

Berryville-Clarke County Joint Committee on Economic Development and Tourism
January 15, 2021 Regular Meeting 10:00 am

At a regular meeting of the Berryville/Clarke County Joint Committee on Economic Development and Tourism held on Friday, January 15, 2021, at 10:00 am in the Main Meeting Room, Berryville Clarke County Government Center, 101 Chalmers Court, 2nd Floor, Berryville, Virginia.

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

Members Absent: None

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

Press Present: None

Others Present: Mary Ivie

1. Call to Order - Determination of Quorum

At 10:00 am, Tiffany Kemp called the meeting to order.

2. Organizational Items

Elect Chair

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

Kara Rodriguez, seconded by Doug Lawrence, moved to nominate and elect Harry "Jay" Arnold 2021 Chair. The motion carried by the following vote:

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

Following the vote, the meeting was turned over to Harry "Jay" Arnold, 2021 Chair

Elect Vice-Chair

Chair Arnold called for the nomination and election of the 2021 Vice-Chair

Doug Lawrence, seconded by Kara Rodriguez, moved to nominate and elect David Weiss 2021 Vice-Chair. The motion carried by the following vote:

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

Set meeting Date, Time, and Location

- March 19, 2021
- May 21, 2021
- July 16, 2021
- September 17, 2021
- November 19, 2021
- January 21, 2022 – Organizational Meeting

David Weiss, seconded by Kara Rodriguez, moved to approve the Meeting Dates, Time, and Location for 2021. The motion carried by the following vote:

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

3. Adoption of Agenda

Kara Rodriguez, seconded by David Weiss, moved to adopt the agenda as presented. The motion carried by the following vote

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

4. Approval of Minutes

- Chair Arnold noted the following corrections:
 - o Page three of ten, Item Number 5, should state the name "Kyle of Virginia Main Street Program," not "Keith."
 - o Page four of ten, Item Number 7, correct the spelling of "Zoom."
 - o Page four of ten, Item Number 8, correct sentence from "Continues to work with those businesses to contact additional funding opportunities..." to "Continue to work with those businesses to contact about additional funding opportunities..."

David Weiss, seconded by Doug Lawrence, moved to approve the minutes for November 20, 2020, as amended. The motion carried by the following vote:

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

5. Director of Economic Development & Tourism Goals Update and Year-end Summary

Felicia Hart Highlights Include:

Goals

1. Convene group of hospitality owners/operators (topics to include TOT, short-term rentals, Civil War)
 - o Group has met once in person. Discussion continues with business owners on a regular basis for updates/status
2. Engage stakeholders on the feasibility of a hotel in Berryville (this would include owners/operators in the region)
 - o 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.
 - o Chris Boies offered that capital for new enterprises is not going to be investing in new facilities because they have so many not being used. Still a priority but it does not seem we will see movement on this right now until occupancy numbers go up.
3. Continue efforts on business attraction, retention *and growth* (seminars, promotion, and assistance)
 - o 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.
 - o 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.
 - David Weiss asked how that program works and if the business has to pay a fee to the State for this assistance. Felicia Hart responded that she personally interviews the business to get a sense, then she will put that business in Clarke together with the State. The State will then hire someone to do all the research for that business once the State understands the plan of action of the business. There are no fees associated with this program.
 - Chris Boies added the key to this is the local relationship, the liaison being Felicia Hart. If she is responsive, reliable, communicates, does everything she is supposed to on her end, they will keep coming back to her to serve the local businesses. They do not reach out to companies directly.
- We will start working with C2M on their second phase of this same program.
 - Chris Boies added Felicia initiated conversations between C2 Management (C2M) and Cochran's Lumber, who previously went through this program. C2 Management can tell Cochran's Lumber, here is how much time I had to dedicate, how much work we had to do, but it was worth it in the end. Cochran's Lumber then becomes the spokesperson for the next business we try to get into this program.
- We have initiated conversations 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.
 - Businesses that previously took advantage of the PPP funding still do not know if the money they received will be forgiven or not.
 - Working with CPAs and Tax Consultants to help businesses understand what they need to be looking for and to help businesses prepare for the tax season.
 - David Weiss asked, and Felicia Hart confirmed, it is possible those businesses who took advantage of the PPP Program may not have to pay that money back. Funds will still count as income but whether they have to pay it back or not is unsure.

