

Aproved: March 17, 2021

Clarke County Economic Development Advisory Committee
January 20, 20201 Organizational Meeting 1:00 pm

A meeting of the Economic Development Advisory Committee (EDAC) held in the Berryville/Clarke County Government Center, Berryville, Virginia, on Wednesday, January 20, 2021, at 1:00 pm.

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

Board Members Absent: Betsy Pritchard, Lee Scheaffer, Lori Mackintosh

Staff: Chris Boies, Felicia Hart, Tiffany Kemp, and Cathy Kuehner

Press: None

Also Present: Mary Ivie

1. Call to Order

At 1:05 pm, Tiffany Kemp, Economic Development Advisory Committee Clerk, called the meeting to order.

2. Organizational Items

Elect Chair

Tiffany Kemp called for nominations and election of the 2021 Chair.

Christy Dunkle, seconded by Christina Kraybill, moved to nominate and elect John Milleson, 2021 Chair. The motion carried by the following vote:

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

Following the vote, the meeting was turned over to John Milleson 2021 Chair.

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Elect Vice-Chair

Chairman Milleson called for nominations and election of the 2021 Vice-Chair.

Christy Dunkle, seconded by Christina Kraybill, moved to nominate and elect Chris Bates 2021 Vice-Chair. The motion carried by the following vote:

Chris Bates	-	Aye
Christy Dunkle	-	Aye
Christina Kraybill	-	Aye
Lori Mackintosh	-	Absent
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 20, 2021 – Organizational Meeting
- March 17, 2021
- April 14, 2021 – Spring Tour
- May 19, 2021
- July 21, 2021
- September 15, 2021
- October 20, 2021 – Fall Tour
- November 17, 2021
- January 19, 2022 – Organizational Meeting

- Chair Milleson likes the schedule to include the spring and fall tours instead of a cold one in winter. If we get busy enough, we can add more meetings should we need to.
- Bev McKay would like to go to the southern end of the county and visit businesses out there no one knows of, business who build electrical boxes at White Post, smaller things like that. When asked, Bev McKay stated he would provide a list of places to visit out there to staff.

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- Chair Milleson brought up Lori Macintosh not attending any meetings all year. Chair Milleson asked, and the Committee agreed, for him to contact about Ms. Mackintosh about meeting attendance and stepping down, if necessary.

3. Adoption of Agenda

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

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

4. Approval of Minutes

Christina Kraybill, seconded by Chris Bates, moved to approve the December 2, 2020, minutes as presented. The motion carried as follows:

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

5. Continued Discussion: Economic Development Structure

Chris Boies

- Asked for any thoughts now that the Committee has had time to process the information presented at the December 2, 2020, meeting.
- Will present to the IDA next week, January 28, 2021.
- Will schedule with BoS work session in February or March to discuss input from the different groups and get things finalized.

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Chair Milleson

- Felt there is a good discussion last month, requested, EDAC be specifically informed of the work session with the Board of Supervisors should anyone wish to attend.
- Also requested the Berryville-Clarke County Joint Committee on Economic Development and Tourism meeting schedule. Felt it would be beneficial for members of the EDAC to attend if schedules align.
- Chair Milleson asked if the IDA can legally change its name.
 - Chris Boies stated the IDA could become an EDA through a resolution. The only fees associated are those accrued in the legal process of changing the paperwork to match the name change.
- Often thought EDAC should do what the Berryville-Clarke County Joint Committee on Economic Development and Tourism does, and feels EDAC should be included and asked for meeting dates and times.
 - Keep MOU at a higher level, EDAC and IDA do the groundwork.
 - MOU gets into weeds, can give strategic direction, other groups can accomplish the goals. Some work could funnel down.

