

Town of Richlands
Industrial/Economic Development Authority
January 27, 2025

The Richlands IEDA called a special meeting at 6 p.m. with the following present:

Dr. Brandon Buskill	Lynna Mitchell
Craig Earls	Joseph Vance
Jeff Casey	Cody Harman
Dillon Smith	

Members Absent:

Town Representatives: Ronnie Campbell, Mike Thomas, Laura Mollo, Keisha Cole, Jordan Bales

Guests:

Dr. Brandon Buskill called the meeting to order.

Lynna Mitchell made a motion to approve the agenda. Joseph Vance seconded the motion. With no further discussion, the agenda was unanimously approved.

IEDA By-Laws

Dr. Brandon Buskill: Anyone want to discuss?

Mike Thomas: I compared our by-laws with Tazewell's, and there are some differences. They are very active, and we can consider aligning with them on some points. The IEDA should be the arm of the council and not restricted by some of the council's limitations. Under the by-laws, it states that directors must be notified for a special meeting, but that requirement can be waived. We may want to align and update those sections. I believe this meeting was called appropriately, so we are good. If anyone has changes, let me know.

Dr. Brandon Buskill: Do you have Tazewell's by-laws so we can compare?

Mike Thomas: Yes, they are on the town website.

Joseph Vance: Can we just do a red line version and then try to match them up?

Craig Earls: I will take the action to email out the Email addresses to Mike.

Dr. Brandon Buskill: When Jason May came as our Town Manager, he acted as the quarterback and helped coordinate both groups, including our effort to obtain 501(c)(3) status.

Mike Thomas: You are already under tax-exempt status.

Lynna Mitchell: Obtaining 501(c)(3) status would open us up for more grants.

Mike Thomas: I can mention this to my partner and see if we would have any advantages.

(Group Discussion – Some grants are only available to 501(c)(3) organizations.)

Dr. Brandon Buskill: Would Keisha Cole be the best person to contact if someone wanted to discuss starting a business here?

Keisha Cole: We are working on putting together business development packets and incentives for different types of businesses.

(Group discussed further.)

Dr. Brandon Buskill: Jason May previously asked us to gather information about businesses, land, etc. Do you, have it?

Keisha Cole: I will check to see if he knows where that information is. I do have a compiled data sheet that includes some downtown business information, among other details.

Real Estate Acquisition

Mike Thomas: The Town Council desires to provide as an option the ability to convey the Teen Venture building to the IEDA for a sale to Teen Venture for \$50,000. The town wishes to work with the IEDA to facilitate this transfer. The town needs to convey the property to the IEDA, and then the IEDA can enter into an agreement for a set amount and appropriate terms. The council wants the right of first refusal and the ability to repurchase the property for the same amount plus one dollar if Teen Venture no longer exists.

Laura Mollo: We want to sever ties with Teen Venture due to a prior board member's action.

(Group discussion followed regarding the past issues with Teen Venture.)

An investigation was conducted, and the director was arrested. Grants were revoked, and money was misused by this director. We wanted Teen Venture to change its board completely and we continue to have issues with the building, like people breaking into the building. Due to these issues, we discussed the situation with the board and asked for a plan to move forward, but the proposed plan was not appropriate, or feasible. They are unwilling to change the board or present a viable plan.

If by June 30, they are unable to purchase the building for \$50,000, we want to put it up for auction and sell it to the highest bidder. However, we (Town Council) want to give them the opportunity to acquire the building, especially since they have made improvements using grant funding over the years. However, they must demonstrate the ability to purchase it.

(Group discussion followed.)

Dr. Brandon Buskill: So, you want to transfer the building to us, then allow them to contract with us through June 30 to purchase the building. If they can't pay, we take it back?

Lynna Mitchell: Does the town currently have a lease agreement?

Mike Thomas: The original lease was I think from 1999 and is renewed every five years.

Dr. Brandon Buskill: So, who owns the building?

Mike Thomas: The Town of Richlands owns it.

Dr. Brandon Buskill: Why are we giving them this opportunity?

Laura Mollo: The council wants to give them a chance to maintain the existing non-profit, but on their own with transfer of the property to lower the town's liability.

Jeff Casey: How would the money be handled?

Mike Thomas: The IEDA could either retain the funds or transfer them back to the town. We could also use the funds for development projects, subject to approval by the Town Council.

Dr. Brandon Buskill: Are there any positives about Teen Venture? It seems like a lot of great activities take place there.

Jeff Casey: It was originally set up as a community-based service. The recreation park model has been successful, and I think it could work well if the town took over its management.

Joseph Vance: It would significantly increase the town's budget and be expensive to maintain. The town would need to hire additional personnel and invest in technology upgrades.

(Group discussion: If the IEDA does not take over the property, the council could choose to sell it or modify and extend the lease.)

Laura Mollo: The town has reviewed all options, and this seems to be the best approach. The decision on the existing lease to extend/expire for five years is due in the fall.

(Group discussion: The group discussed the sale, extending the lease or expiring the lease if that is the will of the Town Council. No action taken and the group wants to review this week in preparation for our regular meeting on February 3rd)

FOIA Training Discussion

Mike Thomas: As members, you are required to complete FOIA training. Webinars and pre-recorded sessions are available for you to complete at your convenience. Please email me at mthomas@ghartlaw.com once you have completed the training.

Upcoming FOIA Training Sessions:

February 6th at 2:00 PM (Thursday)

February 25th at 10:00 AM (Tuesday)

March 13th at 2:00 PM (Thursday)

Joseph Vance made a motion to adjourn. Dillon Smith seconded the motion. It was unanimously approved, and the meeting adjourned.