

Approved 07-15-2020

Clarke County Economic Development Advisory Committee
January 29, 2020 Minutes

A meeting of the Economic Development Advisory Committee (EDAC) held in the Berryville/Clarke County Government Center, Berryville, Virginia, on Wednesday, January 29, 2020, at 1:00 PM.

Board: Chris Bates, Christy Dunkle, Christina Kraybill, Bev McKay, John Milleson

Absent: Jim Barb, Betsy Pritchard, Lee Sheaffer

Staff: Doug Lawrence, Len Capelli, Cathy Kuehner, Lora B. Walburn

Press: Mickey Powell – The Winchester Star

1. Call to Order

At 1:00 pm, Lora Walburn, Economic Development Advisory Committee Clerk, called the meeting to order.

2. Organizational Items

Elect Chair

Lora Walburn called for nominations and election of the 2020 Chair.

Bev McKay, seconded by Christie Dunkle, moved to nominate and elect John Milleson, 2020 Chair. The motion carried by the following vote:

Jim Barb	-	Absent
Chris Bates	-	Aye
Christy Dunkle	-	Aye
Christina Kraybill	-	Aye
Beverly B. McKay	-	Aye
John Milleson	-	Aye
Betsy Pritchard	-	Absent
Lee Sheaffer	-	Absent

Following the vote, the meeting was turned over to John Milleson 2020 Chair.

Elect Vice Chair

Chairman Milleson called for nominations and election of the 2020 Vice Chair.

When queried, 2019 Vice Chair Christina Kraybill declined the 2020 nomination citing potential scheduling conflicts.

Christy Dunkle, seconded by Christina Kraybill, moved to nominate and elect Chris Bates 2020 Vice Chair. The motion carried by the following vote:

Jim Barb	-	Absent
Chris Bates	-	Aye
Christy Dunkle	-	Aye
Christina Kraybill	-	Aye
Beverly B. McKay	-	Aye
John Milleson	-	Aye
Betsy Pritchard	-	Absent
Lee Sheaffer	-	Absent

Set Meeting Date, Time and Location

By consensus, the Committee adopted the schedule as presented.

Third Wednesday at 1:00 pm, Berryville Clarke County Government Center Meeting Room AB

- January 29
- March 18
- May 20
- July 15
- September 16
- November 18
- December 16 [Annual Business Tour]
- January 20, 2021 – Organizational Meeting

3. Adoption of Agenda

Chris Bates opined that the brochure project required more research. Chairman Milleson suggested further discussion under Item 5 as scheduled.

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

Jim Barb	-	Absent
Chris Bates	-	Aye

Approved 07-15-2020

Christy Dunkle	-	Aye
Christina Kraybill	-	Aye
Beverly B. McKay	-	Aye
John Milleson	-	Aye
Betsy Pritchard	-	Absent
Lee Sheaffer	-	Absent

4. Approval of Minutes

Chris Bates, seconded by Christina Kraybill, moved to approve the November 20, 2019, minutes as presented. The motion carried as follows:

Jim Barb	-	Absent
Chris Bates	-	Aye
Christy Dunkle	-	Aye
Christina Kraybill	-	Aye
Beverly B. McKay	-	Aye
John Milleson	-	Aye
Betsy Pritchard	-	Absent
Lee Sheaffer	-	Absent

5. Brochure Project Update by Cathy Kuehner

Chris Bates stated that the brochure projects needed additional research before the Committee could make decisions. He further noted that there was no tracking mechanism to determine effectiveness.

Lora Walburn comments:

- The late John Sours, former Director of Economic Development and Tourism, in conjunction with the EDAC, created the County's tourism brochure.
- Historically, the brochure has been reviewed and revised by the Director and the EDAC; and, after his retirement, reviewed and content approved solely by the EDAC while she clerked the public body from 2002 to 2010.
- Tourism Alliance, a group created at the suggestion / recommendation of the EDAC, created and published a brochure, "Closer than you think." The Tourism Alliance disbanded in 2006.
- Administrative staff, with the help of other employees traveling near distribution locations, delivered brochures on a monthly basis from 2002 to 2010.
- Since she returned to clerking the EDAC in July 2016, no requests until late 2018.
- Demand for brochures has significantly decreased over the past ten years.

