

WHITE COUNTY DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY  
REGULAR MEETING AGENDA

DATE: Tuesday, March 14<sup>th</sup>, 2023  
PLACE: Community & Economic Development Conference Room  
1241 Helen Highway, Suite 200  
Cleveland, GA, 30528  
TIME: 4:30 PM

Board members present were Michael Yarbrough, John Ziemer, Don Allison, Joe Whelchel, Ridley Kinsey, and Virginia Roberts. Board member not present was Mike Meuse. Guests present were Beth Truelove, Carl Free, Mike Renshaw, John Sell, Mercedes Dodd, and Linda Erbele.

Chairman Yarbrough called the meeting to order and confirmed the quorum. He introduced the newest board member, Virginia Roberts to the board. Chairman Yarbrough requested to amend the agenda to add a report by Joe Whelchel of the Cleveland Development Authority meeting he recently attended. Motion to approve the agenda as amended made by Mr. Ziemer and seconded by Mr. Kinsey. Motion was unanimous.

Ms. Ligon was not present to provide the financial report, so Mr. Sell provided a summary of payments to Thomas and Hutton and payments received from the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC). He added that the final report for the ARC was complete and final check was received. A check for Carl Free was signed and provided to Mr. Free. Motion to approve the financials made by Mr. Ziemer and seconded by Mr. Allison. Motion was unanimous.

Mr. Renshaw, County Manager for White County, explained the vision meeting with the Board of Commissioners is projected to be held mid to late April. He stated a committee has been formed to discuss workforce and affordable housing that has included discussions of a possible limit on housing square footages, infrastructure challenges for higher density housing and ongoing discussions with the City of Cleveland, and possible planned development zoning and R-4 zoning to allow for density. He said he attended a meeting with other county managers that included information for offering development incentives that he would forward to the Development Authority board to read through.

Mr. Whelchel provided a report for the recent Cleveland Development Authority meeting that he attended, including functional population data and the impact of affordable housing for those who commute to and from the area for work, the difference between the average household income compared to housing prices, and constraints of infrastructure for development. Chairman Yarbrough added that data was also presented at the meeting regarding how far people are willing to travel from Cleveland and housing would be more valuable when closer to the city.

Ms. Truelove explained how the Chamber is working on their Vision 2030 project and that Rope Roberts, formerly a liaison for Georgia Power that is now privately consulting, has expressed interest in completing a housing study for the entirety of the county. She stated the housing study is part of the strategic plan and would provide information including: types of housing needed, general locations for development, where existing opportunities exist near centers of employment, and where there is existing infrastructure that would allow for density. Ms. Truelove stated that Mr. Roberts has priced the study at \$8,000, which is relatively low due to

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Mr. Roberts already having existing data, and invited the Development Authority to be included. She said in conjunction with the Chamber of Commerce, the City of Cleveland, the City of Helen, and the Development Authority, each part would be responsible for a \$2,000 contribution. She said a tactical plan would likely be developed early July.

Motion to authority the \$2,000 contribution and plan involvement made by Mr. Whelchel and seconded by Mr. Kinsey. Chairman Yarbrough stated that the strategic plan is more of a macro-plan, whereas this would be a micro-plan. Motion was unanimous. Ms. Truelove invited the board members to the next presentation on March 24<sup>th</sup> at 7:30am at Farmhouse Commons in Cleveland.

Mr. Sell stated Mr. Roberts could turn the strategic plan into an implementation plan for \$3,000. He said the board did not need to vote on this plan currently, but to discuss and he would also be presenting the information to the Board of Commissioners. Mr. Sell also explained that decisions would need to be made on how to structure staff for the implementation, whether it be to hire staff for the Economic Development Department, hire a third party, or hire a project manager within the Development Authority.

Mr. Ziemer provided an update on the White County Water Authority, including many new meters and 2500 residential customers, the conversion of short-term rentals to commercial rates, the hookup of the new well, and concerns over bank bailouts in light of recent events.

Chairman Yarbrough expressed his concern for the increase of short-term rentals, the impact to the school systems, and being able to provide housing for residents. He said there should be a balance, otherwise residents, workers, and the school systems would suffer.

Mr. Renshaw stated that the Board of Commissioners understand the concerns and have recently approved a new software that would scan rental management websites to find rentals that are not operating under county regulations, which should be operational within one to two months. He said the commissioners are potentially looking to cap short-term rentals, but will need to know how many total existing rentals there are in the county.

Chairman Yarbrough made a statement that he supports the commissioners in their work to come up with a reasonable solution that benefits tourism and residents.

Mr. Renshaw inquired about hotels versus short-term rentals in the county, to which Ms. Truelove explained that a hotel feasibility study was conducted and, based on factors such as police enforcement and broadband, very few parcels were able to meet the needed criteria. Mr. Sell said all major hotel brands are already in Helen, so it would be difficult to bring into the county within such close proximity. Mr. Sell added that grants are available, but the county would need to have development incentives as well.

Ms. Truelove stated the Talent Pipeline Management, which engages students in skilled development, has been very successful with the help of Workforce Georgia and North Georgia Technical College. She said they have been able to place some of White County's students in the program by bringing employers together to train students in a skilled profession with a planned progression for their career.

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Mr. Kinsey inquired about the status of the proposed alcohol ordinance in the City of Cleveland. Ms. Erbele explained the first public hearing was last night and the second would be on April 10<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Sell stated that the county is working on the mapping to help determine the possible areas for the placement of the liquor stores in relation to churches and schools, which would likely be three locations. Ms. Truelove and Mr. Sell explained there would be a 60-day timeframe to open, which would prevent a new structure for the store to be built. Mr. Sell suggested reaching out to Tom O'Bryant with the City of Cleveland for exact details.

Motion to adjourn made by Mr. Allison and seconded by Mr. Ziemer. Motion was unanimous.