

Economic Development Advisory Committee
November 16th, 2022 Regular Meeting 1:00 pm

At a regular meeting of the Economic Development Advisory Committee held on Wednesday, November 16, 2022, at 1:00 pm in the Main Meeting Room, Berryville-Clarke County Government Center, 101 Chalmers Court, 2nd Floor, Berryville, Virginia.

Members Present: Christy Dunkle, John Milleson, Betsy Pritchard, Bev McKay, Mark Gribble, Christina Kraybill,

Members Absent: Chris Bates, Reid Dodson

Staff Present: Felicia Hart, Catherine Marsten, Indea Ford

Others Present: Jay Arnold

Press Present: None

1. Call to Order

At 1:01pm, Chairman Milleson called the meeting to order.

2. Adoption of Agenda

Christina Kraybill made a motion, seconded by Christy Dunkle, to adopt the agenda as presented. The motion carried by the following vote:

Chris Bates	-	Absent
Reid Dodson	-	Absent
Christy Dunkle	-	Aye
Mark Gribble	-	Aye
Christina Kraybill	-	Aye
Bev McKay	-	Aye
John Milleson	-	Aye
Betsy Pritchard	-	Aye

3. Approval of Minutes

- September 21, 2022 – Regular Meeting

Betsy Pritchard made a motion, seconded by Mark Gribble, to approve the minutes of the September 21, 2022, Regular Meeting as presented. The motion carried by the following vote:

Chris Bates	-	Absent
Reid Dodson	-	Absent
Christy Dunkle	-	Aye
Mark Gribble	-	Aye
Christina Kraybill	-	Aye
Bev McKay	-	Aye
John Milleson	-	Aye

Betsy Pritchard - Aye

4. Recap October Economic Tour

- Chairman Milleson stated that the tour was very well done, and noted that the thing that stood out was the business’ lack of available help.
 - Felicia Hart advised that the Economic Development Summit noted that there are currently 843 vacancies for the hospitals. Valley Health System is not-for-profit and operates 12-14 hospitals. The federal government provided \$141 million in subsidies, but that program has ended.
 - Mark Gribble observed it is difficult to hire and retain employees on every level.
 - Felicia Hart and Chairman Milleson suggested the problem spans all industries: restaurants are having to close on certain days, self-service is the new normal for hotels because they have minimal cleaning staff, and airlines are struggling to retain pilots and baggage handlers alike. Waterloo Electric customers have to wait about two weeks to get an estimate and two months for work to be completed; a new industry average.
- Felicia Hart reported that regional repair and service businesses are still quite busy, but the customers have to wait longer due to the lack of help. At the high school, Shaine Coleman is working diligently to identify and encourage students who may be interested in trade schools.
 - Mark Gribble added that farm labor is also in short supply, often their most reliable employees are college students.
 - Christina Kraybill opined that more and more people are retiring early or resigning in order to do something completely different, perhaps it is more of a question of inspiration or family circumstances.
 - Felicia Hart added that a speaker at the Economic Summit explained the importance of making sure employees are happy and not overworked in order to retain them.
 - Mark Gribble observed that there are enough jobs out there at the moment that people are looking for, but it seems loyalty is no longer a factor. Employees are not receiving respect from the company in the form of good benefits, and people are leaving without even giving notice.
 - When asked by Chairman Milleson for input, Jay Arnold agreed that lack of help is a problem everywhere. Berryville looked at hosting a seminar for local businesses on finding and retaining employees, but nobody was interested in attending at the time and the event never happened.
- Felicia Hart shared that smaller businesses often do not have the time or resources to manage their Human Resource needs. At the Economic Development Summit Employer Expo, they discussed the possibility of working with the Society of Human Resource Management (SHRM) to help provide part-time HR management to small businesses and promote them at the same time.
- Felicia Hart solicited ideas for the next business tour. Committee members suggested Casey Trees, Champion Iron, Falling Bark Farm or another food producer, and Patriot Carriers.

5. Preliminary Discussion on Grant Opportunity for Commercial Kitchen

Felicia Hart, Director of Economic Development & Tourism, provided the following update:

- At the Agritourism Summit in February, many shared that there is a big need for a local commercial kitchen. Access to a commercial kitchen would allow small farms and producers to increase their product offerings and sales.

