



DRAFT Economic Development Authority (EDA) Meeting/Retreat Minutes

Tuesday, February 7, 2023 ❖ 7:00 pm

Viget Offices, 105 W. Broad Street, 5th Floor, Falls Church VA 22046

- 1. Call to Order:** at 7:03 PM by EDA Chairman Bob Young
- 2. Meeting Attendees:**
In Person: Brian Williams, Debbie Hiscott, Matt Quinn, Bob Young, Letty Hardi, Phil Duncan, Renee Rojural, Tim Stevens, Matthew Downs, Becky Witsman, Jim Snyder, Rachelle Barimany, Jimmy Jung, Jim Coyle, Wyatt Shields, Cindy Mester, Andrea Caumont
Virtual: Ed Saltzberg, Ross Litkenhous, Sandy Kiercz. Upon a motion read by Cindy Mester, virtual participation by the EDA members listed was approved.
- 3. Approval of December 2022 EDA Meeting Minutes:** Unanimous approval.
- 4. Election of EDA Chair and Vice Chair** – Ross Litkenhous nominated (seconded by Jim Coyle) Bob Young to again chair the EDA for 2023. The nomination was unanimously approved by roll call vote. Bob Young nominated (seconded by Jim Coyle) Ross Litkenhous to be Vice Chair. The nomination was unanimously approved by roll call vote.
- 5. Affordable Housing/Virginia Village** – Cindy Mester and Brenden Woodley briefed the EDA on the status of the closing/conveyance of the EDA-owned properties to Wesley Housing, upcoming discussions about the possible future redevelopment of the Virginia Village properties and the status of the Amazon Reach/City homeownership program. There was also discussion about the EDA’s interest and future role in the Virginia Village redevelopment project. A new working group for this further discussion will be named within 6 months of the conveyance of the properties to Wesley Housing and EDA will have representation in that working group.
- 6. Rightsizing parking requirements in the City** – Jim Snyder kicked off this discussion about the general perception of EDA members of the current parking situation in the City- Too little? Too much? In addition, there was discussion about how to park the re-use of older commercial buildings so that they are not underutilized or sit vacant. It was decided that better answers to those and other questions should be included in a scope of work for an EDA paid parking consultant.
- 7. Post-Covid Emergency Outdoor Dining Ordinance update and scheduling** – EDA members were advised that a presentation and discussion on this topic will occur at next month’s EDA meeting.
- 8. Commercial District Amenities** – Ms. Mester and Ms. Witsman advised of the City’s upcoming efforts to recognize the 75th Anniversary of the City via seed money allocated by City Council and banners that will be designed and installed in the City from August 2023 – August 2024. This effort is in the early stages.
- 9. Ground floor commercial Voluntary Concessions in mixed use buildings** – Two recent applications for changes to the Voluntary Concession restrictions on the types of uses that can be located in ground floor spaces in mixed use buildings have caused this issue to require more consideration. Powerpoint slides highlighting the “blacklisted” uses in two of the most recently approved projects also reflects the need for possible changes to how the City negotiates voluntary concessions for the ground floor of these buildings. Striking a balance between community desires, market reality and fiscal impact should be general considerations as well as the need for



some measure of flexibility so that as the market changes, creative, unique and possibly very desirable new uses can be accommodated. As well, the current process for gaining approval for unapproved uses is City staff intensive, time consuming and expensive so more evaluation of an improved process was suggested. As a result of the discussion, EDO staff will reach out to marketing/retail consultants to possibly engage professional assistance in further exploring how to improve the current and future situations.

10. **The Little City Gift/bonus Card program update** – Renee Rojural gave an update on the success of the gift card program. Over 70 businesses participated in the highly popular program and the program has generated \$447,109 in available funding to be used in those 70+ businesses. If sufficient funding can be identified, the program may be resurrected again for the 2023 holiday season.
11. **ARPA Parklet** – Jim Snyder gave an overview of progress being made on implementing new outdoor dining parklets in the City. The most progress has been made on the So. Washington Street/Corrales Alley, where a proposal by Studio 39 has been received for providing landscape architecture design services for the project. The City procurement process is nearly completed for this effort. Mr. Snyder also shared very impressive examples of Studio 39’s work on a parklet along Richmond Highway in Fairfax County. Additional ongoing efforts are being made on a small City-owned area at the lower end of S. Maple Street near the intersection with S. Washington Street. Both of these areas are near a large number of restaurants. Merrifield Garden Center has provided estimates for the implementation of a proposed design for this second parklet area.
12. **ARPA tourism grant** – Renee Rojural gave an update on the EDO’s approved request for \$80,000 in the Virginia Tourism Corporation’s ARPA tourism grant program. The approval amount is based on hotel taxes generated in the City. The monies are anticipated to be spent on a marketing study, a possible Restaurant Week and a mini-tourism website.
13. **Other EDA Board member discussion topics** – Ross Litkenhous proposed that an effort should be made by the EDA to investigate improving the City’s climate for attracting and retaining new businesses (particularly office users). He specifically mentioned evaluating the City’s business license tax rates and/or possibly providing other incentives to attract new businesses, so that businesses might open/start their business, grow their businesses and keep their business in the City.
14. **Miscellaneous updates** – The holiday tree lighting contract is out for an Invitation for Bid process; responses are due back by 2/27. The Founders Row 2 ground breaking event will occur at 3:30 PM on March 16th and the next EDA meeting will be held on March 7th, 2023
15. **Renee Rojural** – It was announced that Renee will be leaving City employment on Friday, February 17th. She will start work in the marketing department in a department of the US Department of Transportation in March. All in attendance expressed their best wishes and thanks for her hard work and tremendous successes in the 16 months she worked for the City.
16. **Adjournment** – the meeting was adjourned at 10:00 PM.

Affordable housing – There will be continued EDA participation in the future Virginia Village/Wesley redevelopment project via a new Virginia Village working group. That group will be created within 6 months of the conveyance of the City properties. Updates and discussion on the project will occur via reports to the EDA, as available, via the EDA members who are named to the working group.



Parking – engage a consultant, possibly Walker who performed the downtown commercial parking analysis for the EDA, to evaluate:

- Parking needs in future new mixed-use projects
- Criterion/process to apply for parking flexibility for re-use of older commercial buildings and recommendations for solving unanticipated adverse parking impacts that might occur as a result of a reduction.

Voluntary concessions and ground floor commercial uses – engage consulting assistance and City staff involvement to advise on options for resolving current situation of inconsistency of ground floor VC's in projects including “black list” and “white list” uses. Also, answer the question as to how long the VC's might be expected to last and to meet the following objectives:

- Fully occupied ground floor spaces
- Street level activity generated by ground floor spaces
- To the degree possible, combined ground floor uses should produce net revenues predicted during approvals
- Occupancy of new ground floor spaces in new projects to occur ASAP, concurrent with occupancy of residential units
- Flexibility for changing market conditions
- Anticipating/preventing potential unintended consequences such as towing
- Having a vision of future parking needs
- Possible public/private partnerships with current and future mixed-use project developers, for provision of public parking, as well as with landlords of existing buildings with excess parking
- Recommendations for ground floor VC's in future projects
- Recommendation for an expedited process and criterion by which current VC's can be changed

Improve the City's climate for attracting and retaining new businesses (particularly office users) – Investigate the possible need/feasibility of reducing specific City business license tax rates and/or provide incentives to attract new businesses, so that businesses might open/start their business, grow their businesses and keep their business in the City.