**NEWPORT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION**

**Tuesday, June 10, 2025**

**7:00 A.M.**

**Business Resource Center**

**COMMISSIONERS PRESENT**

Chairman Dean Sides, Vice-Chairman Jim Gowen Sr., Secretary/Treasurer Mike Turner, Benjy Harris, Nyesha Greer, Scott Foushee, Hiro Kado, and Lee Scoggins.

**COMMISSIONERS ABSENT**

Dr. Johnny Moore

**OTHERS PRESENT**

Others present were NEDC Executive Director Jon Chadwell, Director of Chamber Affairs Julie Allen, Director of Workforce Christel Taylor, Charles Walker, and Mayor Derrick Ratliffe.

**OPEN MEETING**

Chairman Dean Sides opened the meeting.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Benjy Harris made a motion to accept the minutes from May, with a second by Lee Scoggins, motion carried.

**FINANCIAL REPORT**

Director Chadwell presented the financial report for May. A ReNewport Grant was awarded to Grady’s Electrical Heat and Air for $2,473.50. The Sales Tax Report and Obligations were supplied to the commission for review. The Sales Tax generated in March was up .3%. Secretary/Treasurer Mike Turner made a motion to accept the financial statements for May with a second from Scott Foushee motion carried.

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR’S REPORT**

* Arkansas Development Finance Authority
* Perry Callahan, Newport Fire Department Fire Chief
* Katherine Johnson, Senator Caldwell’s Office
* Eric Asbury, Lost 4

**DIRECTOR OF CHAMBER AFFAIRS REPORT**

* New Vision Fishing Derby
* New Vision Welcome Wagon Project
* Candimonium Food Drive
* Newport Area Chamber of Commerce General Account Report
* 150th Celebration

**RENEWPORT GRANTS**

None

**TIME CAPSULE OPENING**

Chamber Director Julie Allen reported that the time capsule from 1975 was opening on Saturday, June 7 in conjunction with the Delta Arts Festival. Mayor Derrick Ratliffe and County Judge Jeff Phillips read proclamations, and the event was well attended. The class of 1970 was awarded the spirit stick.

**RETAIL ACADEMY UPDATE**

Newport was one of six communities chosen to participate in the Retail Academy. Jon, Julie, and Christel participated in a zoom session to ask specific questions and learn best practices.

**RURAL DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE**

Director Jon Chadwell attended the Rural Development Conference where Jon was on two panels. The conference is designed for those with counties with less than 20,000 in population.

**HOUSING INFRASTRUCTURE GRANT RECOMMENDATIONS**

The commission was presented with proposed guidelines for housing incentives. Jon Chadwell also provided housing developers with incentive programs from eleven other towns. Chairman Dean Sides suggested forming a committee to go over these guidelines and see what would work best for the Newport Community.

**ADVISORY COUNCIL CONCEPT**

The commission will appoint a committee to go over the Advisory Council Concept.

**ENTERTAINMENT DISTRICT UPDATE**

The third and final reading for the Entertainment District was held a week ago Monday. Five community leaders spoke in favor of the district, while two spoke against the ordinance. The council passed the ordinance and it will go into effect in sixty days.

**THIRD AND LAUREL PARKING LOT UPDATE**

Miller Newell is completing the plans for the parking lot on Third and Laurel. The lot will go to the end of the driveway of the nearby house. Three parking spaces will be for compact cars.

**75 STRONG**

Team Newport consisting of Jon Chadwell, Julie Allen, Christel Taylor, and John Twyford attended 75 Strong in Conway. The three-day course consisted of building a strong entrepreneurship ecosystem by understanding the needs of microenterprises, small businesses, startups, and venture companies. Mo Collins and Dell Gines led the sessions, which included in-depth case studies and practical exercises to enhance learning.

**TECH DEPOT UPDATE**

Tech Depot has several events on the schedule. Vex Robotics, Pilot Training, Police Training, a new ADC Training Academy and a Healthcare Roundtable will keep the building busy.

**NEW TAXI SERVICE**

City Cab, a new taxi service in Newport, is going to locate on State and Malcolm. The cost for one way in town is $8 and $2 per mile out of town.

**PROSPECT ELEVATE**

Prospect Elevate, Ben and Leslie Glidewell, are working to open an 80/20 Autism School in Newport. The prospect currently has a school open in Jonesboro, and it is thriving with 30 students. Superintendent Jon Bradley is in favor of the school and will not hurt the Newport School District in any way. The school will start with 15 students and employ 22. Commissioner Benjy Harris made a motion for a $80,000 forgivable loan for creating 22 jobs at the end of four years with a second by Jim Gowen Sr., motion carried.

**DRIVESMART UPDATE**

The bid for the remodel of the former NEDC/Chamber offices (First State Bank Building) was held at Mayor Derrick Ratliffe office. The winning bid was to Province Construction. The EDA has been submitted all information, and the project can move forward.

**P3 GROUP HOUSING UPDATE**

Newport School District School Board and P3 are going over plans for the new housing subdivision. Currently the size of the lots will cost around $ 45,000 for a quarter acre lot, and $67,000 for a third acre lot, however, they have decisions that could impact this cost.

**PROSPECT SMOCO**

Prospect Smoco is looking to break ground at the end of the summer.

**PROSPECT RICE STRAW**

Expanding utilities to the Airbase for Prospect Rice Straw will cost $1.7 million. The state has committed to covering a portion of the infrastructure costs, and discussions are ongoing to determine Summit’s contribution.

**PROSPECT FRESH AT HOME**

Prospect Fresh at Home is looking at two locations in Newport.

**PROSPECT MAGIC DRAGON**

Revolution has been sold and has a new owner.

**PROSPECT CLIPPINGS**

Prospect Clippings is located at the General Cable building. They are using it for warehousing and perhaps to manufacture small tractors.

**VERIZON CELL TOWER**

The last phase is being completed for the Verizon cell tower.

**ADJOURNED**

Jim Gowen Sr. made a motion to adjourn the meeting with a second from Lee Scoggins, meeting adjourned.