

**Minutes  
Business Advisory Committee**

February 24, 2012

Council Chambers – City Hall - 401 North Main Avenue

The Business Advisory Committee met at 11:30 a.m. on February 24<sup>th</sup>, 2012 for a lunch meeting at City Hall.

**Members**

**Present:** Javier Chavez    Jerry Hodge  
              Jeremy Petty    John Stiver  
              Tom Warlick

**Members**

**Absent:** Eddie Haupt  
              Judy Smith  
              Neal Powell  
              Luke Walling

**Others Present:** none

**Staff Present:** Rob Powell, Community Development Coordinator

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**Item 1:**

**Rob Powell** opened the meeting with comments about recent Newton real estate and business news, including new business startups during January and February.

Rob asked for comments or corrections to the minutes of the January 13<sup>th</sup> 2011 meeting. The minutes were approved with one correction. The January minutes will be corrected to show that Mr. Tom Warlick made the motion to nominate Mr. Jerry Hodge as Vice-Chairperson of the Committee.

**Item 2:            Incentive Program for the City of Newton**

**Chairman John Stiver** opened the discussion on a draft incentive program for Newton. Rob Powell explained the format of the draft program along with the incentive calculations for three categories of businesses. The discussion on the incentive program led to these suggestions for improving the draft program:

- 1) Cut off the term of incentive payments at three years maximum as opposed to the five years in the first draft
- 2) Combine the industrial category with the commercial category, leaving only two categories of incentive calculations – downtown district and everywhere other than downtown

There was some discussion as to whether this program, as designed, would be competitive with other municipalities in the area. The Committee, recognizing budget limitations, felt that the proposed plan would be a good start, and that they could continue to discuss improvements to the plan for future years. Mr. Hodge would like to develop a local incentive to encourage the re-use of empty textile and furniture mills. Rob is to check with the Newton Finance Department to see if Newton receives tax payments from Catawba County as the County collects, or in one lump payment. Rob is to revise the draft incentive program and present the revised version at the next meeting.

### **Item 3 & 4: Code Enforcement, Branding and Wayfinding**

With time being short, **Chairman John Stiver** commented that the City Manager was hoping to be able to include a Level 1 Building Inspector in the next fiscal year budget, and discussion moved on to priorities, branding, and wayfinding. Mr. Stiver requested that each member submit recommendations to him on their personal views of how the Committee should set priorities on the many ideas listed in the Sanford Holshouser study on commercial business development.

The Committee discussed the potential benefits and expected costs of branding, marketing, and wayfinding. The general opinion of those present was that consulting or design costs for branding should be kept low so that any money that might be available could be utilized to start work on improvements to wayfinding and signage for the major entry points into Newton. Comments were made in support of the current heart logo and “Heart of Catawba County” tag line, and comments were made in favor of considering additional work on the current logo, especially if those changes might generate attention from large manufacturing companies and major commercial businesses. One such suggestion, from Mr. Warlick, was to add “North Carolina” to the logo or tag line so that national companies would know where we were.

### **Item 5: Business Inventory for Newton**

Mr. Stiver advised the Committee that a database was in the process of being developed based on the utility accounts from the City of Newton. It was felt that the utility account information would be the best and quickest method of establishing the database. The City of Newton Commercial Development Coordinator will be adding category codes (business types) and location codes identifying the commercial area of location for each business. The City Planning Department will also be able to develop maps showing the concentration of businesses within the Newton city limits.

### **Item 6: Meeting Schedule**

The Committee determined that Friday meetings were difficult for some of the members. It was felt that monthly meetings were needed to continue to make progress on the many interests of the Committee. The Committee decided that meetings would be held each third Wednesday of the month at 11:30 am. The next meeting will be held on March 21<sup>st</sup>.

### **Item 7: Adjournment**

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

Respectfully submitted,

Rob Powell  
Recording Secretary