available that she was able to locate and provided to the Board. Ms. Lewis also shared with the Board a retail map of the current shopping centers with vacancies and pad sights.

New Business
<u>Review of the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)</u> Ms. Lewis shared that herself, Mr. Waltz and Chairman Novak attended the Northern Shenandoah Regional Valley Commission stake holder meeting. They are starting the process of repulling their development strategy and are looking for input from our board. When Ms. Lewis receives more output information from this study she will share with the Board. The current presentation that was presented was completed in 2019. Mr. Waltz shared their goals which align with our own Board, Chairman Novak viewed the meeting as a possible resource for FREDA.

Open Discussion
Chairman Novak also shared that on February 27th Rob McDougall held a meeting at Royal Cinemas on his plans to open an art center in the Murphy Building. Director Miller attended and shared his thoughts on the new art center and how it will provide great opportunity and diversity downtown.

Next Meeting
The Board agreed to have a work session meeting on March 18th at 12:30 to follow up on the goals.

The next regular meeting for FREDA will be April 1, 2024, at noon.

Adjourn

Chairman Novak asked for a motion to adjourn at 1:04pm, motion made by Director Miller and seconded by Director Eshleman.

FRONT ROYAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY (FREDA) WORKSESSION MEETING MINUTES

Monday, March 18, 2024, at 12:30pm

Town Hall Upstairs Conference Room

The following minutes are a summary of items on the agenda.

This meeting may be viewed in its entirety by accessing the video of the same date online via the Town's website at www.frontroyalva.com.

ROLL CALL PRESENT: Chairman Richard M. Novak
Director Aiden Miller- absent
Director David Gedney
Director Frank Stankiewicz
Director Nicholas C. Bass
Director Robert Elliott
Director Thomas Eshelman

SUPPORT STAFF PRESENT: Town Manager Joseph Waltz
Director of Community Development and Tourism Elizabeth Lewis
Executive Administrative Assistant Hillary Wilfong
IT Director Charles Hutchings

Goal Setting Discussion

Infrastructure- Downtown Parking- Mr. Waltz shared the parking study which was conducted in 2019 prior to this meeting. Director Bass shared that it had excellent information, however, didn't address some things such as Valley Health being overflow parking. Director Gedney shared that it also did not provide any feedback for events and parking. Lastly, Chairman Novak advised that the study was thorough, however it is outdated. Mr. Waltz will investigate how much a parking study would cost.

Traffic Studies- Ms. Lewis opened the discussion for traffic studies; Director Eshleman discussed his major concerns with John Marshall Highway starting from Leach Run Parkway. Director Gedney even stated from High Knob, if we could work with VDOT or the County on widening the roads or adding a turning lane Director Eshleman also shared his concerns on potential truck traffic from Happy Creek from the Industrial Park and the Avtex Center on Kendrick Lane. Mr. Waltz advised that the Town has done some preliminary studies on the traffic specifically regarding the Avtex area that he will try to share.

Existing Business- Survey Questions- Ms. Lewis distributed a draft list of questions for the business survey to the Board. Each board member reviewed the list and suggested some edits and clarification with some questions. The Board discussed how we would we distribute the survey to each business, Chairman Novak suggested a business card with a QR code, the Board also discussed having it digitized on the website. The Board then discussed how long the survey should be, and if it should be open-ended questions, rating and include a comment line, but also expressed concerns on how long it would take to complete the survey. Ms. Lewis acknowledged that with all the information we are trying to obtain that the survey could become lengthy and agreed that some business owners might shy away from completing the survey. However, Ms. Lewis asked the Board did we want quantitative or qualitive results, and shared with the right questions we could receive both. Ms. Lewis will work on the survey prior to the next meeting, allowing the Board members to complete their own survey.

Ms. Lewis asked the Chair if we could skip New Business on the Agenda, as there are no updates. Permission granted.

Workforce Development- Ms. Lewis discussed site tours at Blue Ridge Technical Cetner and Laurel Ridge Community College. The majority of the Board will attend Blue Ridge Technical Center on April 15th and later visit Laurel Ridge Community College on April 18th. The Board is excited to see what both schools offer for continued education and trades.

Asset Development- No additional updates, however, the Board is working on securing a comprehensive inventory of available existing commercial spaces to benefit both current and future businesses.

Next Meeting

The next regular meeting for FREDA will be April 1, 2024, at noon.

Adjourn
Chairman Novak asked for a motion to adjourn at 1:04pm, motion made by Director Eshelman and seconded by Director Gedney.