

Economic Development Advisory Committee
September 20, 2023 Regular Meeting 1:00 pm

At a Regular meeting of the Economic Development Advisory Committee held on Wednesday, September 20, 2023, at 1:00 pm in the Main Meeting Room, Berryville-Clarke County Government Center, 101 Chalmers Court, 2nd Floor, Berryville, Virginia.

Members Present: Mark Gribble, Bev McKay, Johnny Milleson, Betsy Pritchard
Members Absent: Christy Dunkle, Christina Kraybill, Reid Dodson
Staff Present: Michelle Ridings Brown, 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 removing item 5. Town of Berryville Update by Christy Dunkle and item 6. Berryville Main Street Update by Christina Kraybill.

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

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

3. Approval of Minutes

- July 19, 2023 – Regular Meeting

Bev McKay made a motion, seconded by Betsy Pritchard, to approve the minutes of the July 19, 2023 Regular Meeting as presented. The motion carried by the following vote:

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

Betsy Pritchard - Aye

4. Economic Development and Tourism Update by Michelle Ridings Brown

Michelle Ridings Brown provided the following update:

- We received 58 submissions for the new website design RFP. These are currently being reviewed and the selected company will be invited to attend the November 15th EDAC meeting to give a presentation on the services they provide. They will also design the logo for the tourism brand.
 - Chairman Milleson asked who would approve the logo.
 - Michelle Ridings Brown responded that the EDAC would be responsible for the initial approval of the logo design. The final design approval would go to Board of Supervisors.
 - Bev McKay asked for clarification on the attached social media metrics report
 - Michelle Ridings-Brown responded that the reports indicate that our current social media audience is local to Clarke County, but that this would be explained in more detail later in the meeting.
 - Mark Gribble asked if the selected company is required to be local.
 - Michelle Ridings Brown responded that although it is not a requirement that they be local, they would be expected to attend some meetings in person.
- A new Experience Clarke County Instagram account was created a month ago and we already have over 100 followers.
 - Bev McKay suggested that Chairman Milleson and Michelle Ridings Brown visit the Horseshoe Curve Restaurant and meet with the owners.
 - Chairman Milleson suggested that the Horseshoe Curve Restaurant might be a good business to visit for the fall tour.
 - Betsy Pritchard asked if clarketourism.com is still in use.
 - Michelle Ridings Brown answered that it is not. The current website domain is experienceclarkecounty.com; we will continue to use this domain when building the new website.
- Kelli Williams (Weaver) from Virginia Tourism Corporation will be attending the November EDAC meeting and will provide insights on developing a new tourism brand.
- Lockett's Market is one of the largest draws for tourism and they bring in around 10,000 people twice a year to Clarke County. Indea Ford created a Clarke County Fall Itinerary to be included on the Lockett's website.
 - Bev McKay suggested marketing to motorcycle groups.
 - Michelle Ridings Brown responded that social media campaigns can be used to target a specific demographic.
- Discussions took place with Berryville Main Street about planning seasonal events further out.
 - Bev McKay added that Dinosaur Land is planning to hold their 50th anniversary celebration at White Post Restorations in 2024/2025.
- A paid Facebook campaign was created to promote the Shenandoah Valley Fiber Fest. The advertisement cost \$8.90 and reached 1627 people, with 37 clicks, 52 post engagements and 24 cents cost per click.
- It is important to let the downtown business knows in advance of big events so they can be prepared and encourage them to come up with promotional ideas during these events.