Cathy Kuehner comments:

- There is no process because she has not done this before. Her vision:
 - She is invited to the table to talk about basic questions.
 - Do we need one?
 - Who is the audience?
 - What is the budget?
 - Once it is established that, yes, we want something, whether it is a brochure or a rack card; then, kinda get into that deeper discussion about:
 - What are we promoting?
 - What telephone number?
 - What email address?
 - What is the content?
 - Who is your audience?
 - What is the content?
 - So, first, if it is something you decided you wanted to pursue; then, me at the table talking about images, text, content, that sort of thing. Of course, I report to Chris [Boies]; and, it is the County that would pay for it. So, some point, there is that.

Bev McKay asked when the new website was up, running, and after it gets established if the County would have something that links to things on it.

Cathy Kuehner responded in the affirmative.

Christina Kraybill asked Ms. Kuehner in her professional opinion, in all the years she spent in communications in various sources, if she felt a paper copy would be helpful or an app development.

Cathy Kuehner responded that she had to say that, she thought, that we are in a point in time when there are still some people, and she tends to think women with pocketbooks, who are out and about and will pick up. She continued that she thought it was the same conversation of the bigger picture is the discussion about newspapers. We are at a point in time where there are still some people that like paper, right; but, we recognize that the scale is tipping toward people that do everything online, right. And, so, that has got to be part of the conversation is that if there is a brochure, or a rack card, first – where does it get distributed, who is doing the distribution. Chris [Bates] is right, is there a mechanism to track in any way how somebody heard about something.

Chris Boies informed the Committee Len Capelli had introduced him to the regional tourism group, Shenandoah Valley Tourism Partnership, that will meet again the first part of February; and, at that meeting, he would have access to every tourism director in this region with whom he would like to seek opinion. Noting that a lot of them were still producing a brochure, he said he would ask about tracking value back to costs, and things of this nature. Mr. Boies suggested coming back with a proposal at the next meeting.

Christy Dunkle remarked that many of these member jurisdictions are on the Interstate 81 corridor.

Bev McKay commented that when you get a paper one it is targeted to what you want it to be targeted to; because, you pick up a piece of paper and look on it, unless it is in Berryville or Clarke County, that is what you get. He told the members that when he was in Richmond for a meeting, he had entered in his phone area restaurants; and, while he got a few area restaurants, some were displayed were located in Shreveport, Louisiana. He wondered how much money it was worth to do that.

Christina Kraybill responded that it comes done to the target audience; because, when she ran her shop, her ideal customer tended to be in their 40's and 50's, the age group that tends to have the most discretionary income. Therefore, if you want tourists that spend money, you tend to go after that age group; but, you do not want to forget the next generation that might not have as much disposable income, but you want them to start buying into the benefits of a community. She opined that it gets tricky because the younger generation is mostly using apps or social media for recommendations; and, the challenge is, how do we continue to care for an older consumer, that is very important to a community, but how do we not forget the younger ones coming up.

Cathy Kuehner commented that Christina Kraybill, knowing from her drum circle, that younger generations are interested in the experience; and, on that, Clarke County has a lot to offer with the river, the Appalachian Trail, and places to bicycle, wander, Blandy, places to go to and have an experience. So, yeah, it is finding that balance that we have discussed before that the challenge with any brochure is that you don't want to be real specific about stores and places that may not be in business a year or two from now.

Christina Kraybill noted that one thing all generations have in common is word-of-mouth; and, when they hear something word-of-mouth, they tend to go to check it out. She provided an example from her own experience during a recent trip to Homestead, Florida.

Bev McKay opined that there was no substitute for local knowledge.

Chairman Milleson instructed staff to carry the matter forward to the March agenda.

Presentation by Dana Waring, Principal – Clarke County High School

Bev McKay informed the members that he had recently spoken with Terri Catlett, Board of Supervisors Liaison to the Clarke County School Board, who had informed him that Dana Waring, Principal – Clarke County High School, was working on a program at the high school where she would like those high school students that will have to start doing interviews soon to participate in practice interviews. Ms. Waring would like to make a presentation on her project to the EDAC at its March meeting.

