

Update - Business Friendliness Initiative

As of 4-13-18

Purpose: The Board of Supervisors has requested the EDA examine the County's reputation for being unfriendly to business and suggest changes to County ordinances, processes, policies or procedures to improve the business environment for both existing and new businesses in Amherst County. The request also asked for proposals that will have the greatest and quickest impact that are fully coordinated with stakeholders and staff and be presented in a final form.

Goal: Perceptions take time to change, but the results from this examination of business unfriendliness issues should have a major long-term impact on the health of our existing businesses and demonstrate to new businesses that Amherst County is open for business.

Form a small Steering Committee to guide the process. **Steering Committee met Jan. 31, 2018**

February-March 2018 - Information Gathering

One-on-one Business Interviews **Ongoing.**

Focus Groups (6-8 people) **7-Member Focus group met Feb. 15, 2018**

- Developers/Builders
- Surveyors/
- New Business Owners
- Current Business Owners
- Retail

Interview County personnel whose jobs bring them into frequent contact regarding business:

- Planning & Zoning **Completed**
- Chamber of Commerce **Scheduled for 4-13-18**
- Commissioner of the Revenue (Business License + Tax Structure) **Scheduled for 4-16-18**
- Building and Safety Inspections **Completed**
- Amherst County Circuit Court (registering business name) **Completed**
- Amherst County Health Department **Scheduled for 4-17-18**

ACSA working group led by Lee Cobb, EDA consultant: rate comparison, ease of finding information, processes

- Will continue working the issue from January - March/April **Ongoing**

Examine 2016 Economic Development Strategic Plan data, information gathered by the Planning Commission and information gathered for the Board of Supervisors retreat

Develop Online Survey **Completed**

Survey: Business Owners, developers, builders, surveyors, etc. **Ongoing. Survey sent to 150 businesses with 52 responses**

March/April - Compile Information & Determine Suggested Course of Action

Compile data and find common issues.

Examine each issue and prioritize them.

In order of priority, determine the following:

- Can something be done?
- Should something be done?
- If so, what are several potential solutions?
- What solutions are feasible? What is the cost? What department would need to implement the changes?
- Are there any unintended consequences of the change?

What can be done to make the processes holistically simpler and less confusing for businesses, whether they are starting a business, new to the County, or an established business that needs something from the County or is expanding?

Conduct final Steering Committee meeting on results of information gathering and suggested actions.

Bring draft Business Friendliness Plan to May 9 EDA Board meeting for feedback.

Bring draft Business Friendliness Plan to May 17 Planning Commission meeting for feedback.

Presentation to Board of Supervisors on June 5 of Findings and Suggested Actions

Based on feedback from the Board of Supervisors, form implementation plan of the approved business friendliness actions.