

Economic Development Advisory Committee
September 22, 2021 Regular Meeting 1:00 pm

At a regular meeting of the Economic Development Advisory Committee held on Wednesday, September 22, 2021, at 1:00 pm in the Main Meeting Room, Berryville Clarke County Government Center, 101 Chalmers Court, 2nd Floor, Berryville, Virginia.

Members Present: Chris Bates, Reid Dodson, Christy Dunkle, Christina Kraybill, Bev McKay, John Milleson, Elizabeth Pritchard

Members Absent: Lee Sheaffer

Staff Present: Chris Boies, Felicia Hart, Brianna Taylor, David Weiss

Others Present: None

Press Present: None

1. Call to Order

At 1:00 pm, John Milleson called the meeting to order.

2. Adoption of Agenda

Bev McKay, seconded by Christina Kraybill, moved to adopt the agenda as presented. The motion carried by the following vote:

Chris Bates	-	Aye	Bev McKay	-	Aye
Reid Dodson	-	Aye	John Milleson	-	Aye
Christy Dunkle	-	Aye	Elizabeth Pritchard	-	Aye
Christina Kraybill	-	Aye	Lee Sheaffer	-	Absent

3. Approval of Minutes: July 21, 2021, Regular Meeting

Christina Kraybill, seconded by Elizabeth Pritchard, moved to approve the July 21, 2021 minutes as presented. The motion carried by the following vote:

Chris Bates	-	Aye	Bev McKay	-	Abstain
Reid Dodson	-	Aye	John Milleson	-	Aye
Christy Dunkle	-	Aye	Elizabeth Pritchard	-	Aye
Christina Kraybill	-	Aye	Lee Sheaffer	-	Absent

Bev McKay abstained because he was not in attendance at the July 21, 2021, meeting.

4. Economic Development & Tourism Update by Director Hart.

Felicia Hart highlighted the following:

Goals

- 1) Convene group of hospitality owners/operators
 - I keep in touch with them as needed to understand what their reality is.
- 2) Engage stakeholders on the feasibility of a hotel in Berryville (this would include owners/operators in the region)
 - Work in progress – COVID major consideration right now.
 - Talked with a company recently about this – but they come into a locality and look for local financiers and then build.
 - In talking with other localities, a majority of the hotels are still having difficulty hiring front line staff – for many, it’s almost a self-serve mentality when you check in.
 - Locally, the occupancy rate is dropping right now because of cancellations.
 - Some local hotels are competing against the Airbnb’s and short-term rentals.
- 3) Continue efforts on small business attraction, retention and expansion (seminars, promotion, assistance). I have also expanded this to include workforce initiatives and expansion.
 - We have brought in Virginia Career Works, the Virginia Employment Commission and other local and state agencies as needed for networking.
 - Working regionally regarding the Worlds of Work!, Workforce Initiative and programs Clarke County schools are currently involved in.
 - We continue to work with the schools in making introductions for local businesses and the students.
 - See attachment in the packet from Christine Kriz – Lord Fairfax Small Business Development Center.
- 4) Engage in a dialogue with property owners of vacant buildings and the developable land to spur economic activity.
 - Ongoing.
 - I continue to review weekly.
 - Merke property has sold – LVG will be building a warehouse to double the size of their existing space on Station Road.
 - Christy Dunkle explained that we are anticipating a site plan for the October Berryville Area Development Authority (BADA) meeting. The proposal is three (3) warehouse buildings phased in, but it seems like those could be filled quickly so they are doing all of the site work all at once and then build it depending on who they can lease them to. This is a 12-acre parcel on Jack Enders Boulevard.
 - Spoke with several property owners recently regarding the Brownfield grant.
 - Found out that they have changed the regulations; we were doing that regionally with Frederick County and the City of Winchester. Now, each County

- has to do it individually; Clarke will choose not to do that because it is too hard for us to manage all of that on our own. Frederick County will also not be participating. This was a good conversation starter with businesses.
- In talks with some to utilize their front window space for marketing/promotion of Main Street in partnership with Berryville Main Street (BMS) and the Barns.
- 5) Evaluate what is needed to make the Berryville Main Street (BMS) program viable and successful – report back to Joint Committee on recommendation.
- They have a new president – Michelle Mellon with Edward Jones. Very positive meetings.
 - Have developed regular joint meetings with Berryville Main Street, The Barns and Clarke County. Many new programs are in the works including quarterly Meet/Greet meetings for new citizens; regular meetings with local businesses; BMS will be expanding their marketing to include businesses in the County; Business Spotlight enhancement program; welcome bags for new citizens; and we're working directly with the Ruritans to develop relationships with those organizations/ groups renting the fairgrounds; rack and coupon cards; and Dinner and a Show program at the Barns; a cohesive holiday program with several events tied together; enhanced social media blitz with all three parties; Clarke County will also be working directly with these two outlets to better address quick turnaround needs from VTC and other news outlets wanting information directly on local businesses.
- 6) Formalize website and social media strategies for economic development.
- Work in progress regarding updates.
 - New website is in design works – will better enable us to post immediately and provide more pertinent information for those who use it.
- 7) Establish relationships, and provide training for, realtors in the area.
- In regular conversations with Blue Ridge Association of Realtors (BRAR) ED Nancy Silva.
 - Made introductions with ED and Clarke County High School officials as partnership for teaching students.
 - Made BRAR aware of new Waterloo water/sewer program and the potential at Double Tollgate.
 - Continue meeting one-on-one with realtors to learn of speedbumps /issues/ concerns.
 - Continue to offer my assistance for those dealing with properties in Clarke County.
- 8) Develop and implement an incentive program using the CARES funding.
- Program completed.
 - New funds are available through the American Rescue Plan. We are currently trying to understand how these new funds can be used, and when.