Christina Kraybill

- In favor of changing IDA to EDA.
- Feels EDAC needs a new name.
- Conversation with a business owner who had a concern list. Found she had to explain whom the EDAC is historically, reminding the EDAC has no money or budget. Felt it was frustrating to do that; it feels like a revamp is needed.
 - Bev McKay stated the EDAC could request any budget it may need from the board of Supervisors. Chris Boies responded Bev McKay is correct; some of what we need to accomplish would be through budgets.
- Marketing generally involves funds and time. When the public sees the name, they tend to think the EDAC is doing what the IDA is doing; they get confused.
 - Chris Boies stated if we do a revamp, it is a good idea to do a complete overhaul.

Bev McKay

- Informed the Committee that the BoS voted to reduce the sewer fees by 1/3. Feels this should help sell the land currently available in Waterloo.
 - Chris Boies clarified this is an example of trying to be more proactive. Property owners stated these fees were a deterrent for us. This reduction is only for 2021, hoping that an end date would spur activity sooner than later. Looking at barriers, both perceived and actual, to help property owners get things moving.

Chris Bates

- Asked for clarification the fee reduction would be for new business connections only?

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- Chris Boies stated it was proposed that way, but the board gave the flexibility to include properties with older septic systems if the request came before us.
- Originally designed as an economic development tool, but if there is a health concern, there is the flexibility to use that exemption for those properties.

Christy Dunkle

- Inquired as to whether the capacities good in the sanitary system?
 - Chris Boies stated the plant capacity is currently at 50%. There is some capacity of the pump stations in that location, which may need to be upgraded, but the plant capacity is excellent.
- Is there a threshold where you have to start designing the next phase?
 - Chris Boies stated we could fill that up and not have to worry. It is a small plant, but it has quite a bit of capacity. Bev McKay supplied it would not hurt the plant to have more going through it; it would make it more efficient.

Feasibility Study

Chris Boies

- The Sanitary Authority will do a monthly fee comparison and a hookup fee comparison.
- Hired an engineering firm to look at surrounding locality rates, but also capital needs, how to pay to determine if our current rates are where they should be or if they need to go up or down based on the study.
- It could be done in the next 90 days. Will keep this group updated on that.

6. Director of Economic Development and Tourism Update and 2020 Year-End Summary

Felicia Hart:

1. Convene a group of hospitality owners/operators (topics to include TOT, short-term rentals, Civil War)
 - Group has met once in person. The discussion continues with business owners regularly for updates/status
2. Engage stakeholders on the feasibility of a hotel in Berryville (this would include owners/operators in the region)
 - Participate in a weekly update of the travel industry. This covers the hotel industry. Talked last week with regional DMOs who get the STR report (monthly hotel industry booking numbers), and many hotels are still understaffed and way under-booked due to COVID-19. Talk now for the industry is that the numbers will not get better until at least 2023. Many travelers are now utilizing short term rentals.

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3. Continue efforts on business attraction, retention, and growth (seminars, promotion, assistance).
 - I continue to work closely with the Virginia Employment Commission, Virginia Career Works, Lord Fairfax Small Business Development Center, and other agencies as needed. We are currently working with the USDA and other Federal agencies to take advantage of their programs.
 - While in Front Royal, I collaborated with Page and Rockingham County to develop the Connect 340 program. We applied for and won a REDI (Rural Economic Development Initiative) grant from the USDA. USDA has allowed this program to follow me. This grant provides extensive research for our area(s) aimed at outdoor tourism-related businesses. It is based on our quality of life and the resources that we have. The research includes other areas/states that have been successful in recruiting these types of businesses and their overall marketing plan. We hosted our second Zoom meeting, fine-tuning our research needs/areas.
 - We continue to work with our local businesses to promote their hiring and training needs.
 - We have had another status meeting with the Virginia Economic Development Partnership.
 - We have successfully completed our first extended conference call with Cochran's Lumber regarding the Economic Gardening program. From this call, researchers will work to determine Cochran's best opportunities for not only increased sales but better understanding their competition, where sales opportunities are, and how to better promote (and to who) their products.
 - We will start working with C2M on their second phase of this same program.
 - We have initiated a conversation with a local business and the Virginia Economic Development Partnership regarding international trade.
 - Via conference call, we are meeting next week with the USDA to continue the discussion on the USDA Rural Development Value-Added Producer grant with a local farmer.
 - We have been regularly communicating with local businesses/non-profits to make them aware of the new PPP 2.0 program. Lord Fairfax Small Business Development Center has already been working with five local businesses to determine eligibility.