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.
 - David Weiss asked if Felicia Hart had received a sense as to why the buildings remain vacant. Felicia Hart responded many vacant properties are family properties and the owners are not in a hurry to become renters or realtors. Many owners do not want to put the money in because they do not need the income.
 - David Weiss asked if other localities have programs to encourage owners. Felicia Hart responded, there can be. Tax abatements, water/sewer hook-up fees spread over the years, etc.
 - Kara Rodriguez asked if there was any interest from property owners for improving those areas. Felicia Hart stated these posters have just been completed; some owners have been spoken to and are aware of the signage but have not asked for it yet. Felicia Hart plans to make a big push on this.
 - 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 recommendation
 - 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.
 - Ultimately, it will be up to that board to decide what they want to do moving forward.

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 – both in Clarke County and surrounding areas.
 - Continue working with the Executive Director Nancy 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.
 - Previous years have had upwards of 60,000 plus visitors pass through; this year, they were at 47,000 visitors.
 - 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.
 - 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 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.
 - 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 can we 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.

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, 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.
- Regionally we are producing a NSV 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 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.
- 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) 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.
 - Chris Boies clarified we can say "Come visit Berryville" but we cannot say "Visit these restaurants in Berryville". There are specific rules as to what can be posted.
 - Kara Rodriguez offered the idea of a QR code on the sign to pull up places in Berryville/Clarke County.

- 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
 - Unveiling of our new Partnership websiteYour Zoom invitation will be e-mailed to you personally.

Questions:

Chair Arnold

- Would it be possible to add a section to the social media sites of jobs available in Berryville/Clarke County? Businesses can post they are hiring and applicants would apply directly with that business; we would not want to manage applications, qualifications etc., but a list of businesses looking for help.
 - Felicia Hart responded they are working on this and can definitely implement something like this on the new website. Working with businesses to put together specific advertisements for jobs currently open.
 - Chris Boies added it might be easier to do something like this as a weekly email as opposed to a section on the website.
 - David Weiss asked for clarification that this could be done on a government website. Chris Boies responded yes, as long as we keep it open to any business interested in posting something; we can limit to Clarke County.

Doug Lawrence

- The hotel business will not come back for a while, can the retirement homes be used as such.
 - Chair Arnold responded he did not believe those areas to be zoned appropriately. Keith Dalton confirmed Chair Arnold's comment, but can double check if needed.

Kara Rodriguez

- It is obviously not a great time for a hotel to start new projects, but knowing that is there anything that can be done now to get potential sites ready for development when activities pick back up.
 - Felicia Hart responded we need to have sites pad-ready, infrastructure in place. The community needs to invest in the project.
- Has there been any thought given to our Economic Development Facebook Page, changing the image so it is not a map?
 - Felicia Hart responded she is working on that but yes that is the plan.

Chris Boies provided a COVID-19 Vaccination Clinic Update:

- The vaccination clinic being held at the Clarke County High School will have to begin turning people away as they have allotted all available vaccines on hand to people waiting. Some school employees were able to get in to get their vaccinations.

6 Discussion on Economic Development Structure

Chris Boies Highlights Include:

- Current Structure of the County
 - Economic Development Advisory Committee (EDAC)
 - Industrial Development Authority (IDA)
 - Berryville-Clarke County Joint Committee on Economic Development and Tourism (MOU Committee)
 - Town of Berryville has a Community Development Committee where pieces overlap
 - NGO's (Non-Governmental Organizations)
 - Top of Virginia Chamber of Commerce
 - Berryville Main Street
 - Barns of Rose Hill
 - Historical Association/Mill, Equine Alliance, Farmers Market, Fairgrounds, and many others
- EDAC
 - Originally discussed/appointed by the Board of Supervisors in 1999/2000.
 - Initial Charge:
 - Review revenue needs and offer ideas for revenue generation
 - Offer advice to BoS, County Administrator, and the Economic Development Director concerning economic development activities
 - A broad charge for them to work on
 - Talented people on the group who feel they have not been utilized, as they would like to
- IDA
 - Legal entity created by the BoS with authority granted by the Code of Virginia.
 - They have special powers localities don't
 - Make grants to private entities
 - Buy/Sell/Lease property without a public hearing
 - develop industrial parks
 - Issue bonds for the benefit of private entities
 - Make loans to private entities/forgive repayment of those loans
 - They are also:
 - The economic development cheerleaders
 - Eyes/ears of the business community