- Mark Gribble added that a downtown merchant had complained that parking had been blocked off the day before the annual car show and as a result, she got no business that day. This is something to be mindful of during large events.
 - Chairman Milleson added that the car show attendance was down this year, likely due to the rising popularity and frequency of car events nationally.
- Social media metrics for August shows that 503 people have visited the Experience Clarke County Facebook page and 90 people visited the Instagram page. The reports show that our social media posts reached around 4500 people in August and the number of Facebook and Instagram followers continues to increase.
 - Bev McKay added that is around 1/3 of the population of Clarke County.
 - Michelle Ridings Brown added that right now, we are marketing to our community and they are responding well. The goal is to expand our presence to surrounding localities.
- Monthly meetings with the Shenandoah Valley Tourism Partnership are taking place. There is an annual cost of \$10,000 to be part of their marketing program, along with eight other counties. However, this year we paid \$5000 as the new website is the top priority. We will need to evaluate the return on investment before paying \$10,000 next year.
 - Bev McKay asked if their marketing is mostly focused on the trails.
 - Michelle Ridings Brown responded that it covers a variety of things, including dining, activities and events. However, we need to provide the content in order to be featured. Clarke County was recently featured in their “Leaf Peep in the Shenandoah Valley Parks” blog.
 - Bev McKay asked how to encourage people on the trails come to Clarke County after a hike.
 - Michelle Ridings Brown responded that the new website would list Clarke County businesses and we could create hiking itineraries.
 - Betsy Pritchard added that Shenandoah Valley and Shenandoah River are huge keywords in a Google search
 - Michelle Ridings Brown agreed and added that there is value to being a part of the Shenandoah Valley Tourism Partnership.
- I continue to meet with business owners and develop good working relationships.
 - Chairman Milleson added that the committee is happy to help make any necessary connections.
 - Michelle Ridings Brown responded that an introduction to the Neighborhood Italian Kitchen would be helpful.
- The EDAC Fall Business Tour is on October 18. It would be a good idea to visit the old prison property (Camp 7), as it would be a good project for the IDA to take on. The tour will also include Rappahannock Electric Cooperative Property and Dinosaur Land.
 - Bev McKay added that the Lone Oak would be a good place to stop for lunch.
 - Chairman Milleson added that a tour of the glass factory would also be good.
 - Michelle Ridings Brown added that this could be included in the Spring Tour.
- We are partnering with the City of Winchester Economic Development Authority and Fredrick County EDA for a FAM tour on September 26-27. We will be meeting at the Barns of Rose Hill and touring the LGV Group and Smith Meadows Farm.

- The Virginia Economic Developers Association (VEDA) Fall Conference begins today until September 22; I will be heading to Portsmouth after this meeting to attend the conference.
- The VA-1 Governor's Tourism Summit is being held November 12-14 in Richmond, I will be attending.
- ARPA fund updates:
 - Restaurant Week will be held March 18-23, 2024. We will use digital campaigns to help bring people into our restaurants during the off-season. This will include wineries and farm markets that serve food.
 - Mark Gribble asked what ARPA stands for
 - Michelle Ridings Brown responded that ARPA stands for American Rescue Plan Act and is COVID funding.
 - Signage at the Fairgrounds will be developed to promote events and direct traffic. \$3000 of the ARPA funds will be allocated for this.
 - Enhancements to the Barns of Rose Hill Visitors Center have been discussed, and reconfiguring the layout to make it more welcoming, and upgrades on displays and wall mounted brochure racks. \$12,000 of the ARPA funds will be allocated for this.
 - The remaining funds will be used to develop the new tourism website.
- Chairman Milleson asked if Shaine Coleman would be providing an update to the committee.
 - Michelle Ridings Brown responded that Shaine was unable to make today's meeting but is scheduled to attend the November Meeting.
- Bev McKay added that perhaps the owners of Dinosaur Land would consider offering a 'rent-to-buy' option to potential new owners.
 - Betsy Pritchard asked whether the land could be put into conservation easement.
 - Bev McKay responded that it could not as it is not an AOC or FOC.
 - Michelle Ridings Brown added that Dinosaur Land is a one of a kind attraction; however, some enhancements are needed.
- Betsy Pritchard asked if there were any updates from the Town of Berryville or Berryville Main Street.
 - Michelle Ridings Brown responded that Christy Dunkle was unable to attend today's meeting but did not have any updates. Christina Kraybill was also unable to attend today's meeting
- The Haunted Berryville Ghost Tours are being held October 19-21; we will be working with Berryville Main Street and the Historical Association on this.
- Chairman Milleson suggested that the November EDAC meeting might run longer than usual, as there will be several guests presenting.
- Michelle Ridings Brown added that the itinerary for the Fall Tour would be sent out soon.

5. Next Meeting

- October 18, 2023 – Fall Business Tour
- November 15, 2023 – Regular Meeting

6. Adjourn

- 2:13pm Chairman Milleson adjourned the meeting.

Minutes Recorded and Transcribed by Indea G. Ford