4. Engage in a dialogue with property owners of vacant buildings and the developable land to spur economic activity.
 - We continue the discussion with local property owners.
 - Regularly run queries about new properties on the market to start a dialogue.
 - We produced the graphics for the oversize "For Sale/Rent" posters designed to spur discussion

- We have regular meetings/updates with Christy Dunkle, and she continues to make introductions for me.
5. Evaluate what is needed to make the Berryville Main Street program viable and successful – report back to Joint Committee on recommendations.
- Have initiated several meetings with both current and past board members for a better understanding of the history of the Berryville Main Street program. We are working on potential partnership opportunities for events, trainings, and campaigns. While the board members themselves will determine the fate of the program, we can definitely utilize the fact that they are at least trying and wanting to make a difference. They already have relationships with many of the business owners, and we can work to take advantage of that asset in getting the word out and helping us better understand current reality.
6. Formalize website and social media strategies for economic development.
- Work continues. We have talked with other localities to learn what does/doesn't work. What pages and community infographics to include. Then production of those individual pieces will be initiated based on budget. We have set up a meeting with the Virginia Economic Development Partnership to incorporate the VAScan program into our site. This program includes land and property offerings in Clarke County. In our first training, we will be working to determine what properties would qualify to be included in this State listing database.
7. Establish relationships, and provide training for realtors in the area.
- I am now planning one-on-one meetings with local realtors in Clarke County and surrounding areas.
 - Continue working with ED at the Blue Ridge Association of Realtors to collaborate on potential Zoom training meetings with the USDA, LFSBDC, and others.
8. Develop and implement an incentive program using the CARES funding.
- Currently, as stated earlier, we are working to educate businesses and non-profits as to what the PPP 2.0 version is offering.
 - The Clear Brook Welcome Center display was a great opportunity. We showcased Main Street and other Clarke County towns/communities, numerous non-profits including Long Branch, Blandy, Historical Association, Farmers Market, the Clarke County Equine Alliance, and Shenandoah Spirits Trail that showcased our two wineries. Special thanks to Chris Bates for getting organizations to participate.
 - We were able to produce three banners that will be used throughout the year at events/programs and at places like the Clear Brook Welcome Center.

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- We produced a Profile Sheet that will be utilized to promote Clarke County to various travel writers, travel bloggers, and DMOs. Our profile sheet will be distributed at numerous shows (courtesy of SVTP, SVTA, and others) attending the shows.
- We produced short videos of local business owners and video of our area. This will give us access to the video that will be utilized for future projects – including those with the State Tourism, Shenandoah Valley Tourism Partnership, Shenandoah Valley Travel Association, Shenandoah Spirits Trail, social media, and many others.
- We also produced the over-size for sale/rent signs that will be utilized by property owners. These are colorful signs that include my contact information and make mention of incentives that might be available.
 - Christy Dunkle suggested adding Felicia Hart's title to these signs to clarify who she is.
 - Felicia Hart clarified many of the buildings are family-owned properties that have been handed down, and the owners do not want to sell, rent, or be landlords.
 - If anyone knows anyone who wants one, please direct those owners to Felicia Hart.
 - Bev McKay asked if localities do vacancy taxes?
 - Felicia Hart does not know of any program.
 - Christy Dunkle does not feel the General Assembly would allow that kind of tax.
 - Christina Kraybill found inviting property owners to dinner to discuss how the business owners feel seeing the vacant buildings. Feels the only way we will get past this is if people know what it feels like. Wants people to do something for the betterment of the group.
 - Felicia Hart stated once one starts to clean up their vacant buildings, a domino effect usually goes into play. Just need the initial spark.
- We continue to have weekly conference calls with EDAs from both Winchester City and Frederick County. Meeting also includes LFSBDC (Christine Kriz) and the Top of Virginia Chamber (Cynthia Snyder). It also includes the United Way as needed. This weekly communication helps us to better understand what our current reality is and how we can adjust sooner to meet those needs. We also serve as a clearinghouse of new information regarding grants and training opportunities. We continue to push the "Open and Safe" COVID-19 campaign.
- We are in regular communication with our local community banks to ensure we are not missing areas of concern for our "Main Street" businesses.
 - There area a couple of meetings next week which Chris Boies is attending.

