

Approved December 8, 2021

Industrial Development Authority of the Clarke County Virginia
Board of Directors
July 22, 2021, Minutes

A meeting of the Industrial Development Authority of the Clarke County Virginia, held in the Berryville-Clarke County Government Center, Berryville, Virginia, on Thursday, July 22, 2021, at 1:00 pm.

Directors Present: Brian Ferrell, Rodney Pierce, William Wolfe, Ben Cochran, Isreal Preston, English Koontz, and William Waite

Directors Absent: None

Board of Supervisors Liaison: David Weiss, Chair

County Staff: Felicia Hart, Director Economic Development and Tourism
Tiffany Kemp, Clerk

Press: Mickey Powell, Winchester Star

Others Present: None

1. Call to Order

At 1:00 pm, Director Ferrell called the meeting to order.

2. Adoption of Agenda

Director Waite requested a discussion on the Lucketts Market be added to the agenda.

Director Koontz moved to adopt the agenda as amended. The following vote approved the motion:

Ben Cochran	-	Aye
Brian Ferrell	-	Aye
English Koontz	-	Aye
Rodney Pierce	-	Aye
Isreal Preston	-	Aye
William Waite	-	Aye
William Wolfe	-	Aye

3. Approval of Minutes

Director Cochran, seconded by Director Waite, moved to approve the April 22, 2021, minutes as presented. The following vote approved the motion:

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Ben Cochran	-	Aye
Brian Ferrell	-	Aye
English Koontz	-	Aye
Rodney Pierce	-	Aye
Isreal Preston	-	Aye
William Waite	-	Aye
William Wolfe	-	Aye

4. Secretary / Treasurer's Report

A. FY2021 Year-to-Date Check Log

- Director Waite noted no activity since the last meeting. Insurance check and director fees, consistent with last year. One outstanding check was not cashed.

B. Investments Year-to-Date Summary, Year-to-Date Budget, Bond Logs

- Information Only.

C. FY2022 Budget

- Director Waite went over the proposed FY 2022 budget, stating nothing is changing, keeping the additional \$15,000 in professional fees the County asked to put there. However, adding the funds will not be spent without a vote by the Board. David Weiss clarified the Board of Supervisors asked the IDA to hold those funds for the County as a "just in case."
- Director Waite brought up the annual contribution to the Lord Fairfax Small Business Development Center (LFSBDC), noting there had not been an update given to the Board for a number of years. The center has again asked for \$6K; Director Waite is willing in support if everyone else is but would like to know what the money is being used for, whether that be an in-person update or a report sent in for our next meeting and that the information should be put out publically.
 - o Director Koontz supported Director Waite in wanting to hear an update from the LFSBDC, adding that she likes to hear the update, and it was only a few years ago that the contribution amount was raised from \$5-6k. Supports the center but wants to hear from them.
 - Staff will coordinate Director Kriz either visiting or providing a report as to what money was used for and what will be used for again before issuing a check for the FY2022 annual contribution.

Director Waite, seconded by Director Wolfe, moved not to issue the annual contribution to the Lord Fairfax Small Business Development Center until a report is received on how the funds were previously used and anticipated uses of FY2022 funds. The following vote approved the motion:

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Ben Cochran	-	Aye
Brian Ferrell	-	Aye
English Koontz	-	Aye
Rodney Pierce	-	Aye
Isreal Preston	-	Aye
William Waite	-	Aye
William Wolfe	-	Aye

- Director Waite noted the bond revenues would be decreased by \$136.50 each, making the estimated amount for Lord Fairfax \$2,728.50 and Shenandoah University \$ 3,771.50 giving the IDA an estimated total of \$6,500.

Director Waite, seconded by Director Cochran, moved to approve the Treasurer's report as presented and the FY2022 Budget with the bond revenue estimates amended. The following vote approved the motion:

Ben Cochran	-	Aye
Brian Ferrell	-	Aye
English Koontz	-	Aye
Rodney Pierce	-	Aye
Isreal Preston	-	Aye
William Waite	-	Aye
William Wolfe	-	Aye

5. New Business

A. *Director of Economic Development and Tourism Update*

Goals

1. Convene a group of hospitality owners/operators.
 - Group has met once in person. Discussion continues as needed and when appropriate.
 - o I have not heard from anyone (good or bad) regarding the new meals tax.
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.
 - o In another locality, one hotel has decided to hold off on building; in another locality, two are holding off.
 - o In talking with other localities, a majority of the hotels are having difficulty hiring front-line staff.
 - o Locally, the occupancy rate is holding at about 70% right now.
 - o Local hotels are competing against the AirBnBs and short-term rentals.