Chris Boies explained that Ms. Waring is trying to find a connection to the business community.

Bev McKay added that Ms. Waring wanted to explore what the businesses in the County can / will do.

Chris Boies opined that it might be helpful for the members to hear what Ms. Waring is working on with her students.

Chairman Milleson stated that he would contact Ms. Waring and invite her to the March meeting.

Chris Bates added that the presentation might take more than fifteen to twenty minutes since Ms. Waring had a lot the EDAC needed to be aware of, which will take time to go through all the opportunities for businesses and Career and Technical Education students.

6. Director Economic Development and Tourism

Update and 2019 Year-end Summary

Highlights of Len Capelli's update includes:

- This is his last meeting with the Economic Development Advisory Committee. He noted that he had enjoyed working with everyone and would keep in touch.
- Brochure:
 - Never been a proponent of big, expensive brochures.
 - He agrees with Christy Dunkle, who did mentioned that people do stop in tourist centers, that a rack card there might result in an action, whether it is visiting a website or making a telephone call.
 - Two websites:
 - Tourism website: Averaging over five hundred [500] new users per month, which it has done over the past two and a half years.
 - Economic Development website: Two hundred and twenty five [225] to two hundred and fifty [250] new visitors per month on average, which is significant for what Clarke has to offer and the limited assets. This is a fairly significant number of visitors at a low cost.
- "Become and Agripreneur" Seminar
 - February 12, 2020, at 6:30 pm, Main Meeting Room
 - Over 100 people have pre-registered.
 - Will have speakers from a number of agencies that are targeted to assist farmers.
 - A business working with the local equine community has donated a leaf blower for a raffle / door prize.

Report: Meals Tax in Surrounding Jurisdictions

- In favor of a food tax; and, if Representative Gooditis' bill [HB785] passes, it will allow the Supervisors to can make the decision without going to referendum.
- One report in the packet contains meals tax rates and budgeted FY2020 revenues for surrounding jurisdictions.
- The second report represents a conservative estimate of potential revenues.
- By consensus, the matter was carried forward to the March agenda.

Agricultural / Equine Survey

Highlights of Vice Chair Bates overview on the subject include:

- Two years ago, as a representative of the Farm Bureau and the Clarke County Equine Alliance, he came before the EDAC to present these groups' desire for an economic survey.
- The agpreneur seminar does not include the "horse people."
- Horses are the biggest economic driver in Clarke County agriculture.
- All information on surveys for agriculture in general, and horses in particular, dates back to 2002.
- Information is needed to seek businesses and educational programs.
- Spoke with the Agriculture teacher at the high school, who is "limping along" in an ag-management class without sufficient local data.
- It is estimated that there are approximately two thousand equine jobs in the County.
- Is suggesting that the EDAC have a legitimate discussion on conducting a survey to tell us what is here so that it can be developed.
- Clarke's website shows some available buildings and parcels, but it is nowhere near a complete list.
- Survey may need to be a "total" economic survey.

Bev McKay noted that Virginia does an ag survey, as well as the USDA. He opined that while there may be many horses out there many of those horses have zero value.

Chris Bates responded that if a horse produces \$165 a month in subsistent rent it does not have zero value for it has economic value, making it the most valuable animal in the County.

Bev McKay countered that retired race horses might be worth something, but really have no value and cannot be sold. He said that he could tell you what a cow is worth or an acre of corn, but how do you determine income value on a horse. He opined that, traditionally, ag surveys have looked at the value of the animal.

Chris Bates responded that the two surveys cited by Mr. McKay get very limited response. He opined that what Clarke needs is to control its own survey, to work together with entity conducting the survey. He reminded that two years ago the groups he represented had twenty lined up to do the legwork for the survey to find out really what is there, which is what is missing on a USDA or a Virginia Tech surveys.

Chris Bates opined that this opportunity was best suited to the EDAC to review to determine what is needed and to make those recommendations to the Board of Supervisors.

Bev McKay responded that the Farm Bureau funded the last survey, but nothing was done with the information.