Other Projects:

Economic Development

- We continue to regionally participate as part of the Small Business Resiliency Team program as part of a GOVirginia grant. This is in partnership with Lord Fairfax Small Business Development Center. This program assists small businesses with marketing, financial guidance, the creation of an e-commerce website, and accounting software.
- Continue to utilize Christine Kriz and her staff from the Lord Fairfax Small Business Development Center.
- We continue working regionally to promote the Workforce Initiative. This program works to put businesses in front of high-school students to show them potential career opportunities.
 - Not just for students, people who are looking for a new direction for employment.
- Regionally we are producing a Northern Shenandoah Valley Talent website. This site will highlight each areas' quality of life (including P&R), educational opportunities, and other pertinent information that people are looking for when job hunting.
- We continue participating regionally in the Startup Shenandoah Valley program. This program works with businesses to identify and address their risks while scaling up.
- I continue to meet regularly with Clarke County's Planning and Zoning Directors for updates/catch-ups.
- We continue to see some turnover in smaller businesses – i.e., restaurants and some others.

Tourism

- As part of the Shenandoah Valley Spirits Trail, we just finalized our latest video that highlights Twin Oaks Tavern Winery. This video is shared on the Spirits Trail website and the Virginia Tourism Corporation's site. It is hosted on YouTube and shared via numerous social media outlets.
- We continue to update the Virginia Tourism Corporation, the Shenandoah Valley Travel Association, and other websites regarding Clarke County and our assets/businesses. This includes providing photography and video as time allows. Because of time constraints, we are missing opportunities to highlight Clarke County via blogs, itineraries, and "What's New" stories.
- We have been successful working with local photographers who have offered their works to us. They are providing their images to us for free with just a copyright credit. We are (and will be) incorporating these images in our websites and social media opportunities, in addition to other outlets.
 - Thirty-six citizens offered their photos, with photo credit; no money was spent to get photos of Clarke County.
- Following up with Mayor Arnold's suggestion about potential signage at the trailheads (special thanks to Alison Teeter for the introduction to the "Trail Boss" Chris Brunton),

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we have discussed where potential signage can go (VDOT vs. State Park properties) and what said signage could incorporate. In the works is a new Eagle Scout kiosk project at Bear's Den that we could also potentially include our messaging on.

- As a general reminder, unemployment numbers are climbing again. Handout provided to see how we compare to surrounding localities. We need to understand what type of work these newly unemployed people are doing – restaurant workers, brick and mortar stores, etc.
- The handout provided shows the numbers from the Virginia Tourism Corporation. From an economic standpoint, we need to understand the value of tourism and the potential it brings to our community. Each year the State does a breakdown by locality, see the handout, (1 year behind to collect data) 2019 local tax receipts include an increase of 3.1% compared to surrounding localities. When questioned about tourism, this shows why it is important.
- As part of our Shenandoah Valley Tourism Partnership Annual Meeting (1/21 @ 10 am), we are proud to announce guest speakers:
 - Rita McClenney, President and CEO of the Virginia Tourism Corporation;
 - Eric Terry, President of the Virginia Restaurant, Lodging and Travel Association;
 - Patrick Kenney, Park Superintendent, Shenandoah National Park; along with
 - Presentations on the economic impact of travel in the Shenandoah Valley; and the
 - The unveiling of our new Partnership website
 - Highlights localities as individuals
 - Your Zoom invitation will be e-mailed to you personally.