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3. 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 regarding the Worlds of Work!, Workforce Initiative, and programs Clarke County schools are currently involved in.
 - We have brought in Virginia Career Works, the Virginia Employment Commission, and other local and State agencies as needed for networking.
 - Wrapped up the latest Economic Gardening program. Have met with participants, and they are very pleased with the results and the end product.
 - Note newest Clarke County unemployment numbers. We had an unemployment rate of 3.9% in March – lower than February's rate of 4%, although some of our Main Street businesses are reducing hours because of the lack of employees applying.
4. Engage in a dialogue with property owners of vacant buildings and the developable land to spur economic activity.
 - Ongoing.
 - I update my list weekly of available properties.
5. Evaluate what is needed to make the Berryville Main Street program viable and successful – report back to Joint Committee on a recommendation.
 - Letter received from Berryville Main Street regarding reorganizing.
 - I attended their recently held public meeting, and they have elected nine new board members. They are now working on developing committees.
6. Formalize website and social media strategies for economic development.
 - Work in progress regarding updates.
 - A new website is in design works which 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 a partnership for teaching students.
 - Made BRAR aware of the new Waterloo water/sewer program and the potential at Double Tollgate.
 - Continue meeting one-on-one with realtors to learn of speedbumps/issues/concerns.
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**

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- Continue having broadband meetings/updates/phone calls. We are looking at opportunities to use the new American Rescue Plan funds.
- On behalf of 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 downtime while at the same time vaccinating more people.
- The Commissioner's Office will be visiting each restaurant/store to educate them on the recently passed meals tax program and will be distributing this information.
 - Working with them, I developed handouts for our restaurants regarding available grant monies from the American Rescue Plan program.
- Met with representatives from our local Department of Social Services to make them aware of several local programs and organizations for partnership opportunities.
 - Made them aware of numerous existing programs their clients may be able to take advantage of. Made several introductions to local organizations/businesses for the DSS Director to speak at to update local elected officials (Town of Berryville) and citizens (civic clubs) as to DSS's current reality. We have now set up quarterly meetings for regular updates.
- Have monthly phone calls with representatives of the Virginia Economic Developers Association (VEDA). We continue to update them on the current reality of Clarke County and regionally.
- I have met several times with Ali Farahani, the owner of Oakhurst Cabinetry on Cattleman's Lane.
 - I have made several introductions with local businesses and organizations and a couple of State organizations. I am continuing to work with him on needs/opportunities as they arise.
 - Cochrans gave a tour of the Mill.
- Continue to utilize Christine Kriz from the Lord Fairfax Small Business Development Center.
 - L'Auberge Provencale Bed and Breakfast was announced as The Client of the Year.
 - Director Ferrell added that L'Auberge celebrated its 40th year in business.
- 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 that 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.
 - Director Pierce asked if this will pay for phase II? Felicia Hart stated that it all depends on the property and what is found.
- Regionally participating in the Startup Shenandoah Valley program. This program works with businesses to identify and address their risks while scaling up.

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- Continue to meet regularly with Christy Dunkle for updates/catch-up.
- I continue to meet regularly with Clarke County's Planning and Zoning Directors on updates/catch-ups.
- Have monthly phone calls with representatives of the Virginia Economic Developers Partnership (VEDP). We continue to update them on the current reality of Clarke County and regionally.
 - o VEDP is establishing a new division – Office of Education Economics. I have already made introductions with them and Clarke County High School officials to make them aware of the programs already in place here in Clarke County.
 - o Had a conference call with VEDP's representative regarding international sales.
- Work/talk continues on both the Waterloo and the Double Tollgate areas. Clarke County is still awaiting word back 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.
 - o Virtual Job Fair hosted through the Virginia Employment Commission and several other outlets.
- 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, the creation of an e-commerce website, and accounting software.

SmartAsset Piece

- Clarke County has been rated 8 out of 10 for 2020.
- Working directly with Industrial Development Authority (IDA) and Economic Development Advisory Committee (EDAC) Committees to develop personalized contact lists. This would give each of the committee members an opportunity to talk directly with businesses to find out how we can be of greater assistance. We have a questionnaire that is a work in progress to initiate conversation and help us understand how we can be of assistance.

Tourism

- A travel writer recently visited eight businesses and farms around the County. Betsy Pritchard of Smithfield Farm hosted her for the evening. The writer visited such businesses as Blandy, The Buttery, The Lockes Store, various businesses downtown, The Nimbus Alpaca Farm, etc.
- Continue to write blogs for State, regional, and local use
- Continue conversations with our local farmers/farm markets about needs and opportunities
- 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. They are sharing and posting positive comments on our wineries and breweries.

