

Berryville/Clarke County Joint Committee on Economic Development and Tourism
September 18, 2020 Regular Meeting 10:00 am

At a regular meeting of the Berryville/Clarke County Joint Committee on Economic Development and Tourism held on Friday, September 18, 2020, at 10:00 am in the Meeting Room AB, Berryville Clarke County Government Center, 101 Chalmers Court, 2nd Floor, Berryville, Virginia.

Members Present: David Weiss, Board of Supervisors, Chairman; Harry "Jay" Arnold, Berryville Mayor; Kara Rodriguez, Town Council Representative; Doug Lawrence, Board of Supervisors Representative

Members Absent: None

Staff Present: Chris Boies, Christy Dunkle, Cathy Kuehner, and Tiffany Kemp

Press Present: Mickey Powell, Winchester Star

Others Present: Matthew Bass

1. Call to Order - Determination of Quorum

At 10:00 am, David Weiss called the meeting to order.

2. Adoption of Agenda

Kara Rodriguez moved to approve the agenda as presented. The motion carried by the following vote:

| | |
|----------------|-------|
| Jay Arnold | - Aye |
| Doug Lawrence | - Aye |
| Kara Rodriguez | - Aye |
| David Weiss | - Aye |

3. Approval of Minutes

- Jay Arnold, Item Number 5, bullet point 1: change "township" to "town";
- Jay Arnold, Item Number 5, bullet point 5: add the word "is" after "tipping point";
- Christy Dunkle, Southeastern Collector Study, bullet point 3: change "sight" to "site";
- Christy Dunkle, Southeastern Collector Study, bullet point 4: change "site" to "sight";

Jay Arnold moved to approve the minutes for July 17, 2020, as amended. The motion carried by the following vote:

| | | |
|----------------|---|-----|
| Jay Arnold | - | Aye |
| Doug Lawrence | - | Aye |
| Kara Rodriguez | - | Aye |
| David Weiss | - | Aye |

4. CARES Grant Program

Chris Boies highlights include:

- The Small Business Grant applications were due on September 11, 2020, by 5:00 pm. There were 30 total applications received, 28 turned in on time, and two (2) were late or incomplete. Those applications totaled roughly \$285,000.
- The review committee was established and has met once to go over the applications. The committee consists of Terri Catlett - Finance Committee, Betsy Pritchard - EDAC, and Bill Waite - IDA. They will be meeting again Wednesday, September 23, to decide which businesses will receive funds. County finance will be notified on Thursday, and the Grant recipients' checks will be issued at the end of the month.
- The original plan was for the IDA to issue the checks; we have since found out that a 1099 will be due to each business at the end of the year, so the checks will now be dispersed through the County finance system.
- There has been a preliminary discussion on a second round of grants, though nothing has been decided yet.
- Some businesses did not apply because they wanted to be sure those who needed the funds most received them.
- The rules for CARES are ever-changing. Expenses previously not thought allowed are now acceptable; the changes may affect the remaining balance and the possibility of a second round of grants for small businesses.

Felicia Hart highlights include:

- Just under 1,000 grant applications were direct mailed out to individuals with a business license through Clarke County/Berryville.
- Thirty (30) total applications were received.
- The Grant Program was promoted through The Winchester Star, Clarke County website, and social media pages, Kristine Kriz with the Lord Fairfax Small Business Development Center, Winchester, and Frederick County EDA's helped promote, the Chamber President, Cynthia, has included numerous social media and meeting mentions.

Questions:

Kara Rodriguez: Was the general reason more businesses did not apply was that they were doing okay? What was the percentage of financial loss? Is there any thought to do a second round of funding?

Chris Boies: A complete guess was that you had to show a 25% financial loss, and some businesses surpassed that but didn't want to share their information. We will hold the information given to us privately. The Board has initially set aside \$185,000 based on Clarke County receiving the first half of the funding. The Board approved at their September meeting to up the amount available to \$285,000, if everyone's application checked out okay. We are trying to nail down the balance because of variables in what was allowed to be spent using CARES funds, and the childcare program had fewer participants than expected. We hope to take to the October finance committee what our plan will be for the remaining funds; we hope to include a second round of the small business assistance. We also want to find a way to include non-profits in that, if possible.

David Weiss: Surprised at the number of mailings done. Many of our businesses are construction-related, which have not been hit as hard. Restaurants are still struggling. Supervisors are willing to have another round if the funds are available.

Felicia Hart: The Rebuild Virginia grant is still available to small bricks and mortar stores that didn't qualify the first time. It is an easy grant to apply for, and there still is money available through them. Grants are up to \$10,000.

5. CARES Funding

Felicia Hart highlights include:

- Thanks to the Board of Supervisors for allocating her department \$50,000 of the CARES monies for marketing and public relations.
 - Approximately \$4,100 will be used as our regional piece for the GoVirginia grant.
 - Back to workforce program.
 - Focus provides training to those out of work.
 - Focus on getting tourism back into Clarke County and our "Wide Open Spaces".
 - Strategically placed radio advertising with iHeartradio.
 - Improve website and social media presence.
 - Signage for vacant businesses for sale.
 - Potential Clarke County marketing blitz at the Virginia Clearbrook Welcome Center for the month of December.
 - For \$500, we can set up what we want through the whole building.

