

**MINUTES
WATAUGA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION
VIDEOCONFERENCE MEETING
MARCH 31, 2020
6:00 P.M.**

CALL TO ORDER:

President Miner called the meeting to order by videoconference at 6:06 PM.

DIRECTORS PRESENT:

Art Miner, President, Place 1	Attended by Videoconference
Amirali (A.J.) Fazalbhai, Place 2	Attended by Videoconference
Jan Hill, Place 3	Attended by Videoconference
Mike Alexander, Place 5	Attended by Videoconference
Cheneya Cruze, Place 6	Attended by Videoconference
Robert Gaffney, Place 7	Attended by Videoconference

DIRECTORS ABSENT:

None

CITY STAFF PRESENT:

Andrea Gardner, City Manager	Attended by Videoconference
George Hyde, City Attorney	Attended by Videoconference
Sandra Gibson, Director of Finance	Attended by Videoconference
Denise Wilkinson, ED Specialist	Attended by Videoconference
Chad Stephens, Parks Superintendent	Attended by Videoconference
Aaron Farmer, Consultant – The Retail Coach	Attended by Videoconference

Also present – Council Liaison, Andrew Neal Attended by Videoconference

PUBLIC TESTIMONY

Scott Prescher, 6501 Patsy Lane, asked the Board to consider developing a separate web page for the WEDC separate from the City website, stating that while the links to economic development on the City website provide information, it is not enticing to potential businesses that may want to locate in Watauga. He stated some of the information is outdated, new videos need to be added, and a staff person needed to be hired to do this and social media to relieve the IT department from doing these tasks.

PRESENTATIONS

1. Presentation and update to the WEDC Board from Retail Coach on consultant activities from January 2020 to March 2020 to include new business recruitment and the impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic on economic development activity

Mr. Aaron Farmer, The Retail Coach, gave an update on the activities engaged on behalf of the WEDC. Retail Coach continues to market Watauga to potential retailers, with many continuing expansion plans despite the economy. The report included an update on the major retailers as being strong in the market prior to COVID-19 are likely to remain in business, but those that were struggling prior, will most likely not make it through the crisis. The report included the announcement that Pier 1 will be leaving Watauga, and that a high-quality retailer will be filling in the space. Retail Coach is working with a local broker regarding 4 new businesses to locate in Watauga; TCBY, a pizza concept and a hotel are showing interest; and Retail Coach will be representing Watauga at an ICSC RECON conference that has been postponed to September or October of this year.

REPORTS FROM STAFF

Sandra Gibson, CGFO, CGFM, Director of Finance

Ms. Gibson presented the Monthly Financial Report for the period ending January 31, 2020

Director Gaffney asked if Ms. Gibson could anticipate a percentage of how much sales tax would decrease for March and April. Ms. Gibson answered that a decrease in March may not be substantial, but April receipts will most likely be decreased. She also stated that the reserve fund is healthy.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. Consider and take action to approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting of February 18, 2020

Vice-President Cruze motioned to approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting of February 18, 2020 as submitted. Director Hill seconded and the motion carried by a unanimous vote as follows:

Ayes: Fazalbhair, Hill, Alexander, Cruze, Gaffney
Nays: None

2. Consider and take action to approve the minutes for the Special Meeting of February 25, 2020

Director Hill motioned to approve the minutes of the Special Meeting of February 25, 2020 as submitted. Director Gaffney seconded and the motion carried by a unanimous vote as follows:

AYES: Fazalbhai, Hill, Alexander, Cruze, Gaffney
NAYS: None

PUBLIC HEARING

1. Conduct a public hearing on a business retention project adding digital poster signs as infrastructure in Capp Smith Park

President Miner opened the public hearing 6:27 PM.

Public Testimony:

Mr. Scott Prescher, 6501 Patsy Lane, stated that he supports the signs, but asked that the signs include Watauga EDC instead of WEDC because people will not recognize WEDC to be the Watauga Economic Development Corporation.

