

Berryville-Clarke County Joint Committee on Economic Development and Tourism  
March 19, 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, March 19, 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, via phone call-in;  
                                      David Weiss, Board of Supervisors Representative;

**Members Absent:**        None

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

**Press Present:**            None

**Others Present:**         Betsy Pritchard

**1. Call to Order - Determination of Quorum**

At 10:00 am, Chair Arnold called the meeting to order.

**2. Adoption of Agenda**

**David Weiss, seconded by Doug Lawrence, 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

**3. Approval of Minutes**

**David Weiss, seconded by Doug Lawrence, moved to approve the minutes for January 15, 2021, as presented. The motion carried by the following vote:**

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

#### 4. Economic Development and Tourism

Updates by Director Felicia Hart:

##### Goals

- Convene group of hospitality owners/operators (topics to include TOT, short-term rentals, Civil War).
  - Group has met once in person. Discussion will continue.
  
- Engage stakeholders on the feasibility of a hotel in Berryville (this would include owners/operators in the region).
  - Work in progress – COVID consideration right now.
  
- Continue efforts on small business attraction, retention, and expansion (seminars, promotion, assistance).
  - I have also expanded this to include workforce initiatives and expansion.
  - Working regionally with Frederick County and the City of Winchester regarding talent attraction on a potential new website.
    - This would be through the workforce initiative.
  - We have brought in Virginia Career Works, the Virginia Employment Commission, and other local and state agencies as needed for networking.
  - Continue working with the USDA regarding the REDI grant.
    - Works on how to attract outdoor recreational businesses.
  - Wrapping up the latest Economic Gardening program.
    - First time going through the process start to finish.
    - Will be working with a company to ensure the program has value.
    - Very impressed with the level of service provided.
    - Doug Lawrence asked if the second business was C2 Management? Wondering if Cochran's Lumber would want to partner with us for a news release.
    - Director Hart responded C2Management had already gone through the process one time. Was told they have a few projects currently being worked on, but they can go through the program again.
    - Has been mentioned to the newspaper in the past, will see if it can be expanded.
  - Working regionally regarding the Worlds of Work!, Workforce Initiative, and programs Clarke County schools are currently involved in.
    - The Clarke County Principal, Dana Waring, spoke to the EDAC on Wednesday, March 17. Doing things in tandem with what Director Hart is trying to accomplish. Felt it was a good introduction for all parties involved.
    - Christine Kriz also presented on March 17 to the EDAC. Was able to introduce Ms. Waring and Ms. Kriz to see how they can assist each other.
    - Director Hart asked if the Board of Supervisors knows the programs for kids at the High School? David Weiss responded they presented to the Board in the past, not recently, but the Board is aware.
  
- Engage in a dialogue with property owners of vacant buildings and the developable land to spur economic activity.

- Ongoing. Need to develop a database of property to expand conversations.
- Evaluate what is needed to make the Berryville Main Street program viable and successful – report back to Joint Committee on recommendation.
  - Letter received from Berryville Main Street regarding reorganizing.
    - Waiting to see what its next steps will be.
- Formalize website and social media strategies for economic development.
  - Work in progress regarding updates
    - The website itself is outdated; trying to enhance it is the current project.
    - David Weiss asked what the timeframe is for completing? Director Hart stated she is finishing up the tourism page. It's been cleaned up as much as possible. The next step is to determine if a complete overhaul is necessary, what baby steps can be taken and what the budget would be for the project. Hopes to have hard numbers and dates soon.
- Establish relationships, and provide training for realtors in the area.
  - In regular conversations with Executive Director Blue Ridge Association of Realtors, Nancy Silva.
  - Made introduction to Anne Herring, USDA, for follow up training.
  - Made Blue Ridge Association of Realtors (BRAR) aware of the new Waterloo water/sewer program.
  - Continue meeting one-on-one with realtors
- Develop and implement an incentive program using the CARES funding.
  - Program completed.

**Other projects:**

**Economic Development**

- Regionally we are part of the Small Business Resiliency Team program as part of the GOVirginia – this is in partnership with Lord Fairfax Small Business Development Center.
  - This program assists small businesses with marketing, financial guidance, creating an e-commerce website, and accounting software.
  - Three (3) businesses in Clarke County have taken advantage of this; \$1,500 value.
- Regionally working with the GOVirginia Economic Resilience and Recovery (ERR) Program
  - To make local businesses aware of this program.
- Shared Spotted Lanternfly information with many of our local businesses.
  - Clarke County is now a state-recognized quarantined area, so any local business who travels outside Clarke County is required to get a permit and perform due diligence on site.
  - We have also created partnerships with Blandy and the Clarke County Farmers' Market to help get the word out.

