

**Minutes
Business Advisory Committee**

January 13, 2012

Newton Depot – 1123 North Main Avenue

The Business Advisory Committee met at 11:30 a.m. on January 13th, 2012 for a lunch meeting at the Newton Depot. The meeting was opened by Rob Powell.

Members

Present: Eddie Haupt Jerry Hodge
 Jeremy Petty Judy Smith
 Tom Warlick John Stiver

Members

Absent: Luke Walling
 Javier Chavez
 Neal Powell

Others Present:

Mayor Anne P. Stedman
Jessica Setzer, Walker’s Pharmacy
Crystal Morphis, Sanford Holshouser Economic Development Consulting, LLC

Staff Present: City Manager Todd Clark
 Rob Powell, Community Development Coordinator

Item 1:

Rob Powell opened the meeting with some brief comments about recent Newton real estate and business news. Committee members indicated that this should be a regular agenda item. Rob asked for comments or corrections to the minutes of the December 8th 2011 meeting. Mr. Hodge moved that the minutes be accepted as written, the motion was seconded by Mr. Stiver, and the minutes were approved with no discussion.

Item 2: Incentive Program for the City of Newton

Crystal Morphis of Sanford Holshouser Economic Development Consulting presented an overview of around ten different incentive programs which could be good examples for developing an incentive program for Newton. Sanford Holshouser’s meeting report and recommendations are included at the end of these minutes. Mr. Stiver would be in favor of offering incentives to encourage new businesses to locate in the downtown area by offering temporary rent or utility subsidies. He is also in favor of efforts to help new businesses with gaining skills needed to successfully operate a business. Mr. Haupt says that the existing façade grant program does not provide enough money to incent property owners to improve their buildings. There was also discussion in favor of eventually being able to set up a revolving loan program for new and expanding businesses. Crystal Morphis suggested that the Committee work on assembling a group of local angel investors to fund a revolving loan program. Rob is to contact Morganton about the administration of their revolving loan program. Mr. Hodge said he was certain that there were local businesses that were in danger of failing due to the economy and that the Committee should put some thought into finding a way to help those businesses survive this economic downturn.

Item 3: Newton Non-Residential Maintenance Code

Rob Powell gave an overview of the existing Newton Non-Residential Maintenance Code, explained the limitations imposed by State law, and discussed some of the issues relative to enforcement of the Code. The Newton ordinance is based on NC General Statute 160A-439, Repair, Closing and Demolition of Non-Residential Structures. The City of Gastonia expands the coverage of their code by linking their code to G.S. 160A-536, Downtown Revitalization. Rob is to contact Gastonia about the success of their policy.

The Committee's discussion concentrated on the need to dedicate a code enforcement officer to focus on enforcing existing Newton codes. Mr. Petty suggested that the City could more clearly define which city department was responsible for enforcing which code. The idea of helping building owners who might be interested in adding upper-floor residential units was suggested as a way to encourage improvements to downtown buildings, along with education on the tax benefits available to building owners once the downtown historic district is established. The Committee voted to encourage the City Manager to include a Level 1 Code Enforcement Officer in next year's City budget.

Item 4: Redevelopment Master Plans

This presentation was delayed until a future meeting due to time restraints.

Item 5: Election of Officers

John Stiver was nominated to the office of Chairperson by Jeremy Petty, seconded by Jerry Hodge, and approved by unanimous vote. **Jerry Hodge** was nominated to be Vice-Chairperson by Tom Warlick, seconded by Eddie Haupt, and approved by unanimous vote.

Item 6: Next Steps

Items for the next meeting:

- Discussion on the first draft of a Newton incentive policy
- Creation of a Newton business list
- BAC meeting calendar for 2012

Item 7: Next Meeting Date

The suggested date for the next meeting is Friday February 24th at 11:30 am.

Item 8: Adjournment

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rob Powell
Recording Secretary