

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

Minutes of the Board of Directors Meeting May 15, 2023 - 4:00 P.M.
Meeting held at Warren County Armory Civic Center

Members Present: John Earl Alston, Jane Ball-Groom, Victor Hunt, Stanley Jones, Angelena Kearney-Dunlap, Brady Martin, Brock Pepper, Jim Whitley

Ex-Officio Members Present: Walter Gardner, Mayor of Warrenton; Keith Sutton, Superintendent of WCPS; and Diane Cox, President of the Kerr-Tar COG (virtual)

Members Absent: Claude O'Hagan

Ex-Officio Members Absent: Wayne Aycock, Mayor of Norlina; Rachel Desmarais, Vance Granville Community College President Carroll Harris, Mayor of Macon; Leanne Patrick, Lake Gaston Chamber of Commerce

Also Present: Charla Duncan, Community and Economic Development Director; Vincent Jones, County Manager; Rose Ponton, Community and Economic Developer; Jimmy Moore, Bridge Tech (virtual); Doris Williams, Bridge Tech (virtual)

The May 15, 2023 meeting of the Warren County EDC Board of Directors was called to order by Chairman Brady Martin at 4:02 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 May 2023 meeting agenda.

After review, and striking the closed session item, a motion was made by Brock Pepper to set the meeting agenda, seconded by John Earl Alston. Duly carried by a unanimous vote; the May 15, 2023 meeting agenda was set.

Chairman Brady invited board members to review the April 2023 meeting minutes. After review, a motion was made by Brock Pepper to approve the April 2023 meeting minutes, seconded by Angelena Kearney-Dunlap, and duly carried by a unanimous vote; the April 17, 2023 minutes were approved.

Jimmy Moore provided an update to Project Bridge virtually over conference call and slide presentation detailing plans for a digital information campus at Triangle North Warren with an emphasis on emerging and sustainable technology and the goal of providing a LEED certified micro-manufacturing site and educational facility aimed at middle and high schoolers.

Board and ex-officio members inquired around architectural plans, the number and types of jobs created by this project, when the board should expect another update, which parcels of the industrial site are occupied by this project, and the details of the option agreement to acquire additional land for the project.

Following this discussion, concerns were voiced by the board overall around the Project Bridge timeframe, funding sources, and lack of progress thus far. A concern was also specifically voiced by Jane Ball-Groom regarding the current appearance of the overall Triangle North Warren site with a reply that the site is managed by the Triangle North Board and currently leased by a local farmer, with any improvements sought to be addressed to the county and Kerr-Tar COG through the Triangle North Board.

Upon final consideration it was determined that the board would like to see a firm timeline and business plan with an outline of key indicators of progress by Project Bridge.

Director Duncan presented her report to the board highlighting recent changes in the county's impervious surface zoning rules, pending approval by the Board of Commissioners, to make the county's rule consistent with the extant interstate overlay district; the launch of a multi-modal path feasibility project; the ongoing work of the farmers market committee with Wooten engineering to assess initial needs of the future home of the farmers market, and current weekly produce "pop-ups" at the Lion's Den property; the results of the recent UNC student project to assess the redevelopment potential of the Norlina hotel; and recent economic development classes held locally, in partnership with ECU.

During board comments and remarks, Angelena Kearney Dunlap made the comments that some bylaw updates should be made to clarify the removal of the secretary position, and that the board should be making a record of closed session proceedings. During this time, Jim Whitley also expressed the desire to better understand the relationship between the Kerr-Tar COG and the Triangle North Warren site. Director Duncan then made suggestions for how best to accomplish this goal.

With no further business to discuss, Jane Ball-Groom made a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Victor Hunt. Duly carried by a unanimous vote, the meeting was adjourned.