

Economic Development Advisory Committee  
July 19, 2023 Regular Meeting 1:00 pm

At a Regular meeting of the Economic Development Advisory Committee held on Wednesday, July 19, 2023, at 1:00 pm in the Main Meeting Room, Berryville-Clarke County Government Center, 101 Chalmers Court, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Berryville, Virginia.

Members Present: Mark Gribble, Christy Dunkle, Reid Dodson, Bev McKay, Johnny Milleson, Christina Kraybill  
Members Absent: Betsy Pritchard  
Staff Present: Michelle Ridings Brown, Chris Boies, Indea Ford  
Others Present: None  
Press Present: None

**1. Call to Order**

At 1:00 pm, Chairman Milleson called the meeting to order.

**2. Adoption of Agenda**

Chairman Milleson requested to amend the agenda by adding item 2a: Committee Introductions to newly appointed Economic Development & Tourism Director, Michelle Ridings Brown.

**Mark Gribble made a motion, seconded by Christy Dunkle, to adopt the agenda as amended. The motion carried by the following vote:**

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

**2a. Committee Introductions to newly appointed Economic Development & Tourism Director, Michelle Ridings Brown**

Committee members gave introductions.

- Chairman Milleson asked Bev McKay to provide a brief update on the new committee member.
  - o Bev McKay stated that Christian Borel was appointed yesterday. Bev will provide Christian’s contact details to Chairman Milleson.

### 3. Approval of Minutes

- May 17, 2023 – Regular Meeting

Christina Kraybill made a motion, seconded by Mark Gribble, to approve the minutes of the May 17, 2023 Regular Meeting as presented. The motion carried by the following vote:

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

### 4. Update by Shaine Coleman

Chris Boies stated that Shaine Coleman had been invited to attend today's meeting but had not responded.

- Chairman Milleson stated that he would reach out to Shaine and see if he can attend the September meeting.

### 5. Economic Development and Tourism Update by Michelle Ridings Brown

Michelle Ridings Brown provided the following update:

- The Virginia 250 Commission program resolution was approved. This will support the Virginia Tourism Corporation grant for the Clarke County Historical Association for Heritage Days in November.
- ARPA fund allocations are being reviewed; a plan and budget has to be submitted by December 2023. Everything has to be completed and invoiced by July 2024.
  - o Christina Kraybill asked if a portion of the ARPA funds have been allocated to Restaurant Week.
    - Michelle Ridings Brown responded that funds have been allocated for Restaurant Week, the Love Local Campaign, improvements to the Visitor Center, signage at the Fairgrounds, and a farm tour.
  - Bev McKay asked Michelle Ridings Brown if she would attend the Boyce Town Council meeting, as it would be good for her to meet with them to help promote the Railroad Museum.
    - o Michelle Ridings Brown accepted this invitation.

Michelle Ridings Brown continued the update:

- Looking at getting a LOVE sign made for Clarke County which would be added to the map of Love sign locations on the Virginia Tourism website. \$1500 of the total building cost is reimbursable through the Love Works Program after the sign is built.
  - o Chairman Milleson asked where the sign would be located.
    - Michelle Ridings Brown responded that the design and location of the sign would need to be discussed. Typically, the design represents the unique character of the locality. Downtown Berryville would be a good location for the sign.

- Mark Gribble asked how big the signs are.
  - Michelle Ridings Brown responded that there are no size requirements but the larger signs tend to attract more people.
- Chris Boies asked Christy Dunkle if the location for a Love sign had previously been discussed.
  - Christy Dunkle responded that the Council were not keen on a sign being put in Rose Hill Park.
  - Christina Kraybill added that the Fairgrounds had previously been suggested as a location for the sign.
    - Michelle Ridings Brown responded that the Fairgrounds would be a good location.
- Working on creating a tourism brand, including logo, marketing and a new website, which the committee would need to provide feedback on.
  - Christy Dunkle asked if a consultant would be hired for this.
    - Michelle Ridings Brown responded that she has spoken with the Virginia Tourism Corporation who are happy to work through this process together. A new website would be the best place to start.
  - Chairman Milleson added that he would like to see developments happen relatively quickly.
    - Michelle Ridings Brown agreed and added that design ideas will be put together and presented to the committee to choose from.
  - Mark Gribble suggested that the tourism brand be designed around the history of Clarke County.
    - Michelle Ridings Brown added that the Virginia Tourism Corporation tells us that for someone to drive an hour to a locality, they would need 3-4 hours of activities to do. Creating itineraries that highlight restaurants, lodging, activities, historical sights, etc., will encourage tourism in Clarke County.
  - Bev McKay asked how we can appeal to the visitor demographic.
    - Michelle Ridings Brown responded that marketing efforts would be tailored to different audiences. Research will show who the target market is.
  - Chairman Milleson asked what the committee can do to help.
    - Michelle Ridings Brown responded that developing a master list of annual events and activities would be helpful in creating itineraries, as well as developing a business directory that includes lodging, attractions, restaurants and retail.
      - Christy Dunkle suggested that service businesses be included.
        - Michelle-Ridings Brown responded that, typically, the Chamber would list service businesses not a tourism site.
      - Christina Kraybill agreed that services should be listed, as the service industry makes up a substantial portion of the revenue generated from Clarke County businesses.
        - Chris Boies added that Clarke County doesn't have a Business, Professional Occupational License (BPOL) tax.
      - Bev McKay suggested that all businesses could be listed under different headings to make it easier for people to find what they

are looking for. Perhaps something else can be done to promote the service businesses.