- One possibility is building a community commercial kitchen. The fairgrounds would be a good location, from both a geographical and permitting standpoint. Several different grant options are being explored for this project, two of which are through the USDA.
 - Chairman Milleson asked if the plan is to extend the existing commercial kitchen at the fairgrounds.
 - Felicia Hart explained that the current kitchen is dated and, after meeting with the Ruritans to make sure they were on board, the goal would be to build a new kitchen. The Ruritans would ultimately be responsible for maintaining the facility, the insurance, and leasing the kitchen, but the grant would have to go through the locality.

6. Economic Development and Tourism Update by Felicia Hart

Felicia Hart provided the following update:

- There will be a USDA Rural Development event at the Barns of Rose Hill in December. This is a great opportunity to learn about the funding programs and opportunities that they offer.
 - Bev McKay observed that their offerings are huge and a large percentage of USDA funds involve things that are not traditionally considered agricultural, such as housing grants and government buildings.
- The VATI project is moving along, albeit slowly. An update will be provided at the next Board of Supervisors meeting. Felicia explained that the VATI grant is an almost \$100 million grant that came out of COVID money. Eight localities are participating. Clarke County also contributed funds, so that everybody in the county who is either unserved or underserved will receive fiber cable to their homes.
 - Bev McKay added that everybody is unserved or underserved except the towns of Berryville, Boyce, parts of White Post and the road that leads to Old Chapel.
 - Christy Dunkle added that citizens have to sign up ahead of time and provide their addresses.
 - Felicia Hart explained that All Points Broadband already has all the addresses, which were provided to them as a requirement of the grant, but the company is asking citizens to go in and verify the addresses are correct.
 - Chairman Milleson asked how much the monthly service fee would be.
 - Felicia Hart responded that rate and fee information is not available yet.
- We continue to work one-on-one with the Laurel Ridge Small Business Development Center, there are some numbers in the meeting packet showing the different businesses they have been able to help so far.
- We just completed the Worlds of Work at the Shenandoah University Event Center. This is the third year this event has been held, and there were a total of 92 businesses that participated, 5 of which were from Clarke County. The event space was divided into four different areas and each student spent about thirty minutes in each area, including banking and nursing schools. The fire departments and sheriff's offices set up outside. Berryville Chiropractic and Berryville Graphics were also there. There are plenty of opportunities to volunteer at next year's event, invites will be sent out next year.
- The ARPA grant request from the Virginia Tourism Corporation was approved for the full \$30,000. Thanks to Brenda Bennett who submitted the application on the county's behalf. One of the projects we are working on is a Love Local campaign – developing a logo that states "Proudly Produced in Clarke County". Stickers will be made with this logo and given to local businesses,

- including the farm markets, to put on their products and in their locations. The logo will also be available for use on websites and social media and there will be a marketing campaign included as well.
- Another campaign we are exploring is Restaurant Week, in order to help promote and remind people of the local restaurants.
 - o Betsy Pritchard asked when this would be held.
 - Felicia Hart responded that it will be decided according to feedback from the restaurants and whatever would work best for them.
 - We are giving \$13,700 to the Berryville-Clarke County Visitors Center and working with them to get flags out front, new informational pieces inside the building, and purchasing a portable television to set up at events and to show videos. In addition, we are looking at getting the maps in the Experience Clarke County brochure printed, with one side being a map of Clarke County and the other side a map of the Town of Berryville. We will then distribute these maps to the different businesses so they can use them to help give people directions.
 - Money has been set aside for a community calendar at the fairgrounds, so that when people are coming into the different events, such as the Lucketts Market, they can see what other events are coming up. We are also looking at getting some banners and additional signage, website enhancements, and video and/or drone footage to use.
 - A farm tour program was done several years ago and we would like bring that back as a regional campaign. Other localities have done studio tours and similar things.
 - o Christy Dunkle added that a previous art studio tour had been very successful and may be worth looking into doing that again.
 - Christina Kraybill agreed, adding that local shops helped by hosting artisans who did not have studio space. At the time, Clarke had one of the highest concentrations of artists in Virginia.
 - Felicia Hart requested committee members send her any information they may have about these past events.
 - Christy Dunkle answered that there should be files for previous events, because the previous Economic Development and Tourism Director facilitated a grant; however, no one was reimbursed because all the requirements were not met.
 - November 26 is Small Business Saturday. Businesses should be promoting this. Thanks to Christina Kraybill and Berryville Main Street for getting and distributing the promotional items for this event.
 - Betsy Pritchard reported that the fairgrounds are doing well. The Ruritans are seeing more people coming out to events post-COVID, and are getting ready to reinvest rental proceeds in improvements at the fairgrounds. The goal is to have the space rented every weekend from April-October. There are a number of different events coming up, including a small music festival from West Virginia.
 - Chairman Milleson added that attendance at the Lucketts Market was incredible this year.
 - Christina Kraybill opined that we need to continue working on connecting the people attending the market with the businesses downtown, but it is difficult because the distance is not easily walkable.
 - Christina Kraybill asked if it is possible to get some kind of permanent signage installed somewhere on the fairgrounds property to direct people towards dining and shopping establishments. It is not realistically possible to walk from the fairgrounds to downtown, so it is important to connect with