President Miner closed the public hearing at 6:29 PM.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Discuss and consider action to approve a business retention project to add Digital Poster Signage infrastructure at Capp Smith Park

Director Hill motioned to approve the business retention project to add Digital Poster Signage infrastructure at Capp Smith Park. Secretary Fazalbhai seconded and the motion carried unanimously with the following vote:

AYES: Fazalbhai, Hill, Alexander, Cruze, Gaffney
NAYS: None

2. Discuss and consider action to authorize the City Manager to execute a Buy Board contract with the Playground, Shade and Surfacing Depot, LLC for completion of the Capp Smith Park Bench project

Public Testimony:

Mr. Scott Prescher, 6501 Patsy Lane, asked that the park benches state Watauga EDC rather than WEDC for recognition purposes.

Ms. Gardner stated that the purpose of the benches is to promote local shopping at local Watauga businesses, not to promote the Watauga Economic Development Corporation. She said that plates will be added to the benches that state Watauga

Economic Development Corporation but will not be included in the cutouts of the benches.

Vice-President Cruze motioned to authorize the City Manager to execute a Buy Board contract with the Playground, Shade and Surfacing Depot, LLC for completion of the Capp Smith Park Bench project. Director Gaffney seconded and the motion carried unanimously with the following vote:

AYES: Fazalbhair, Hill, Alexander, Cruze, Gaffney
NAYS: None

3. Discuss and consider action to amend the WEDC Bylaws and recommend approval of Amended Bylaws to the Watauga City Council

Director Hill motioned to amend the WEDC Bylaws and recommend approval of Amended Bylaws to the Watauga City Council. Secretary Fazalbhair seconded and the motion carried unanimously with the following vote:

AYES: Fazalbhair, Hill, Alexander, Cruze, Gaffney
NAYS: None

4. Consider action to accept the Comprehensive Annual Audit Report for the period ending September 30, 2019

Director Hill motioned to accept the Comprehensive Annual Audit Report for the period ending September 30, 2019. Secretary Fazalbhair seconded, and the motion carried unanimously with the following vote:

AYES: Fazalbhair, Hill, Alexander, Cruze, Gaffney
NAYS: None

5. Discuss and consider action on the site plan for the Watauga Road Property considered for restaurant incubator location

Public Testimony:

Mr. Scott Prescher, 6501 Patsy Lane, stated that if this property was considered unsafe as a park, the use may attract more school children since a school is located across the street. He also expressed concern that it would generate foot traffic, cause environmental problems and wanted to know if there was parking.

Ms. Gardner stated that Burgess & Niple, consulting engineers, prepared the site plan, the parking is shown on the site plan, and that foot traffic and issues with the adjacent channel are not a concern. She stated this is at the front of the property and does not include the back portion of the property, which is where the channel is located.

President Miner explained this is an opportunity to give an upstart to restaurant entrepreneurs to get a start in the business before making the investment in a brick and mortar location.

Director Hill motioned to approve the site plan for the Watauga Road Property for restaurant incubator location as presented. Vice-President Cruze seconded the motion.

Discussion followed the motion with Vice-President Cruze inquiring about sufficient (16 spaces) would be adequate.

Ms. Gardner stated that parking for vendors would be in a different location and 16 spaces would suffice.

Director Gaffney asked if the target date for completion in September was still a good target.

Ms. Gardner explained that because of the ongoing Coronavirus situation is likely to push the target date out and that the site plan needs to be approved and license agreements need to be completed with legal. She further stated that staff will reassess and keep the board updated.

Director Hill stated this is a great concept because it generates business activity in Watauga.

Ms. Gardner explained the incubator concept and stated the concept was considered because it allows the business to develop and grow before they make a bigger investment in a permanent location and that this concept allows diversity in funding by the WEDC.

Mr. Hyde stated that this concept is a good way to attract other businesses to the community.

President Miner called for a vote on the motion on the table. The motion to approve the site plan for the Watauga Road Property for a restaurant incubator location carried unanimously by the following vote:

AYES: Fazalbhai, Hill, Alexander, Cruze, Gaffney
NAYS: None

ADJOURNMENT

With no further business to discuss, President Miner adjourned the videoconference meeting at 6:53 PM.

APPROVED: this the 21st day of APRIL 2020.

SIGNED: this the 24th day of JUNE 2020.

APPROVED: Arthur L. Miner /s/
Arthur L. Miner, President

ATTEST: Amirali (A.J) Fazalbhai /s/
Amirali (A.J.) Fazalbhai, Secretary