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- Expanded blog opportunities listings with the Shenandoah Valley Tourism Partnership (SVTP) and the Shenandoah Valley Travel Association (SVTA)
- Continue to update the Virginia Tourism Corporation (VTC) website regarding Clarke County and our assets/businesses.
- Included in the packet is the Clarke County census.
 - o Noted some of the businesses are not correct as they are in other localities.
 - o Contains really good information.

B. Broadband Efforts Update

Chris Boies provided the following updates:

- Board of Supervisors approved a resolution to enter into a study period with All Points Broadband (APB) to look at a potential regional VATI grant opportunity for universal fiber to the home using a partnership of APB, Rappahannock Electric (RE), Shenandoah Valley Electric (SVE), and Dominion Power (DP).
- APB has done a similar project in the Northern neck, which included six counties. The state-level representative has said APB has been great to work with.
- The first of a three-step process is to allow APB to come in and determine the underserved areas of the County; the grant funding is only available for underserved areas. APB will conduct a survey of Clarke County over the next 30 days to determine the underserved areas. The current mapping is not very accurate. APB will work with RE to get universal Broadband to the County.
- APB and RE will figure out a plan and present to the County the cost of the project, how much grant funding is available, how much they will cover, and the remaining budget the County would need to cover.
- The County will know that number by the end of August because the grant deadline is the middle of September. The Board of Supervisors, at the end of August, will decide if they want to continue with the project or not. There is no penalty if the Board of Supervisors decides not to continue with the project.
- The County has \$2-2.5m of the Federal American Relief Funds set aside for that type of use. We don't know the actual number yet. If the County is given a price that it feels it can cover, the County will then submit a VATI application and find out in December if our project was funded. Construction could then begin and be expected to take two-three years to build out the infrastructure, but the project would be bringing fiber to the home in the unserved areas.
- This does not help the areas that already have an internet option.
- This is a regional project that will likely be done through the Regional Planning District.
- The expected areas included are Frederick County, Warren County, maybe Shenandoah County, Rockingham County, Augusta County, and Page County. It's a pretty attractive project for the State to fund because it will take a large chunk of the State and serve them.
- David Weiss added that the Board of Supervisors felt that because there were two opportunities to not fund the project if unable, it was a good safety net to utilize.

Director Ferrell

- Asked if this was a Shenandoah Valley Regional project? Adding that he had heard in the Fauquier paper, The Fauquier Board of Supervisors is claiming in three years, everyone would have Broadband.
 - Chris Boies clarified the Clarke County Board of Supervisors is not promising anything at this point. Adding that Fauquier County is in the same position Clarke is, but they are trying to complete the project by themselves.
 - David Weiss reiterated the Clarke County Board of Supervisors is not promising anything until we see what the costs are. Technically, with a VATI application, it is an 18-month project, but the State understands that a project of this size is difficult to accomplish in that timeframe; APB seems to feel a two-three year timeframe is reasonable. The Board of Supervisors does not want this project to hang out there for five or more years. Feels this is the County's best chance at the moment.
 - Chris Boies added that if this project were to stumble at any point, there is a backup project to do a fixed wireless project to serve roughly 2,000 households.

C. Double Toll Gate Update

Chris Boies provided the following updates:

- Requested from Frederick County permission to negotiate with Frederick Water for water and sewer at Double Tollgate.
- That successfully went through the Frederick County Planning Commission Comprehensive Plan Committee, then successfully went through the Frederick County Planning Commission meeting, and was on schedule for the July Board of Supervisors meeting, but they ended up with a full docket, and the County Administrator requested we move to August 11 agenda where we hope they give us the approval to negotiate with Frederick Water.
- This is a possible use of the \$15K IDA budget line item for professional services if the County needed some kind of preliminary study or to justify the numbers that Frederick Water provides us.
- The plan, we believe, will be approved by the Frederick Board of Supervisors is that they would run a force main to the Perkins Mill plant.
- Frederick County has decided they want to build out the entire 522 corridors, and they want this project to include that area and have force main go to the Perkins Mill plant north on 522.
- If the Frederick County Board of Supervisors approves that plan, Clarke County will be able to negotiate with Frederick Water and find out what our costs are for our portion of the project. The County may need a civil engineer to assist with determining if that is a fair price or not, which the County could come to IDA for help with funds.

