

**Town of Wise Economic Development Authority**  
**Thursday, February 8, 2024**  
**6:00 PM – 501 West Main Street**  
**Wise, Virginia 24293**  
**Meeting Minutes**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Jennifer Sturgill-Mullins, Chairman  
Cory Dotson, Vice-Chairman  
Valerie Lawson, Treasurer  
Bonnie Aker  
Brandi Cox  
Rachel Helton

**MEMBERS ABSENT:**

Bill Thompson

**TOWN STAFF PRESENT:**

Reagan Walsh, Secretary

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**1. CALL TO ORDER:**

Chairman Jennifer Sturgill-Mullins called the meeting to order.

**2. ROLL CALL:**

Secretary Walsh called the roll. It was determined that a quorum was present.

**3. REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES:**

Director Aker made a motion to approve the January 11, 2024, meeting minutes with a second by Director Lawson. The motion carried 6-0.

**4. PUBLIC EXPRESSION:**

No one from the public was present for public expression.

**5. UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

**5.1. Community Business Launch Program Update:**

Secretary Walsh gave an update on the Town of Wise Community Business Launch. She stated that there are currently thirteen participants registered for the program. She explained that there is still some uncertainty whether all thirteen participants intend to open a business in Wise, as The Advancement Foundation has categorized participants by home address. Some of the participants are from other localities, such as Pound, Norton, and Big Stone Gap. Secretary Walsh stated that she will know more as the program progresses.

**6. NEW BUSINESS:**

**6.1. FY 2024-2025 Budget Preparation Discussion**

Secretary Walsh gave an update on the current budget planning for FY 2024-2025. She advised the directors that as of right now, the TOWEDA is funded through a line item in the Town of Wise General Fund, and that starting July 1, 2024, any amount remaining will not be carried over into the next fiscal year. Secretary Walsh explained that in order to take advantage of the remaining funds, the TOWEDA should begin working towards becoming a financially independent organization. To do this, the TOWEDA would need to obtain their own federal ID number, bank accounts, and legal counsel; among other things. Discussion among the directors was had over the proper next steps. Secretary Walsh stated she would continue to research and would know more about Council's recommendations for the EDA after the Council/Staff retreat this Saturday. The directors agreed that the TOWEDA should start implementing projects as soon as possible in order to take advantage of the available funding from the Town of Wise.

**7. MATTERS FROM THE DIRECTORS:**

Director Aker presented a cost estimate for the use of two billboards for one year. The total cost is \$11,700.00. She recommended that the TOWEDA consider this project and that she, Director Cox, and Secretary Walsh work together to establish program guidelines. The directors discussed among themselves the logistics behind the program and how to make this as fair as possible for businesses within town. They also discussed the relationship with the Wise Business Association and how to partner with them in order to have a successful billboard program.

Director Helton requested that the TOWEDA discuss marketing and the use of social media archiving software. She also discussed how by not having archiving software, the TOWEDA will be limited in how they can use social media to promote economic development projects. The directors agreed that marketing is the number one priority and that the use of social media archiving software would allow the directors and town staff to expand their reach on social media. Presently, town staff must disable comments on each individual post, which prevents them from being able to schedule posts to be published during peak hours. The directors are in favor of paying for the cost of social media archiving software, but directed Secretary Walsh to ask Town Council if they would allow town staff to use the social media archiving software for their pages to help promote events and share information. Secretary Walsh reminded the directors that if social media were to be used, she would need assistance from the directors to manage social media accounts.

Director Lawson discussed with the directors the vacant restaurant space at the Inn at Wise as well as the Inn blocking all rooms for the Blue Highway Festival in Big Stone Gap. She explained that the Fall Fling and UVA Wise's homecoming will fall on the same weekend and that she had contacted the Inn about rooms for alumni and was told that there was nothing available due to the Blue Highway Festival. The directors felt that this was an issue, as visitors during the Fall Fling and UVA Wise homecoming often stay at the Inn because of its proximity to the college and direct access to the Fall Fling. It was also discussed that by having the Blue Highway Festival and the Fall Fling on the same weekend, businesses lose out on revenue. The directors requested that Secretary Walsh reach out to the Wise County IDA to schedule a joint meeting to discuss the Inn at Wise, as well as other projects and ideas that would benefit from a partnership.

**8. MATTERS FROM STAFF:**

Secretary Walsh advised the directors that the Planning Commission has requested that the TOWEDA provide input on the proposed changes to the Town of Wise Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Regulations as well as the Town of Wise Comprehensive Plan as they progress through the updates. Secretary Walsh stated that this

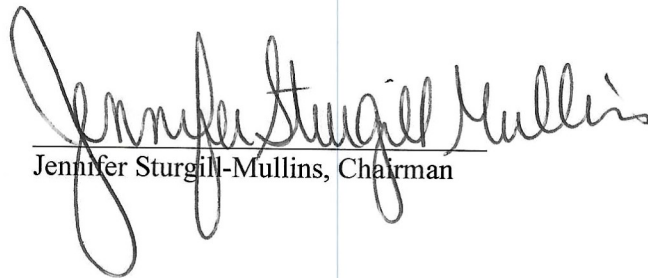
could be done via email. The directors agreed to provide input.

9. **ADJOURNMENT:**

After staff comment, no other topics were brought up for discussion. Director Dotson made a motion to adjourn the meeting with a second by Director Cox. The motion carried 6-0.



Reagan Walsh, Secretary



Jennifer Sturgill-Mullins, Chairman