**NEWPORT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION**

**Tuesday, January 14, 2025**

**7:00 A.M.**

**Business Resource Center**

**COMMISSIONERS PRESENT**

Vice-Chairman Jim Gowen Sr., Benjy Harris, Scott Foushee, Dr. Johnny Moore, Nyesha Greer (phone), and Lee Scoggins.

**COMMISSIONERS ABSENT**

Chairman Dean Sides, Secretary/Treasurer Mike Turner, and Tommy Okada.

**OTHERS PRESENT**

Others present were NEDC Executive Director Jon Chadwell, Director of Workforce Christel Taylor, Assistant Director of Business and Financial Services Crystal Fulmer, Joe Dupree, and Mayor Derrick Ratliffe.

**OPEN MEETING**

Vice-Chairman Jim Gowen Sr. opened the meeting.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Commissioner Benjy Harris made a motion to accept the minutes from December, with a second by Dr. Johnny Moore, motion carried.

**FINANCIAL REPORT**

Director Chadwell presented the financial report for December. The lots on 1407 Holden Avenue and 1813 Hines Street remain as assets for the NEDC and look to be listed with a local real estate company. Director Chadwell will seek clarification on the Capital Fund for the Granges Grant Income. Obligations and the sales tax information for 2024 were presented to the commission. Newport is down 2% in sales tax when surrounding towns are down 4% at least. Commissioner Lee Scoggins made a motion to accept the financial statements for December with a second from Scott Foushee, motion carried.

**ELECTION OF OFFICERS FOR 2025**

Benjy Harris made a motion for Dean Sides as Chairman, Jim Gowen Sr. as Vice-Chairman, and for Mike Turner as Secretary/Treasurer with a second by Lee Scoggins, motion carried.

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR’S REPORT**

* Shelby Johnson, AR GIS
* State Senator Bryan King
* A-State Greyhound Childcare Development Center
* State Representative Wayne Long
* Verizon Cell Tower

**RENEWPORT GRANTS**

None currently.

**CALENDARS FOR 2025**

Jon Chadwell presented the commission with the Tech Depot Calendar and the Staff Schedule for 2025.

**ICSC RETAIL RECRUITMENT TRIP**

The International Council of Shopping Centers will be in Dallas from January 29 through January 31. ICSC gives the opportunity to meet with the marketplace industry and see what potential businesses would be good to locate in Newport. Lee Scoggins made a motion for Jon Chadwell, Julie Allen, and Christel Taylor to attend ICSC funded by the medical marijuana fund with a second by Benjy Harris, motion carried.

**AEDC COMMISSION MEETING IN SEPTEMBER**

Newport will host the AEDC Commission Meeting on September 11 and 12. The commission will arrive on Thursday, tour local facilities, and attend a dinner with local stakeholders. On Friday morning, the AEDC Commission Meeting will be held at Tech Depot. Lee Scoggins moved to approve expenses for hosting the AEDC Commission Meeting, with Scott Foushee seconding the motion. The motion carried.

**VIDEO PROJECT UPDATE**

Nine businesses have signed up to participate in the Video Project to help recruitment and advertising for Newport

**CHILDCARE FACILITY**

The A-State Greyhound Child Development Center is currently hiring. The facility has three employees and plans to begin accepting students once the Aramark contract is approved and the state license is secured. Enrollment will expand as additional staff are hired.

**DRIVESMART UPDATE**

The plans for the DriveSmart renovation have been submitted to the EDA and are awaiting approval.

**75 STRONG**

Jon Chadwell, Julie Allen, and Christel Taylor have been accepted to the 75 Strong Program. The announcement should be announced this week, and they will attend the first ESO Seminar in February.

**INDUSTRIAL GREENHOUSE**

Director Chadwell has three prospects for the Industrial Greenhouse. FARCO still needs to submit an estimate for repairs.

**RETAIL ACADEMY**

Jon Chadwell, Julie Allen, and Christel Taylor participated in the Retail Academy Program in Conway, where Newport was one of only six communities selected, out of twenty-six, to collaborate with Retail Strategies. Upcoming attendance at the ICSC conference in Dallas this January will provide opportunities to connect with quick-service restaurants and potential new retailers, further advancing economic development efforts for Newport.

**NEW DOWNTOWN PARKING LOT**

The survey of the new parking lot on Third and Laurel has been completed.

**NEW EV CHARGING STATION**

Entergy has the Level 3 rapid chargers installed at the Tech Depot parking lot. Once the electrical has been completed they will be ready for use.

**P3 GROUP HOUSING UPDATE**

Plans for the new housing subdivision have been submitted to the Newport School District School Board. The board has proposed adjusting the lot sizes to one-third acre, which would create a total of 87 lots.

**VERIZON CELL TOWER**

Verizon is still looking to place another cell tower in Newport. Verizon would like to use city property and pay rent for where the tower will be located.

**PROJECT CLIPPINGS**

Project Clippings is still looking at using the General Cable building for warehouse usage and possibly manufacturing.

**PROSPECT RICE STRAW**

Prospect Rice Straw is looking at purchasing additional property from the Bond Board.

**PROJECT JUNIOR VARSITY**

Project Junior Varsity is looking at three different sites in Newport in which to locate.

**PROSPECT CRUSH**

Prospect Crush has signed a letter of intent.

**PROSPECT SPLICE**

Prospect Splice is entertaining the idea of consolidating their projects and locating them in Memphis. Director Chadwell is still working with them.

**PROSPECT CHAR**

Prospect Char is affiliated with an existing industry.

**PROSPECT SAVE**

Prospect Save is a local industry that may be purchased to pursue expansion.

**PROJECT MAGIC DRAGON**

Project Magic Dragon is someone looking to purchase the currently operating medical marijuana facility.

**PROJECT SCOOBY DOO**

Project Scooby Doo is a cryptocurrency company looking to locate in Newport. The company is negotiating rates with Entergy.

**PROSPECT CURRENCY BEAR**

Prospect Currency Bear is a cryptocurrency company looking at the electrical capacity in Newport.

**PROSPECT FRESH AT HOME**

Jon will talk with Prospect Fresh at Home later in the week. The prospect is interested in Newport due to Sonic and Pizza Hut being high-performance restaurants in northeast Arkansas.

**PROSPECT SMOCO**

Prospect Smoco has submitted its plans to the City of Newport. The other tenants at the location want improvements to parking facilities before plans go forward.

**ADJOURNED**

Lee Scoggins made a motion to adjourn the meeting with a second from Scott Foushee, meeting adjourned.