businesses on Main Street. A strength of this community is the amazing amount of unique small businesses.

- Felicia Hart replied that this is one of the projects within the ARPA grant through VTC.
- Betsy Pritchard added that Experience Clarke County brochures are displayed at the Fairgrounds in weatherproof display boxes provided by the Clarke County Tourism office, so that people can see them when they are checking out.
- Mark Gribble suggested in addition to visual signage perhaps something digital would be useful, since most people use Google maps or something similar
- Christina Kraybill added that QR codes were included on the back of the new brochures.
- Christy Dunkle stated the town is working on installing wayfinding signage and just had their kick-off meeting last week. ARPA money will be used to get that started. Frazier Associates of Staunton were hired to do the signage.
 - Felicia Hart added that changing the name of the fairgrounds to “Clarke County Fair and Event Center” helps, because then it will be included in search results when people are searching for event space. The Ruritans are upgrading and improving their facilities to be able to offer different spaces and functionalities and people do not realize that these kinds of spaces are available.
- Christina Kraybill advised that the Experience Clarke County brochures are very attractive and people are definitely picking them up. Some businesses still have not received some, while others have run out. These brochures are useful to hand out to people who are coming into town early for weddings or other events and are looking for local things to do.
 - Felicia Hart replied that somebody will be hired to update the website; however, it will take some time to collect the necessary information. 20,000 Experience Clarke County brochures were originally printed and there are about 6000 left. We are also looking at reprinting the Appalachian Trail brochure as well as the oversized, pull out Historic District Walking and Driving Tour map, and making them available to all the businesses as well.
- Betsy Pritchard opined that the Farmer’s Market needs to be better promoted at the fairgrounds and during other overlapping events.
 - Christy Dunkle stated that there used to be a rack card listing all of the farmers market vendors, perhaps another one can be created, as it was pretty inexpensive and mail-able.
 - Betsy Pritchard added that rack cards and brochures are the type of things that are useful to hand directly to people when completing contracts for events at the fairgrounds.
 - Bev McKay suggested distributing some of the Experience Clarke County brochures to the Harley Davidson shop in Winchester, as they get a lot of traffic from all over and motorcycle tourism is a big opportunity.
 - Mark Gribble added that the KOA in Harpers Ferry brings in a lot of people from out of town and offered to deliver some there.
 - Felicia Hart responded that the brochures are also in the Virginia Visitor Centers and are shared regionally with other tourism offices. Every business also gets a tabletop display rack that includes a sticker advising them to call for more brochures when they run out.
- Christy Dunkle explained that the LGV Group, who produces windows for skyscrapers, is in the process of building two warehouses near the Industrial Park, though they are not actually part of it.
 - Felicia Hart clarified that they do not produce the glass, they import it from Spain and then modify it.
- Felicia Hart introduced Indea Ford, who is a new employee in the County Administration office and will be serving as the committee’s clerk.

7. Next Meeting

- January 18, 2023 – Organizational Meeting

8. Adjourn

- At 1:51pm, Chairman Milleson adjourned the meeting.
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Minutes Recorded and Transcribed by Indea G. Ford