Other projects:

Economic Development

- Continue having broadband meetings/updates/phone calls. We are looking at opportunities to use the new American Rescue Plan funds – update on the VATI grant with a partnership with All Points Broadband.
- Have been pushing the Return to Earn grant program that reimburses companies (up to \$500) for sign-on bonuses. This is a program through the Governor’s office.
- Will be producing a “Welcome” piece for Ruritans to hand out to officials who are renting/leasing fairground space. Handout will provide my contact information and give ideas on ways that we can assist them in getting the word out about their upcoming programs and we can make introductions with local companies they would need services/products from.
- We are still working with the Virginia Health Department; we are coordinating with local businesses to schedule on-site vaccines.
 - This is a no-cost program that allows the Health Department to schedule on-site (at the businesses) vaccines for all their employees. This will help to eliminate manufacturing down time while at the same time vaccinating more people.
- I continue to have regular update meetings with representatives from our local Department of Social Services to make them aware of several local programs and organizations for partnership opportunities.
- I continue to make introductions for companies like Casey Trees who has an immediate hiring need. Introductions include Clarke County High School, Top of Virginia Chamber, Christine Kriz, United Way, and numerous local and state agencies.
- Have monthly phone calls with representatives of the Virginia Economic Developers Association (VEDA). We continue to update them on current reality of Clarke County and regionally.
- Continue to utilize Christine Kriz from the Lord Fairfax Small Business Development Center.
 - Christine Kriz's press release was included in the packet. This year L'auberge was selected as the Lord Fairfax Small Business Development Center - the small business of the year.
- Regionally (Winchester, Frederick County, Clarke County) we had a meeting with Draper Aden regarding the EPA Community-Wide Brownfields Coalition Grant.
 - This is a new opportunity grant program Clarke County agreed to participate in. The program will allow us to work with any property owner who is in need of an environmental site assessment in order to sell their property. This is especially pertinent for any older farms who may have used any chemicals or pesticides. This is a no cost program to the property owner or Clarke County. The program has a total value of \$600,000 with no match required.
- Regionally participating in the Startup Shenandoah Valley program. This program works with businesses to identify and address their risks while scaling up.
- Continue to meet regularly with Christy Dunkle for updates/catch up.
- I continue to meet regularly with Clarke County’s Planning and Zoning Directors for updates/catch ups.

- I continue to regularly post upcoming events (training, meetings, etc.) on the Economic Facebook page. I also post about opportunities such as free visits from the Health Department
- Work/talk continues on both the Waterloo and the Double Tollgate areas. Clarke County is still awaiting final vote from Frederick County regarding our water/sewer request.
- Continue hosting weekly meetings with Frederick County and City of Winchester EDAs. Also part of the group is Christine Kriz with Lord Fairfax Small Business Development Center and Cynthia Snyder with the Top of Virginia Chamber.
- 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, creation of an e-commerce website and accounting software.

Tourism

- Continue to write blogs for state, regional and local use – making it seasonal right now.
- Continue conversations with our local farmers/farm markets about needs and opportunities.
 - Gave example that for the Lucketts Farm Market – they wanted pumpkins to sell, so I have networked with the Farmers Markets and others to get the pumpkins.
- I continue to post regular updates on the Tourism Facebook page highlighting upcoming events, places to visit and things to do.
- Expanded blog opportunities listings with the Shenandoah Valley Tourism Partnership (SVTP) and the Shenandoah Valley Travel Association (SVTA).
- Evaluating additional signage at the fairgrounds to showcase more of what Clarke County/ Berryville have to offer.
 - Doing more networking and showcasing and sharing information between the different websites so people can find what they are looking for more easily.
 - Chris Bates asked, and Felicia Hart stated that they are also looking into the opportunities to have signs on the Route 7 side of the Fairgrounds so that traffic can see what event is taking place and let them know that the event that is happening open to the public.
 - Elizabeth Pritchard suggested including Martin's when telling the local business that there is an event at the Fairgrounds.
- Continue to update the Virginia Tourism Corporation (VTC) website regarding Clarke County and our assets/businesses.
- Have talked with Berryville Main Street (BMS) and the Barns about utilizing some of our blogs.
- We have also been in discussion with them about a potential mural campaign around town.
- Discussion is also happening about a potential LOVEWorks program.