- Help elected officials analyze opportunities, determine needs, and generally keep them informed on the status of the business community.
 - Could become an "Economic Development Authority" with the same powers.
 - The only cost associated with this is changing paperwork
 - A more encompassing type of name
 - IDA's, historically, are thought of as helping a business park grow and expand but they should be helping small businesses too
- Berryville-Clarke County Joint Committee on Economic Development and Tourism
 - Consists of two (2) members of the Board of Supervisors, and two (2) Town Council members.
 - Ensures the joint efforts/cooperation on economic development activities in and around the Town of Berryville.
 - Provides one (1) direction to the Economic Development Director.
 - Ensures joint funding of the economic development position.
- Basic Functions of a Local Economic Development Program
 - Placemaking/Tourism
 - Business Retention/Expansion
 - Growing Your Own-small business/entrepreneurs
 - Business Attraction
- Placemaking/Tourism
 - Showcasing your community's special attributes/vibrancy
 - Two-fold effort – bringing people to your community to visit, spend money, then go home/also key for existing and new businesses
 - Talent/Workforce number one concern for expansion/relocation
 - Quality of Life - Schools, healthcare, events, recreation, neighborhoods, and community pride, etc.
- Business Retention/Expansion
 - 2019 Virginia Economic Development Partnership (VEDP):
 - 67% of all announcements regarding new and expanding businesses were from existing Virginia businesses
 - 68% of job announcements were from existing Virginia businesses
 - 54% of capital investments were from existing Virginia businesses
 - Need a coordinated program, site visits, check-ins
 - Thought would be to have members of these groups be assigned business to check in throughout the year
 - Anticipate local business needs/identify problems before they arise
 - Build a strong business climate/create business champions
 - Strategies/approach different for corporate vs downtown businesses
 - The approach for a large business, such as Berryville Graphics, will be a very different approach than one for a small, Mom-and-Pop type of business on Main Street.

- Growing Your Own-small business/entrepreneurs
 - Extensive support networks needed
 - High percentage of failure in the first two (2) years
 - Business incubators
 - Educational programs for would-be entrepreneurs
 - Small Business Development center at Lord Fairfax Community College

- Business Attraction
 - By far the most expensive endeavor/most visible headlines
 - Very competitive – localities with strong incentive programs
 - In Clarke, very targeted and limited due to strong Comprehensive Plan
 - Ensures we maintain a sense of place
 - Focus right now on already properly zoned vacant properties/buildings.
 - History of very successful business park

- Regional Perspective
 - Businesses look at regions, not just jurisdictional boundaries
 - Established relationship with Frederick County and the City of Winchester
 - Coordination with the State
 - Virginia Economic Development Partnership
 - Virginia Economic Developer's Association
 - Shenandoah Valley Tourism Partnership
 - Shenandoah Valley Travel Association

- Projects in and around Berryville
 - Board of Supervisors and Town Council thoughts filter through the Berryville-Clarke County Joint Committee on Economic Development and Tourism (MOU Committee).
 - MOU Committee would be able to provide direction to:
 - IDA (or EDA)
 - would focus on:
 - Business Attraction
 - Business Retention
 - Business Expansion
 - Would send feedback back to the MOU Committee
 - EDAC
 - would focus on:
 - Placemaking and Tourism
 - Small Business Marketing
 - Work with downtown merchants
 - Work with Berryville Main Street
 - Information would flow between EDAC and MOU
 - Economic Development Director reports directly to the MOU Committee
 - Works to achieve goals of the MOU Committee
 - Provide staff support to the IDA and the EDAC

- Projects outside of Berryville
 - Areas such as Waterloo or the Double Toll Gate

- Board of Supervisors would be the main point of contact for all groups
- IDA (or EDA) focus on:
 - Business Attraction
 - Business Retention
 - Business Expansion
- EDAC
 - Placemaking
 - Small Business Marketing
 - Work with Boyce and Villages
- Economic Development Director
 - Achieve goals of BoS
 - Staff support to IDA and EDAC

Questions:

Chair Arnold

- Often felt there was an overlap in these groups, and everyone was going in different directions. Feels this is a good plan.
 - Felicia Hart reminded this is a work in progress so any feedback is appreciated.

Doug Lawrence

- Would like to have this presented to the Board of Supervisors
 - Chris Boies clarified this would be presented to the IDA on January 28, then presented to the Board of Supervisors. Wanted to talk to the groups and get their input. This would also be helpful for when we need new people on these groups.

Kara Rodriguez

- Two Thoughts:
 - Can some of the goals assigned to Felicia Hart be routed to these groups and create sub-goals of the annual goals.
 - Seeing how responsibilities are drawn out, it would be helpful to get a brief update of what the IDA and EDAC are working on relevant to Clarke County and Berryville.
 - Chris Boies stated once we get the framework laid out, they will have a more specific direction.
 - Felicia Hart added that there is also the Berryville Community Development Committee, who could provide regular updates as to what they are doing.

Staff To-Do's:

- Process corrected November 20, 2020 minutes for website.

7 Next Meeting

The next scheduled meeting is March 19, 2021.

8 Adjournment

Kara Rodriguez, seconded by David Weiss, moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion carried by the following vote:

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

At 10:59 am, Chair Arnold adjourned the meeting.

Minutes Recorded and Transcribed by Tiffany R. Kemp