

CITY OF COLONIAL HEIGHTS, VIRGINIA

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MINUTES **City of Colonial Heights** **Economic Development Authority Organizational Meeting** **Thursday, January 28, 2020** **City Hall – 1st Floor, Council Chambers** **8:30 AM**

1. Call to Order and Roll Call

The Meeting was called to order at 8:35 AM

Present:

Mr. Blaha
Mrs. Comstock
Mr. Dance
Mrs. Halbert
Mr. Kester
Mr. Mazza

Absent:

Mr. Hedrick

2. Election of Officers:

Chairman- Mrs. Halbert nominated Mrs. Comstock for Chairman, and Mr. Dance seconded the nomination. All members were in favor, and Mrs. Comstock was elected as Chairman.

Vice-Chairman- Mrs. Comstock nominated Mr. Kester for Vice-Chairman, and Mr. Dance seconded the nomination. All members were in favor, and Mr. Kester was elected Vice Chairman.

3. Adoption of Agenda

Mrs. Epps suggested amending the agenda to include the approval of the meeting summary from the December 17 special meeting. Mrs. Halbert made a motion to adopt the agenda as amended and Mr. Kester seconded the motion, with all members in favor.

4. Approval of Minutes from Dec. 3, 2020 regular meeting

Mr. Kester made a motion to approve the minutes and Mr. Dance seconded the motion with all members in favor.

5. Approval of Meeting Summary from Dec. 17, 2020 special meeting
Mr. Kester made a motion to approve the meeting summary from the December 17 meeting and Mr. Dance seconded the motion with all members in favor.
6. Proposed Meeting Dates – March 25, 2021; May 27, 2021; July 22, 2021; September 23, 2021; December 2, 2021

Mrs. Halbert made a motion to approve the proposed meeting dates and Mr. Dance seconded the motion with all members in favor.

7. Old Business

- a. COVID-19 Small Business Grant Update

Mrs. Epps stated that the \$500,000 in funds the EDA received from the CARES Act expired as of December 31, 2020. Of the \$500,000, \$480,000 was distributed through the grant program to 128 businesses throughout the City. At that time, it was unknown if additional funds would be available in 2021, but she stated that she would likely know by March or April. For the final round of grants, the EDA had decided to allow businesses to reapply. Fifty-three grants were awarded to businesses who reapplied for an additional \$1,160. Mrs. Epps also shared the letters and emails received by business owners expressing their gratitude for the grants and how much the grants helped their small businesses.

- b. 401 Temple Avenue Update

Mrs. Epps shared that Rebkee closed on the property on December 16, 2020. The site plan was submitted for one of the parcels on the project. Rebkee submitted bonds to start doing site work, which may begin in the coming weeks. Mrs. Epps stated that the main project would not submit a site plan until April or May, with the goal to begin construction in July. She continued that Rebkee asked that the project remain confidential as the company is just entering the Richmond region market and want to make the announcement themselves.

Mrs. Comstock asked that Mrs. Epps bring the new members up to speed on the 401 Temple Avenue Project, and she provided a brief overview for new members.

8. New Business

Mrs. Epps provided members with a packet of items that included the by-laws, an updated contact list for all members, and a copy of the Economic Development Strategic Plan.

Mrs. Comstock asked EDA if they would like to change the time of meetings. EDA members agreed to keep meetings at 8:30AM.

Mrs. Epps gave members an update regarding the Economic Development Strategic Plan. City Council asked for added metrics to the Strategic Plan at the City Council Retreat. The Plan is updated every five to seven years, and requires

updating in 2022. Mrs. Epps stated she would likely change the incentive policies on page 15, as the city will not likely have the budget to contribute to incentives. The tourism section will need to be updated since the City is now a member of Richmond Region Tourism (RRT). RRT will help promote the City's hotels and Shepherd Stadium. Mrs. Epps was hopeful that the Chili Peppers would increase tourism.

Mrs. Comstock asked what Mrs. Epps wanted to achieve in 2021.

Mrs. Epps directed the EDA to page 8 of the Strategic Plan which lists goals. She stated the focus should be on job retention and expansion in light of the pandemic. In order to accomplish this, she would need to add a business retention program; therefore, she has requested a full-time position to implement the program. It would also require use of a CRM software to maintain metrics. The second goal is an Economic Development website, agreed to by City Council, which has been budgeted.

Mrs. Comstock asked about the site on Charles H. Dimmock Pkwy. Mrs. Epps explained that to bring the site to a level 3 according to the Virginia Economic Development Partnership, improvements needed to be made in order to move forward. The state will help market the site once it is ready to go. Mrs. Epps stated it would cost approximately \$80,000-\$100,000 to make it ready for level 3.

Mr. Kester asked how the EDA could help with the website. The EDA will be on the website, so Karen would like a photo of the members. Mr. Dance suggested that the EDA provide feedback on design and Mrs. Epps agreed. She also asked for testimonials to list on website. Mrs. Epps continued that they may need to call extra meetings for EDA involvement with the website development.

Mrs. Epps asked members what they would like to see at Southpark Mall.

Mrs. Epps shared that the former Walgreens building on the southern side of the Boulevard near the City Courthouse was under a purchase contract to close in March. She also shared that there was interest in the former Wells Fargo building across the street from City Hall, and the former Gordman's space in Colonial Square.

Mr. Dance shared that he received an email about the Suntrust building closing as a result of the merger with BB&T.

Mr. Kester shared that there was a proposed home and garden show scheduled in May to be held in the former Sears building.

Mr. Dance suggested that utilizing the Sears building as an event space for trade shows could be a profitable solution.

9. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 9:34AM.