

BEAUFORT COUNTY

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



BEAUFORT COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY BOARD Monthly Board Meeting Notes November 17, 2021

Present: Chairman Ed Booth, Bubs Carson, Randy Roark, Commissioner Rebholz, Andrew Fisher

Absent: Ricky Credle, Joy McRoy, Archie Griffin, Don Sadler, Dylan Bowen, Clif Williams, Brian Alligood, Frank Etheridge, Andy Fisher, Rich Morin, Chad Keech, Al Powell

Other Attendees: Martyn Johnson, Trey Goodson, Sarah Bernart, Vicky Hamill, Greg Smith

Welcome: Chairman Ed Booth

Introduction: Martyn Johnson

Speaker: Mary Bell Mehlich, Owner Wine & Words...& Gourmet

Provide insight as a Woman Owned Downtown Business

Ms. Mehlich's passion for wine developed during a career in aviation which allowed her to travel. It was while living with a European family she expanded her knowledge. After moving to Beaufort County in 2004, she became a wine consultant and eventually purchased the business. Ms. Mehlich considers wine to be a lifestyle and is for our relaxation and enjoyment. Her goal is to educate people by teaching Wine and Food Pairing classes through Beaufort Community College. Local businesses work with Ms. Mehlich to create wine lists and she is available to train waitstaff if needed.

Questions

Commissioner Rebholz: Are there many women owned businesses downtown?

Mary: There are several women owned businesses downtown and I think having resources about running small businesses is helpful. I have been approached by ECU students about running a business as a woman.

Chairman Booth: How far does your clientele travel?

Mary: I have people who come all the way from Raleigh, because I carry wines, they are unable to find in their area. She keeps a customer database to maintain a list of what people buy and what they like. I have now opened a wine bar offering a place to talk, read or just relax. The wine bar took about a year to complete.

Sarah Bernhart: How many employees do you have?

Mary: I started with no employees but now have 3 part time employees. I am hoping to hire more as the business grows.

Chairman Booth advised that we don't have a quorum to approve the minutes so we will table that until next month.

Community Reports:

Aurora, Clif Williams: Absent Martyn Johnson advised with the passage of the budget the Aurora Industrial Park will have a satellite campus from Beaufort Community College.

Bath, Bubs Carson: The Bath Halloween event was a huge success with between 400 and 500 children trick or treating on Main Street.
The 36th Annual Bath Christmas Parade is scheduled for December 5, 2021 at 2:00 PM. The parade is one of the larger events in the area.
The following weekend is a holiday tour of historic homes in Bath. The state budget included an appropriation for Bath to assist with wastewater. Again, one of the residents raised the issue of poor cell phone service in the area and wanted to relay that information to our county leaders.

Belhaven, Andrew Fisher: Everything is good, construction will begin in the new year. The Wildlife Ramp was approved and there will be approximately 8 new home sites further down the waterfront.

Chocowinity, Joy McRoy: Absent

Washington, Don Sadler: Absent Martyn advised with the budget approval the airport received 20 million for improvements.

Washington Park Dylan Bowen: Absent

Community College Update, Dr. Loope: Absent Commissioner Rebholtz mentioned that tuition is free through spring 2023.

County Update, Commissioner John Rebholz: The County just completed its audit. We are continuing to work on the solid waste issue and from a financial standpoint the sales tax is up.

Beaufort County Business Update, Randy Roark: Will be closing out the year at a record, up from last year and looking to hire 10 more people. Looking into next year will be making new capital expenditures and hiring more people at that time.

NC East Alliance/EDPNC Updates, Trey Goodson, Sarah Bernhart: Have the 3rd Webinar on December 2, it has been a great series on workforce. Have had over 50 people attend the webinars. County tiers for 2022 will be announced in early December. Have several manufacturers visiting the area including one from South Africa in December.

Beaufort County Schools CTE, Vicky Hammill: The boatbuilding boat house is moving along submittal of sealed bids and the board will be voting on that. Coming back to a normal schedule of full classes after Covid and we will be starting exams.

NCWORKS Greg Smith: Continuing to work with our partners to try to get people trained. Have the director position open at the Beaufort County NC Works Center.

Director's Reports & Budget, Martyn Johnson: Unemployment 3.82 % in September, Beaufort County is doing very well, we are hopeful the free tuition at Beaufort County Community College will help to add much needed people into the workforce. Beaufort County is improving due to the efforts of many people as we come out of Covid 19. Rise 29 team came to visit in November. Had ribbon cutting for Made in Beaufort County. We have 17 active projects and are hopeful they will choose to move and invest here. We are in discussions with ComputeNorth, a company that pulled out of Pitt County and hope to get them to set up in Beaufort County.

Motion to Adjourn: Commissioner Rebholz

Second: Bubs Carson