- Doug Lawrence asked, and Director Hart confirmed, the online video training was still available. Doug Lawrence feels there needs to be the ability, at a state level, to eradicate pests without property owner approval. Pest's destruction was well known, and nothing was done to stop it before it spread.
  - Director Hart further clarified there is a \$6 fee to receive the permit. In talking with VDACs but there are challenges because they do not have the authority to go on to private property without the owners approval. They want to see this pest eradicated. New York and Pennsylvania will penalize us if the hauler does not have the permit forms on them. Pest loves rust, long hatch span. Unfortunately, it is a beautiful bug, and people don't kill them. Working to educate Appalachian Trail folks as well.
  - Chris Boies stated this topic would be added to legislative priorities in the fall.
- Working with Virginia Economic Development Partnership concerning Clarke County's strengths and weaknesses and where opportunities are.
- Continue having broadband meetings, updates, and phone calls
  - Working with Comcast and Shentel.
- Continue to utilize Christine Kriz from the Lord Fairfax Small Business Development Center.
  - She has been either visiting in person or has had conference calls with several more of our businesses.
- Regionally participating in the Startup Shenandoah Valley program.
  - This program works with businesses to identify and address their risks while scaling up.
- Continue conversations with realtors/potential property owners considering Clarke County
- Continue to meet regularly with Christy Dunkle for updates and to catch-up.
- I continue to meet regularly with Clarke County's Planning and Zoning Directors for updates and to catch-up.
- Work/talk continues on both the Waterloo and the Double Tollgate areas
- Continue hosting weekly meetings with Frederick County and the City of Winchester EDAs.
  - Part of the group is Christine Kriz with Lord Fairfax Small Business Development Center and Cynthia Snyder with the Top of Virginia Chamber.
- Clarke County had a slight uptick in the unemployment rate.
  - Still smaller than other localities.

## **Tourism**

- Continue conversations with our local farmers/farm markets about needs and opportunities.
  - Christy Dunkle and Felicia Hart had a good conversation with them recently. Will be at the Primary School again this year, working hard to promote. Bringing in 350-450 people to the farmer market a week. Many outsiders are coming in. Working to expand and get folks from Winchester and Purcellville in.
  
- Our partnership in the Shenandoah Valley Spirits Trail continues to show results.
  - Social media and website stats are improving, and we are getting visitors from further away – and they are sharing and posting positive comments on our wineries and breweries.
  
- Continue to write blogs for state, regional, and local use.
  - Recently completed four (4).
  
- Expanded blog opportunities listings with the Shenandoah Valley Tourism Partnership (SVTP) and the Shenandoah Valley Travel Association (SVTA).
  
- Updated the Virginia Tourism Corporation (VTC) website regarding Clarke County and our assets and businesses.
  
- Dinosaur Land success!
  - Getting 150 people a day visiting.
  - Was able to get Comcast connected free; the project is expected to be completed in the next 60-90 days.

*Note: see below the updated PPP stats to date from Christine Kriz at Lord Fairfax Small Business Development Center.*

Total Loans: 2,194,420  
 Total Amount: \$156,253,510,068  
 Average Loan Size: \$71,000

<b>Additional Data Category:</b>	<b>Total #:</b>	<b>Total \$:</b>	<b>Ave. \$:</b>
<sup>st</sup> draw loans:	704,357	\$15,575,447,263	\$22,078
10 or fewer employees:	684,058	\$10,809,759,318	\$15,802
LMI & less than \$250,000 in sales:	175,719	\$3,304,084,423	\$18,803
<sup>2nd</sup> draw loans:	1,490,063	\$140,738,062,805	\$94,451
10 or fewer employees:	1,114,965	\$36,578,046,482	\$32,806
LMI & less than \$250,000 in sales:	313,829	\$16,002,382,719	\$50,991
Small Banks (<\$10B):	891,651	\$60,735,004,434	\$68,115
Loans \$50K or less: 70.8%			
Loans \$50K - \$100K: 13.1%			

Approved July 16, 2021

Top Lenders:		JP Morgan Chase	\$74,000
		Bank of America	\$60,000
		Itria Ventures	\$28,000
		PNC	\$100,000
		Cross River Bank	\$23,000
Top Industry:		NAICS 72	18%
Hispanic loan recipients:	77,554	\$4,303,993,068	\$56,012
Black loan recipients:	113,617	\$3,056,970,898	\$26,906
<b>Virginia Results:</b>	<b>40,523</b>	<b>\$3,326,483,232</b>	<b>\$82,089</b>

To date, the Commonwealth represents 2.1% of the total dollar volume of PPP funds approved and 1.8% of the total number of loans granted, but the average loan is slightly higher. These results appear to be lower than the loans granted in the first round of PPP funding in 2020.