- In the packet, provided the information from Christine Kritz on the number of businesses that she has been working with and the dollar value that it equates to.

John Milleson thanked Felicia Hart for attending the mixer at the Bank with the Chamber.

5. Discussion on Business Contacts for each Member by Director Hart

Betsy Pritchard, John Milleson, and Christina Kraybill gave the committee an update on the businesses they had visited. From that discussion, it was mentioned to staff that the medians on Route 7 need to be looked at for safety concerns. It was also noted that Berryville businesses were glad that the County implemented the Food and Beverage (Meals) Tax and one owner asked if the County would raise theirs so it was the same as the Towns.

6. Update on Broadband Efforts

Chris Boies highlights included:

- The County contribution for the All Points Broadband Project is \$5.4 million; the Board of Supervisors agreed to allocate that amount if we do receive the grant.
- Made the application to the Virginia Telecommunication Initiative (VATI) Program.
- Clarke is part of an eight (8) County application.
- The total funds requested as part of that Regional collaboration were almost \$100 million.
- At this time, waiting for the incumbent providers to appeal, All Points Broadband said they would cover the unserved areas shown on a map; the incumbent providers can say no, we have fiber in those locations. This appeal process will fine-tune the map of where the fiber will go.
- In December, the State will say yes or no to the application. If the application and the funding is approved, the County will then negotiate an agreement with All Points Broadband and the Northern Shenandoah Regional Commission (NSVRC), which is the fiscal agent for this project. Once that agreement was approved, construction can start.
- VATI received 57 applications representing 84 localities, with total requested funding of \$943 million. The match from the localities was over \$1 billion. All of those application totals would cover about 300K households in Virginia.
- Our application as part of the eight (8) Counties would cover 46K households; our VATI application was a huge portion of what was submitted to the State.
- Included in the application that Clarke County was putting in almost twice as much as what the locality had received in the American Rescue Plan Funds.
- At this point, we just have to wait and see what happens, but we feel good about our application.
- All Points Broadband is proposing about a three (3) year construction process once the agreement is made. Keep in mind that a lot of the construction will depend on

the utility providers; once they get their piece done then, All Points Broadband can start connecting to it.

- The electric utilities will construct the middle mile, and All Points Broadband will do the rest.
- Believe Clarke County is in a good spot because Rappahannock Electric Cooperative had plans to get into the County at the end of this year/beginning of next year.

John Milleson asked, and Chris Boies explained that unserved and underserved means that fiber is not available at the location; do not believe that they will look at existing wireless coverage as being served and have to have speeds of 25 up/3 down.

7. Update on Double Tollgate

Chris Boies highlighted the following:

- Frederick County Planning Commission had a public hearing a couple of weeks ago. There were no citizens who spoke at the public hearing.
- The Frederick County Planning Commission has recommended to the Frederick County Board of Supervisors, for a second time, that they approve this project.
- The Frederick County Board of Supervisors will have their public hearing on October 13, at 7 pm.
- This should be the final stage of this part of the process.
- Frederick Water has already provided staff information on who the County will be negotiating with on the legal counsel, as far as the agreement on who pays what.
- The cost will be split between Frederick County and Clarke County; Frederick Water will just be there to tell the cost. So they will help mediate a solution between the two (2) parties.
- Have an engineering firm on staff to help justify the numbers.
- Have all of the pieces lined up to start those negotiations, just waiting on the final vote from the Frederick County Board of Supervisors.

Chris Boies explained that there is discussion about Warren County being served by Frederick Water in the Rockland area. Was told that initially, that would be some type of package plant in Warren County, just serving those Industrial properties in the Rockland area. I assume that they would run water at some point, also believe that Frederick Water would like to pursue this project so that they can have access to the river. This is a long-term type of deal, but wanted all to be aware of the request; added that it looks like this would be a separate project and not be running from the line that would be for Clarke County.

John Milleson questioned, and Chris Boies explained that the Frederick County Board of Supervisors endorsed the project initially, so believe this second vote will also be passed.

8. Next Meeting

October 20, 2021, Fall Business Tour
November 17, 2021, Regular Meeting

Christy Dunkle highlighted the following:

- There are new owners of the Battletown Inn; Max and Ruth Emma; have met with them on getting the building up to code, and they are looking at opening in the Spring. Looking at the restoration of nine (9) rooms, a restaurant, and a bar.
- Met with Forest Pritchard gave him contact information for Felicia Hart and Michelle Marino, the new president of Berryville Main Street (BMS). Looking forward to Homespun opening on Main Street.

David Weiss, Chair of the Clarke County Board of Supervisors, thanked the Committee for their comments. He explained that the County received \$2.8 million in American Rescue Plan Funds; will utilize \$300K for other items, and looking to put \$2.5 million toward the broadband project and believe that we can find the other \$2.5 million that is needed. The Board of Supervisors believes that this is an important once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

Adjournment

At 1:46 pm, John Milleson adjourned the meeting.

Minutes Recorded & Transcribed by Brianna R. Taylor