

Warren County Economic Development Commission
501 Hwy 158-Business East
Warrenton, NC 27589

Minutes of the Board of Directors Meeting March 20, 2023 - 4:00 P.M.
Meeting held at Warren County Armory Civic Center

Members Present: Jane Ball-Groom, Claude O’Hagan, John Earl Alston, Victor Hunt, Brady Martin, Jim Whitley, Brock Pepper, and Angelena Kearney-Dunlap

Ex-Officio Members Present: Diane Cox, President of the Kerr-Tar COG

Members Absent: Stanley Jones

Ex-Officio Members Absent: Leanne Patrick, Lake Gaston Chamber of Commerce; Rachel Desmarais, Vance Granville Community College President; Wayne Aycock, Mayor of Norlina; Carroll Harris, Mayor of Macon; Walter Gardner, Mayor of Warrenton; Keith Sutton, Superintendent of Warren County Schools

Also Present: Charla Duncan, Community and Economic Development Director; Rose Ponton, Community and Economic Developer; Shiekell Richardson, County Attorney; Denny Burrows (for Wayne Aycock)

The March 20, 2023 meeting of the Warren County EDC Board of Directors was called to order by Chairman Brady Martin at 4:05 PM.

Chairman Brady Martin requested all to join him in a moment of silence. Chairman Martin read the conflict-of-interest disclaimer. No conflicts were identified. A quorum was verified.

Chairman Martin asked members to review the March 2023 meeting agenda.

After review, a motion was made by John Alston to set the meeting agenda, seconded by Brock Pepper, and duly carried by a unanimous vote; the March 20, 2023 meeting agenda was set.

Chairman Brady invited board members to review the February 2023 meeting minutes. After review, and note to correct the year from 2022 to 2023, a motion was made by Brock Pepper to approve the February 2023 meeting minutes, seconded by Victor Hunt, and duly carried by a unanimous vote; the February 20, 2023 minutes were approved.

During visitor introductions, Denny Burrows informed the board he was sitting in for ex-officio member Wayne Aycock. Diane Cox, Shiekell Richardson, and new board member Angelena Kearney Dunlap were all recognized.

Director Duncan presented the board with the previously tabled action for consideration to fund Frontier Warren in FY23. For the board’s benefit, Mrs. Duncan reviewed previous funding, distinctions between the co-working space and leased office space, and the new lease agreement

Henderson Fruit and Produce has entered into with the Town of Warrenton. Upon consultation, the county attorney advised that the Town of Warrenton's incentive of free rent for the first year of Henderson Fruit and Produce's lease did not meet the criteria set forth in NC General Statutes or established by case law for economic development incentives; therefore, Attorney Richardson advised that the County not commit tax payer dollars to covering the operational cost of a single business coming to the Frontier Warren space. After some discussion, Claude O'Hagan made the motion not to extend funding to Frontier Warren in FY2023. With a second from John Alston, the motion was duly carried by a unanimous vote.

A motion to dissolve the MOU between the town of Warrenton and Warren County regarding Frontier Warren was then made by Claude O'Hagan. The dissolution of the non-binding MOU between the Town and the County for Frontier Warren was recommended by the county attorney due to the change in the MOU's scope initiated by the leasing of the co-working space to one single enterprise. With a second from Brock Pepper, the motion was carried by a unanimous vote.

Regarding the opportunity for the development of a revolving loan fund by Warren County, Director Duncan presented in further detail the report findings compiled by NCGrowth for the board's benefit. Discussion was led by Brock Pepper and Diane Cox around the demonstrated need for this type of fund to fill in gaps in existing regional revolving fund programs. After further discussion, the board agreed that they were in support the general concept and of further exploration of a small business Revolving Loan Fund programmatic design development phase.

As a reminder, Director Duncan gave an overview of the upcoming ECU Honors Seminar in Economic Development and encouraged board members to attend.

Director Duncan provided a Directors Report highlighting updates to the slated Project Bridge timeline, the firm selected to provide planning services for a multi-modal pathway, the recent Golden LEAF SITE ID site visit and upcoming report, the upcoming NC Commerce CORE asset planning and economic roadmap project, and work going into the potential development of a regional job board in partnership with the Kerr-Tar COG workforce development board. Mrs. Duncan also mentioned that the Community and Economic Development team needs a larger, dedicated workspace and has toured the one potential space in Norlina, but is open to other suggestions.

Jim Whitley made a motion to go into closed session for economic development, in accordance with NCGS 143-318.11(a)(4) for Industry and Business Location and Expansion. The motion was seconded by Victor Hunt and was carried by a unanimous vote. The board entered closed session.

After discussion, Jim Alston made a motion to come out of closed session. This motion was seconded by Victor Hunt and was duly carried by a unanimous vote.

During board comments and remarks, Chairman Martin suggested creating a forum for board members to provide expertise between regular meetings where needed. Angelena Kearney-Dunlap observed that this meeting structure may not be needed at this time but could become necessary if/when more projects proceed.

To close, John Alston extended a warm welcome to new board member Angelena Kearney-Dunlap and ex-officio member Diane Cox. With no further business to discuss, Brock Pepper made a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Victor Hunt. Duly carried by a unanimous vote, the meeting was adjourned.

Secretary