



Front Royal Economic Development Authority Meeting “Business Development Board”

Monday, July 1, 2024 @ 12:00pm

Town Hall – East Conference Room

View meeting online LIVE at <https://www.frontroyalva.com/673/Town-Hall-Live>

New Business • Existing Business • Workforce • Infrastructure • Asset Development

1. Roll Call – *Hillary Wilfong*
2. *Approval of Minutes - *I move that FREDa approve the Regular Meeting minutes of June 3, 2024.*
3. New Business
 - a. Review of Town Projects
4. Old Business
 - a. Existing Business Survey
 - b. Blue Ridge Technical Center Tour
 - c. Attorney for FREDa- Ongoing Search
5. Open Discussion
6. Next Meeting – Monday, August 5, 2024 @ 12:00pm
7. Adjourn

**Action Item – requires board vote*

Workforce Development, Existing Business, Future Business, Asset Development, Infrastructure



FRONT ROYAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY (FREDA) MEETING MINUTES

Monday, June 3, 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: Vice Chairman Nicholas Bass
Treasurer Thomas Eshelman
Director Aiden Miller
Director David Gedney
Director Robert Elliott
Director Frank Stankiewicz

ABSENT: Chairman Richard M. Novak

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

Approval of Minutes

Director Gedney motioned to approve the minutes from the regular meeting on May 6th. Director Eshleman seconded the motion.

Director Miller discussed abstaining from the minutes on April 1, 2024, due to being absent, and request that to be corrected in the minutes.

Director Eshleman made a motion to amend the previous motion and to approve the minutes with the corrections for May 6, 2024. Director Miller seconded the motion.

Roll Call

Vote:

Yes- Eshleman, Gedney, Elliott, Miller

No - N/A

Absent – Novak

Abstain – Bass, Stankiewicz

New Business

Regional Planning Presentation by Ashly Shickle, Strategic Planner with Northern Shenandoah Valley Regional Commission (NSVRC)

Ms. Lewis introduced Ms. Shickle, noting she guides the Northern Shenandoah Valley Regional Commission

through the development and maintenance of a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy, assists community partners with the Go Virginia Application, and provides project support as needed.

Ms. Shickle shared that the Northern Shenandoah Valley region encompasses five counties in the northwest corner of Virginia—Clarke, Frederick, Page, Shenandoah, Warren—and all jurisdictions within, as well as the City of Winchester. The NSVRC exists to bring these local governments together to pursue common goals, work on regional issues, and find efficiencies through collaboration. The Northern Shenandoah Valley Regional Commission is one of 21 planning district commissions established by the Commonwealth of Virginia. Each commission serves a planning district, a political subdivision of the Commonwealth chartered under the Regional Cooperation Act.

Ms. Shickle presented the Board with an Economic Overview Report generated by Chmura Economics and Analytics. The report highlighted demographic profiles, employment trends, wage trends, cost of living index, industry and occupation snapshots, along with education levels in the town of Front Royal. She noted that the report is being updated as most of the data is from 2022.

The Board engaged Ms. Shickle while reviewing the report and discussed some potentially skewed numbers. Ms. Shickle will look into those and follow up with Ms. Lewis. Ms. Shickle provided feedback, answering as many questions as possible, and shared that our peer localities are Williamsburg and Leesburg, with similar area.

Ms. Shickle also shared information about the cost-of-living index survey and discussed ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed), representing the growing number of families unable to afford basic housing and essentials. Ms. Lewis advised that she is familiar with ALICE but would like to know more about the cost-of-living index survey and how to participate.

The Board thanked Ms. Shickle for her time and valuable information.

Old Business

Existing Business Survey Launch

Ms. Lewis updated the Board on the current number of recipients that have responded to the survey with a completion rate of 70%. She shared that out of the 27 surveys received, there is a mixed batch of business owners. Ms. Lewis also shared that she, Chairman Novak, and Director Eshelman interviewed on Town Talk, highlighting the Survey. She is optimistic about phase one of the survey and shared that the survey will also be in the Chamber of Commerce newsletter, with a QR code to track responses. The survey will also be pushed on Town social media accounts.

Ms. Lewis petitioned the Board to extend the survey until June 30th, hoping for more business owners to complete it. The Board agreed to extend the date.

Blue Ridge Technical Center

Ms. Lewis reminded the Board of the tour scheduled for June 17th at 1:00 pm at the Blue Ridge Technical Center. School is not in session, allowing the Board to see the full range of courses offered. The Board will meet at the front door at the top of the hill.

Attorney for FREDa

The search is still in the process for the Board's attorney. Ideally, the Board would prefer an attorney from the Shenandoah Valley but will consider Northern Virginia as well.

Open Discussion

Director Gedney shared his thoughts on the Baymont Inn Project, noting he was not as in favor of the project as reported. He discussed that having an apartment complex would decrease the tax base for the Town with meal and lodging tax and was unsure how that would align with the Board's goals.

Director Eshelman noted that creating housing is also part of economic development and shared that growth and change for the Town are not bad. However, the support from FREDa wasn't for the apartments but to approve the special use permit for adequate street parking and loading areas.

Mr. Waltz shared that ideally, he would have preferred the Board to receive information on the project earlier so their comments and support could reach the Planning Commission Board sooner. However, Mr. Waltz agreed to try a different approach moving forward.

Next Meeting

The next regular meeting for FREDa will be on July 1, 2024, at Noon.

Adjournment

Vice Chairman Bass called for a motion to adjourn at 1:22 pm, motion made by Director Miller and seconded by Director Eshelman.