Questions/Comments

Christy Dunkle

- What is the status of websites, and do you need any help. It seems the old ones are dead – specifically clarktourism.com and yesclarkecounty.com
 - Felicia Hart responded those websites are a work in progress; help would be great, currently gathering all the different pieces to give to the website developer – we are starting new.
 - The list of businesses on the economic development site, yesclarkecounty.com, was removed. Before doing the leg work, people will google businesses to find a website to list those out.
 - If something needs immediately changed, let her know. Would like to take it down, but unsure of feedback.
 - Christina Kraybill asked, and Felicia Hart confirmed the economic development would be completely new. Felicia Hart also noted she is moving away from words to pictures to then filter from there.

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- EDAC Committee agreed the business listings on yesclarkecounty.com should come down until a new site can go up, so there is not incorrect information listed.

Christina Kraybill

- Mentioned the building vacancy list should go on the yesclarkecounty.com page.
 - Felicia Hart stated we are working on the VAScan program. Has had two meetings to go through rules and regulations stipulating which properties can go on there.
- Asked if the Shenandoah Valley Tourism Partnership Annual Meeting's invitation was sent out recently as she has not received her invite. Also, asked how much time the meeting would take and when it was?
 - Felicia Hart responded she sent it last week but will resend it. The meeting is on 1/21/21 at 10:00 am. It will last roughly 90 minutes.

Chair Milleson

- Any complaints on USPS and how slow the service has been?
 - Felicia Hart responded she had received comments. Roughly 50 of the Small Business Grant Applications we mailed, knowing we had a correct address, came back as undeliverable. It seems to be getting worse.
- Felt the COVID-19 vaccination clinic at the High School went fantastic.

Bev McKay

- Keep trying to get online to get shots. Website updates all day long.
- Boyce clinic was not done well, but they were patient.

Christy Dunkle left the meeting at 1:57 pm

Felicia Hart

- We need the vaccines for the business side of things, a big economic piece!
- Berryville Main Street - still trying to figure out what they are going to be doing. They are great at getting the word out, expanded their reach to more businesses in the county.
- Berryville Graphics has 85 slots to fill. Working with HR to improve the situation. Working on some short videos to help educate what positions are at Berryville graphics. They are on the lower scale for wages, which doesn't help the problem.
- Cochran Lumber currently has three positions to fill, but nothing is listed on their website yet. She is working on getting them to post something online to point qualified people his way.
- Felicia Hart needs to be the main point of contact, from time to time, using Clarke's social media and controlling the Economic Development office's message.

Chris Bates

- Are you coordinating with the career and technical program at school?
 - Felicia Hart confirmed she has been in joint meetings with Cathy Seal to do something once COVID-19 slows down.
 - Christine Kriz can come in and meet if the Committee would like.
 - Chair Milleson felt this would be a good idea.
- Can LFSBDC do the video for Berryville Graphics? Wondering if that could fit into the educational programs.
 - Felicia Hart stated the State is working on that they have the budget to do that.
 - Having students do the videos as an educational project is a bit out of the scope of the LFSBDC.
- Meeting with Virginia Economic Development Partnership, did anything come up for companies we are missing?
 - Felicia responded in the affirmative. They produce quarterly reports, but they are confidential and cannot be shared.
 - Goes over businesses reached out, what they were looking for, areas looking at, etc. They reach out when appropriate, and we have what the business needs. The MOU with the City of Winchester and Frederick County works very well. Also tells us what we do not have.

Staff To Do's

- Chair Milleson will coordinate scheduling Dana Waring.
- Felicia Hart will coordinate scheduling Christine Kriz.
- Staff will process approved minutes for the website.
- Bev McKay to supply staff with a list of businesses for the Spring tour.

7. Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, March 17, 2021.

8. Adjournment

Being no further business, at 2:04 pm, Chairman Milleson adjourned the meeting.

Minutes recorded and transcribed by Tiffany R. Kemp, Clerk