Christy Dunkle reminded that the EDAC, specifically Eric Myer, former EDAC member, with Jake Grover, former Virginia Cooperative extension agent, was responsible for starting up the monthly hay sale at Hash's Auction.

Chris Bates responded to Christina Kraybill's query advising that the 2002 survey was an overview that provided a great deal of good information upon which farm meetings were based. At these meetings, held in the Town of Berryville, a great deal of networking was done, particularly among niche farmers.

Bev McKay opined that a survey may not accomplish anything, and, may in fact, be a negative to find out the actual value.

Christina Kraybill countered that Mr. Bates seemed to be saying that there were a lot more that were of value.

Mr. Bates explained that Mr. McKay's view is that there were more retired horses, drawing a \$165 a month each, than there are valuable horses that actually perform regular work.

Christina Kraybill asked how the 2002 survey was funded.

Bev McKay responded that the Farm Bureau and the County paid for the survey.

Chris Bates added that it cost just over \$5,000.

Chairman Milleson asked that the 2002 survey be included in the EDAC's March meeting packet.

Chris Bates postulated that the last survey caused problems between horse and cow farmers for all placed value on their animals.

In response to Christina Kraybill's query, Bev McKay informed the members that there were current reports available from the USDA on crops, beef cattle, and dairy.

Christina Kraybill asked for a rough cost estimate to conduct such a survey.

Chris Bates responded that it cost Loudoun County almost \$30,000 to conduct a horse-only survey. He stated that economic development funds were in the budget.

Bev McKay remarked that if a survey were done the EDAC should know what it wants to do with the information found, as well as have some sort of idea of what might be found.

Chris Bates opined that as economic advisory council the EDAC could help.

Len Capelli asked Mr. Bates for the number of local Equine Alliance members.

Mr. Bates responded approximately one hundred and forty [140] full equine businesses, with another six hundred [600] hanging around the fringes.

Len Capelli commented that he and Mr. Bates had discussed, even before conducting a survey, how to get more people involved by providing more value to the members in regard to promoting Clarke County Equine Alliance and making others aware of the the fact that Clarke is a substantial equine operation.

Chairman Milleson asked that continued discussion on the matter be added to the March agenda. He asked that a copy of 2002 survey be included in the packet, as well as distributed in advance to allow members time to review.

County Administrator Chris Boies Comments

Chairman Milleson invited newly appointment County Administrator Chris Boies to comment on his first meeting.

Chris Boies thanked Len Capelli for the job he has done for Clarke. He noted that he had only been here since December; and, Len had been super helpful to him in the transition, handing things over very professionally, and working together to keep the cooperation going after his departure and before someone else is hired. He concluded by expressing his appreciation to Len Capelli for the work he has done in service to Clarke.

Mr. Boies informed the Committee that he spoke last week with the Industrial Development Authority, and there was some desire to have targeted approaches to different pieces of economic development, strategies, etc.

Chairman Milleson expressed appreciation to Len Capelli for his help and service. He welcomed Doug Lawrence, Russell District Supervisor, to the meeting.

Christina Kraybill thanked Mr. Capelli noting in particular his coordination of the annual December business tour, which has become a favorite for members.

Approved 07-15-2020

Doug Lawrence told the Committee that he had read that the Jefferson County, West Virginia horse alliance were seeking support to build a center like the Virginia Horse Center in Rockbridge County, Virginia potentially on a piece of property that straddles the Jefferson / Clarke boundary line.

Mr. Lawrence, noting that fiber optics were placed along the railroad tracks stretching from Atlanta, Georgia to Chicago; Illinois, asked if this fiber option was available to local residents.

Bev McKay responded that this backbone line was not available to local users.

Lora Walburn added that Shentel does provide fiber options to commercial businesses along Route 7 and Route 340 in Clarke.

Supervisor McKay added that Shentel seems to be the most responsive of the fiber optic providers.

7. Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, March 18, 2020.

8. Adjournment

Being no further business, at 1:40 pm, Chairman Milleson adjourned the meeting.

Minutes recorded and transcribed by Lora B. Walburn, Clerk