- Averages about 60,000 people who go through the visitor center during the holidays,
- Any business can set up advertisements to market activities to help bring people back in the spring,
- Possible Visitor's Guide and other printed items visitors may need.
 - Waiting on quotes
- Video production to be used in multiple places.
 - No video for Clarke County currently exists.
 - Missing out on too many opportunities.

Questions:

Kara Rodriguez: Now seems like a good time to showcase that Clarke is a "land of social distancing" where families can go and not be around many people.

Felicia Hart: With the leaves changing the backroad and scenic views, we want to showcase that.

David Weiss: Has been approached over the year that tourism doesn't bring much money and is disruptive to our way of life, doesn't necessarily agree, but we need to be aware of this as we have success; we need to be mindful of trouble spots and work with other agencies to alleviate these concerns.

Doug Lawrence: parking needs to be addressed at some of the outdoor attractions. Lockes Mill Landing fills up fast.

Chris Boies: as we have success in these areas, we have to build up our infrastructure to support that. Clarke has received a grant to contribute some money to add parking up on the Appalachian Trail. We need to continue to look at getting grants and working with the Department of Natural Resources to improve boat landings and parking. We need to be proactive in our thinking of how we will accommodate these folks.

Felicia Hart: Because of COVID-19 and the tourism dollars that have been lost, the state and some of those departments are finding some additional money to make these improvements. The biggest thing is reminding and informing the locals of what will happen on a specific day to plan accordingly.

Appalachian Trail Committee

Felicia Hart: The Appalachian Trail brings a lot of outdoor people, people from outside our area, to see what we have to offer. The committee has done a great job of getting the brochures distributed. They will be looking for sponsorships. Alison Teetor pulled all this together; it was the first time they had met in a while, very informative.

6. Economic Development & Tourism Goals Update

Felicia Hart highlights include:

1. Convene a group of hospitality owners/operators (topics to include TOT, short-term rentals, Civil War)
 - This has already happened. Will send comments to the committee.
 - Transient Occupancy Tax
 - Pros and Cons of the Transient Occupancy Tax will be a long-term educational discussion to help them understand what they can get in return for their guests paying an additional tax.
 - Only one (1) person on the committee was for the Transient Occupancy Tax.
 - Felt it was a bad time to implement due to COVID-19.
 - Other jurisdictions around us are collecting this tax.
 - Short-term Rentals
 - the majority would like to see something done about this.
 - They would appreciate a level playing field.
 - They weren't so much concerned with the one or two-bedroom rentals; it was the three bedrooms, which is the definition of a bed-and-breakfast, according to Airbnb.
 - They want to have further discussion on that.
 - Civil War Marketing
 - Rosemont Manor- this is what they sell, the historical marketing.
 - The others do not feel it's a piece that is important to the majority of the folks that visit here.
2. Engage stakeholders on the feasibility of a hotel in Berryville (this would include owners/operators in the region).
 - Has reached out to a few folks and will set up a meeting.
 - Has had an excellent conversation with Bill Waite.
 - Following up on some items with Christy Dunkle as well.
3. Continue efforts on small business attraction and retention (seminars, promotion, assistance).
 - Working on this regularly.
 - Christine Kriz, Lord Fairfax Small Businesses Center, has come to Clarke to visit 14 businesses already, with a couple more scheduled.
 - When COVID-19 allows, we will put together seminars and programs for the community.
4. Engage in a dialogue with property owners of vacant buildings and developable land to spur economic activity.
 - Putting list together.
 - Reached out to a few folks, work in progress.

5. Evaluate what is needed to make the Berryville Main Street program viable and successful.
 - A new board has been put together.
 - There will be a meeting next week to see if it's viable, what their current status is, and what is their game plan moving forward.
 - I spoke with numerous businesses, so we have their take on the history of the program.
 - Parking Meter Contest
 - Christy Dunkle informed the committee that she and Berryville Main Street would be taking this over this year. They are working on the meter applications; fees will be waived this year, working on an updated application.
 - We are working closely with Diane Harrison to see what is currently working for them.
 - Chris Boies stated that we would have to discuss their hours of operation; if we are beefing up our promotion, we need the businesses open when they say they are.
 - Partner with Barns of Rose Hill on their hours and what is being promoted and how.
6. Formalize website and social media strategies for economic development.
 - Work in progress.
 - We are using CARES Act funding to utilize photographs and videos.
7. Establish relationships, and provide training for realtors in the area.
 - Two (2) conversations have happened with Nancy Silva, Director of the Blue Ridge Association of Realtors.
 - We will look at doing a tour in this area when COVID-19 allows.
8. Develop and implement an incentive program using the CARES Act funding.
 - I spoke about earlier, and we're working on making an impact.

Kara Rodriguez suggested creating a chart of goals and use that to update the committee.

Chris Boies brought up that the EDAC Annual Holiday Tour is coming up and to please send recommendations to Felicia Hart.

7. Next Meeting

November 20, 2020

8. Adjournment

At 10:44 am, David Weiss adjourned the meeting.

