

Economic Development Director for Alexander County presents at BBA Meeting

By ANGELA FARR KING

On Thursday, May 14, the Bethlehem Business Association met for their bi-monthly meeting. Holly Campbell, the treasurer of the BBA, opened the meeting and explained that the organization has been going through a transition period since one of their co-presidents, Sara Greene, recently passed away and her husband, Jody, understandably chose not to continue his role as co-president. Holly announced the new president (or chairperson) of the BBA, Jackson Reid, the Assistant Branch Manager at Taylorsville Savings Bank in Bethlehem. Reid has been with the bank for three years.

Michael Worley, the Economic Development Director for Alexander County, was the guest speaker for the evening. Worley has been in that position for a little over a year and is very enthusiastic about all of the opportunities available in the county and says the workforce here is unbelievable. He said “Economic development in Alexander County is going strong and getting stronger.”

Worley talked about some of the other positive changes that have taken place in the last year. He mentioned the new Twin Brothers Pizza Restaurant at Player’s Ridge Golf Course in Bethlehem and the progress on the new water tank behind the shopping center.

He added that the commissioners voted to become a C-PACE county in April. According to <https://edpnc.com/nc-pace/>, “The North Carolina Commercial Property Assessed Capital Expenditure (C-PACE) Program allows owners of qualifying commercial property to obtain long-term financing from private capital providers for certain qualifying improvements up to 35% of the value of the property. Qualifying Improvements include energy efficiency, renewable energy, resiliency, and water conservation as well as improvements made to address safe drinking water.”

The benefits of C-PACE to local governments are listed on the above site

as well and they are: “1) Higher property values – Revitalized buildings improve property values, creating more revenue for local communities, 2) Economic growth – New development and construction projects stimulate the local economy, and 3) Stronger communities – Conserving resources and building resiliency in infrastructure deliver positive impacts for everyone in the community.” This program helps businesses with finances and includes business owners who own five or more rental properties.

Worley also shared that the commissioners voted in April to take an option on 115 acres of property owned by the Alexander Railroad Company, which connects to property already owned by Alexander County. The option lasts for twelve months and will allow the county to run studies to see how the property can best be used for economic development. If the commissioners choose to purchase the property at the end of the twelve month option, it will give Alexander County an estimated 207 acres of connecting industrial property inside of Alexander Industrial Park. This can be used for future manufacturing businesses.

Worley added that “Alexander County can house strong industry here. It is set up for economic development. The current county commissioners are heavily encouraging economic development.”

Worley shared that over 10,000 people from Alexander County leave daily to commute outside of the county, so it is his goal to bring large and small businesses to AC to lessen that number. When asked if Alexander County has the workers to fulfill industry needs, he said, “If we can offer a better quality of life with a shorter commute, we have the workers.” Worley even suggested that people will often take a small cut in pay if they have a shorter commute.

He noted that bringing large industries to Alexander County will impact small businesses because obviously their workers will become

patrons of those small businesses. In other words, “Small businesses benefit from big businesses and vice versa.”

When asked what types of businesses he is hoping to bring into the county, Worley said, “manufacturing and retail.”

Worley also stated that if someone owning a business has infrastructure or broadband needs, “We are your go to.” Mr. Worley views his office as a resource for local business owners.

In summary, Worley brought an enthusiasm to the table at the BBA meeting with his excitement for the potential that Alexander County has to offer businesses and future residents. There are a lot of untapped resources in this area and he has knowledge to help business owners or future business owners

tap into those. He also has knowledge of plans that are already underway that Alexander County residents can be excited about. It was refreshing to hear from someone who is new to this county and views it from an outside lense and can see all that Alexander County has to offer and why it’s a great place to live.

To contact Michael Worley for further information, call his office at 828-352-7755 or email him at mworley@alexandercountync.gov. The next Bethlehem Business Association meeting will be held on July 16 at 6:00 p.m. at Campbell’s Berry Farm, located at 27 Tracy Bolick Lane in the Bethlehem Community. These meetings are very informative and helpful for those with a business and community mindset.



ECONOMIC FUTURE DISCUSSED — Michael Worley, the Economic Development Director for Alexander County, spoke at the May 14 Bethlehem Business Association meeting. He shared his enthusiasm about ongoing and future economic development in Alexander County.

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Central during his first two years of high school where his activities helped him qualify to attend NCSSM.

Zane said he is grateful for the support of his parents, scout leaders, and fellow scouts for their support on the trail to eagle. He encouraged other youth to consider scouting as an opportunity to create lasting friendships and to have great outdoor adventures while improving their com-

munities.

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