- Michelle Ridings Brown agreed that headings could be an option but adding more landing pages would increase the cost of the website.
- Chris Boies added that the Chamber typically helps support and promote service businesses. Michelle will be meeting with the Chamber soon.
- Need to work with the businesses to help them understand what our tourism program is and how to utilize it.
- Working on growing our social media presence and following, including paid advertising campaigns. Campaign analytics will show who the target market is.
  - Mark Gribble added that Instagram seems to be very popular with businesses and suggested creating a tourism page.
    - Michelle Ridings Brown responded that a tourism Instagram account will be set up.

## **6. Town of Berryville Update by Christy Dunkle**

- Working on opening a daycare at Zion Baptist Church. They are currently going through the special use permit process; the Planning Commission meeting is next week.
- Moving ahead with wayfinding signage. VDOT meeting was held and we have the construction intent documents and locations of the signs, as well as businesses and venues identified for the blades of the signs. The bulk of the ARPA funds must be spent by the end of the year; fabrication of the parking signs will happen first.
- A new bakery is coming to South Church Street; they are currently working with the Building Department.
- Lucketts Fall Market begins October 13, ticket presale starts next month.
- Site work continues on the second warehouse in the industrial park; a lot of the space has been leased already.
- Starting a Berryville Area Plan update, the first meeting will be held on August 2.
- Discussions with representatives from 33 West Main Street, where Battletown Pharmacy used to be, are continuing and staff will keep the committee updated.

## **7. Berryville Main Street Update by Christina Kraybill**

- Two new board members have joined, both are local business owners.
- Reminder that Berryville Main Street is now considered an emerging main street program. In 2021, the program lost their accreditation but is now fully led by volunteers and back on track.
- The office is now operational and the livery almost completely cleaned out of Firehouse Gallery supplies. Meeting with the Barns today to see if they can take some of the larger gallery pieces that are left.
- Met with Virginia Main Street in May and Berryville Main Street was awarded an additional \$5,500 for the Hogan's Alley project with no match required. The grand total for the project is \$12,500; the first expenditure was the purchase of the original station window guard from the rail station. The Board approved funds to pay a welder to carry out the necessary repairs to make it a fixture.

- The planters are still looking good and the Woman’s Club of Clarke County has taken over the dead planter outside Jane’s Lunch for the rest of the year.
- The Vice President of the Board is currently managing Berryville Main Street’s social media. Followers have increased to 6,600 and we are averaging 100,000 impressions per month. A private Facebook group was created for brick and mortar, downtown businesses, so they can share upcoming events and sale information with each other.
  - o Christy Dunkle suggested that Michelle Ridings Brown be added to this group
- Requesting permission from the town to use the parking lot behind the livery for food trucks.
- Furnish and Drape on South Church Street will be relocating their business inside Hip & Humble before the end of August due to River City Construction taking over the current property.
- Music in the Park will run through September 8.
- Summers End Cruise-In major sponsors are in; currently looking for volunteers for the event on August 26.
- The Berryville Main Street fall yard sale event will be September 9.
  - o Christy Dunkle asked if the incubator space has been leased.
    - Christina Kraybill responded that it has been leased by a mortgage processor.
  - o Christy Dunkle asked if the Lockett’s liaison would be happening.
    - Christina Kraybill responded that she does not have a volunteer for this yet.
      - o Christy Dunkle suggested that discussions need to be held with Lockett’s Market about including Berryville Main Street on their marketing platforms to encourage more people to visit the downtown stores and restaurants during the Lockett’s Fall Market. Increased marketing efforts would be beneficial.
- Chairman Milleson asked Michelle Ridings Brown if there was anybody in Clarke County that the Committee could help her meet.
  - o Michelle Ridings Brown asked the committee who would be beneficial for her to meet.
    - Chris Boies suggested that it would be useful to make introductions with Rosemont Manor.
      - o Christina Kraybill stated that she plans to do that on Friday.
- Michelle Ridings Brown asked if Long Branch Historic House & Farm still hosts events.
  - o Bev McKay responded yes they have an event this weekend. Randy Buckley is on their Board, it may be useful to reach out to him for future event information.
- Michelle Ridings Brown asked who the contact at Blandy Experimental Farm would be.
  - o Chris Boies said that he would provide contact details.
- Bev McKay added that White Post Restorations may be putting on a car show event next fall to showcase their work and offered to make the necessary introductions.

**8. Next Meeting**

- September 20, 2023 – Regular Meeting

**9. Adjourn**

- 2:07pm Chairman Milleson adjourned the meeting.
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Minutes Recorded and Transcribed by Indea G. Ford