Questions and Comments:

Doug Lawrence:

- Can you expand some more on the REDI Grant and how it works?
  - o Also known as Connect340, Director Hart began work on the project while employed in Front Royal; it has been four (4) years in the making. A partnership between the USDA, Page, Rockingham, Front Royal/Warren County. Put in an application and was one of eight-awarded grants. Consisted of a three-day course in West Virginia looking at outdoor assets, strengths, and weaknesses.
  - o In phase II now, through USDA, allowed this program to follow Director Hart to Clarke County. Now Page County, Rockingham County, and Clarke County. The program researches by determining which small businesses would profit in our area. Do not want big industrial; want to enhance small. What opportunities are missing? It is a research tool to provide new businesses interested in coming in with information on what will succeed here.
- Inquired into who is responsible for, paid for, and distributing the Clarke County Driving Tour and Battlefield brochures?
  - o Christy Dunkle stated she has a lot of them. Those brochures were done through Maral and Historical Association. Created an audio tool to go with the brochure.
  - o David Weiss stated he believed it was funded through grants, maybe some local money, but at most a match of funds. Felt confident the cost was under \$10k, perhaps closer to \$5k.
  - o Cathy Kuehner spoke up and stated that she had boxes, she manages brochure racks downstairs, delivers to places, and there may be boxes in the basement.
  - o Christy Dunkle stated Farmers Market would have a community table set up every week. Doug Lawrence stated Fire & Rescue would like to have a table. Please communicate with Director Brian Lichty about this.

Betsy Pritchard

- Stated in regards to the Farmer’s Market, has enjoyed in both locations, understands we are still under COVID-19 restrictions; my thought is that it is a fabulous space but needs it moved back downtown for overflow on Saturdays.
  - Christy Dunkle stated Town Council also wants them moved back downtown. Asked the board to come to the government center to determine if it would be a good location, they felt it would not. Rose Hill has restrictions, which will not allow for sales.
  - David Weiss stated ties into how to get people downtown.
  - Chair Arnold stated the whole purpose of having the farmer’s market downtown was to also bring foot traffic to main street businesses. Have heard from numerous businesses having the market downtown did make a difference. Felt the distance from Primary School to downtown was not as walkable as the previous location. Perception of parking – more space. Town Council willing to work on getting back downtown.
  - Christy Dunkle detailed she went to the executive committee organizational meeting in January, and they were not keen on coming back downtown. Spoke of a Wednesday afternoon or evening option. Felt keeping the conversation going is essential.
  - Doug Lawrence asked how the Primary School is zoned and if the Farmer’s Market violated any zoning ordinance.
    - Christy Dunkle stated it was zoned residential, but with COVID-19, they are flexible.
  - Doug Lawrence asked if Crow Street could be blocked off to move this back downtown.
    - Christy Dunkle stated this was also brought up. The problem was getting signage posted every week; businesses may not be happy if their streets were closed, the ability to maintain emergency access at all times. Could see this as a viable option if the market were only once a month, maybe but not all the time. Closing down is a chore.
    - Mayor Jay felt closing down Crow street was “doable.”
    - David Weiss and Chair Arnold felt sending someone from both the Board of Supervisors and the Town Council to a meeting would be beneficial.

#### Christy Dunkle Updates

- The Planning Commission is working on reviewing the business park zoning district uses. Next meeting is on Tuesday, March 23, 2021. Staff presented information on proposed uses, shifting around prohibited and special permitting by-right uses. That ordinance was completed in 1999. Need to see what needs have shifted since.
  - David Weiss asked if that includes the Murphy property on South Church?
    - Christy Dunkle confirmed, yes, the whole district, that property, 12-acres on Jack Enders.
- Hermitage 5 is about to begin. Selling the properties to DR Horton. Expect a start in late spring, early summer. Expecting 71 houses, dropped from 77. Will have HOA on this part of the property because of stormwater management facilities and maintenance.
- 46 of 50 lots in Fellowship are either built or approved for development. Moving forward quickly; selling as fast as they build.
- Shenandoah has had a couple submitted further North, hope to start quickly.
  - 2-3 built a month, but going quicker than that.
  - 82 total in Shenandoah.
- Doug Lawrence asked how that will affect Berryville’s water treatment and sewer plant?

- Chair Arnold indicated the sewer plant has plenty of capacity; it will help it run more efficiently and defer some of the costs.
- Christy Dunkle stated capacities are good. The Berryville Area Plan, which was completed in 1992, showed development potential. Used to develop the plant. Actuals are below what was anticipated. The systems work better with more users.

**5. Next Meeting**

The next scheduled meeting is May 21, 2021.

**6. Adjournment**

**David Weiss, seconded by Doug Lawrence, 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 10:46 am, Chair Arnold adjourned the meeting.

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Minutes Recorded and Transcribed by Tiffany R. Kemp