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- Clarke would then have to negotiate with Frederick Water on the final amount and time frame, then go back to the Board of Supervisors.
- Potentially, depending on the cost, could issue bonds through the IDA to pay for that project. We will see how the vote goes on August 11.

D. Lucketts Market

- Felicia Hart stated she reports to the Joint Committee and last Friday made a point of wanting to enhance the relationship between the County and the Ruritans and the programs coming in at the Fairgrounds. Adding that the businesses in town usually do not know if events are happening which causes problems. Right now, we don't have an open dialogue. However, Sarah from the Visitor's Center has reached out and wants to be a part of that program.

Director Waite

- Feels it does not seem like Berryville or Clarke County has done anything to help get the word out.
 - o Felicia Hart stated this was just the start of the process; we just found out they secured the contract at the fairgrounds. Once we know about it, we can help promote it.
 - Director Waite clarified he hears two points, how to promote these activities for businesses that Clarke County will support, but had heard a few thousand cars came through a few years ago. That many vehicles have the ability to generate a lot of business and be prepared for the numbers coming through.
 - o Chris Boies pointed out that Felicia Hart is trying to insert herself in the process to get into the meetings so she knows what is coming up but to also help market the fairgrounds and the County as a place that these entities should come to. She is trying to accomplish this gently, but she is trying to insert her way into that conversation.

Director Cochran

- Inquired into the date of the Lockett's Market? Felicia Hart clarified that Lockett's Market takes place in October.

Director Ferrell

- Pointed out a recent concert at fairgrounds a few weeks ago and noticed nothing showed up on social media about it until a few days before the event. Wondered what the turnout was for that.
 - o Felicia Hart noted there was no communication with the County because they haven't been able to look at the County as a resource in the past. She is trying to get them to communicate with us so we can help.

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- Also pointed out Watermelon Pickers Fest will be happening at the fairgrounds soon and wonders if the fairgrounds will allow the County to help with that promotion or not.
 - o Felicia Hart noted there are many events happening, and she wants to be able to help promote as much as possible.

David Weiss

- Asked if there was active communication happening with the Ruritans? Felicia Hart confirmed and added that she attended the membership meeting last night.

Business Contacts Update:

- Felicia Hart reminded the Directors of an email sent out asking each to get back to her with three business contacts.
- Felicia Hart asks that each person gets with her on the businesses they would like to work with so she can create a spreadsheet to ensure no one is duplicating their businesses.
- Tiffany Kemp will email the sample questions to act as the ice breaker. Felicia Hart added she does not expect the Directors to be experts but help feel out what assistance they may need from the County.
- Once each Director meets with their businesses, she would like to sit down with each Director to find out what they have learned and provide the information they can pass along that she has as a resource for County businesses.

Director Cochran

- Asked for clarification if this was for existing businesses or new businesses trying to start up. Felicia Hart confirmed this is for existing businesses.
 - o Chris Boies added that the County is spending a lot of time with prospective buyers on some properties in the County; vacant land zoned properly for businesses. One may come to fruition, but conversations are currently happening, and there is interest in some of those properties, but it is too early to say because there are no contracts signed yet. There are quite a few conversations going on between potential buyers, and Felicia Hart does a great job of lining folks up with the appropriate parties to ensure a smooth conversation from the beginning.

Director Waite

- Pointed out he has reached out to one business and is trying to get the right contact for another, wondered if there was a timeline to get back together to discuss the results. Adding he was worried about confidentiality and how those findings would be delivered.
 - Felicia Hart clarified that if a business has said they want to keep the discussions private, to let her know. Once she gets the sheets back from each Director, she will then be able to schedule individual meetings to smooth out any speed bumps adding that phone calls work too.

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- Chris Boies added that what is mentioned to this group is an aggregate of the theme of what was discussed. Don't mention specifics in open meetings, but generalizations.

Please get with Felicia Hart by July 29, 2021, with what businesses each would like to meet with. She would like to schedule meetings with each Director in early September to discuss what was learned.

6. Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, October 28, 2021, at 1:00 pm.

7. Adjournment

Director Koontz, seconded by Director Waite, moved to adjourn the meeting. The following vote approved the motion:

Ben Cochran	-	Aye
Brian Ferrell	-	Aye
English Koontz	-	Aye
Rodney Pierce	-	Aye
Isreal Preston	-	Aye
William Waite	-	Aye
William Wolfe	-	Aye

At 1:47 pm, Director Ferrell adjourned the meeting.

Minutes recorded and transcribed by Tiffany R. Kemp, IDA Clerk