

**Campbell County
Economic Development Commission/CEDS Committee**

March 21, 2019

The regular meeting of the Campbell County Economic Development Commission was held on Thursday, March 21, 2019, in the Campbell County Citizen Services Building Conference Room, Rustburg, Virginia.

Members Present:

Willie Jones	Richard Carroll	Eric Fletcher
George Rosser	Hugh Bragg	Scott Tweedy
William Anderson	Kathy Carson	Scott Blankinship
Frank Davis	Richard Metz	

Members Absent:

None

Also Present:

Mike Davidson, Director of Economic Development
Sarah Johnson, Program Manager, Economic Development
Kim Stewart, Administrative Assistant, Economic Development

// Chairman Willie Jones called the meeting to order at 12:02 p.m.

// A motion was made by Mr. Richard Metz to approve the minutes of September 20, 2018, and seconded by Mr. Scott Tweedy. With all in favor and none opposed, the motion passed unanimously.

// Mrs. Sarah Johnson reviewed the Project Updates provided to the members prior to the meeting. Several industrial projects have made good progress since the last meeting. Highlights include that Abbott is pursuing a TROF grant through the Tobacco Commission, Centra Health's project along Simon's Run is continuing to move forward, and Tru by Hilton has their construction permit and will begin construction soon, weather permitting. The Wards Road Construction Project is also moving forward and construction is slated to begin in the spring.

// Under the Projects and Activities, Mrs. Johnson announced that she is now a graduate of Oklahoma University Economic Development Institute (OUEDI). Other projects include Economic Development's current progress of training and reconnecting with various leads through the department's contracted prospect company. Additionally, existing business visitation meetings, conferences, and calls were made with several Campbell County businesses since the Commission last met.

// The new Pasture Grant Phase II will commence soon and applications are expected the first of June. The Brookneal Campbell County Airport security fence has been brought back into compliance with FAA regulations following grading the area and lowering the height of the fence. However, the crack seal contract left some of the runway out of the contract and additional runway crack sealing needs to be performed. The Lynchburg Regional Airport has interest in creating a site for a Manufacturing Repair and Overhaul (MRO) facility for aircraft that Liberty University is interested in helping find a potential operator for. Chairman Jones asked if this facility would be just for LU's aircraft but Mike answered that it would be a commercial hangar and would be capable of servicing aircraft as large as a Boeing 737, although the runway can accommodate any size aircraft.

// Economic Development (E.D.) continues to market Campbell County's privately and publicly owned industrial sites. The Industrial Development Authority's (IDA) building is complete and under lease. E.D. has been working with Shentel and Simplimatic Automation, the company leasing the IDA building, for monthly funding to help pay for electricity as well as a one-time fee to help pay for the park's entrance sign. E.D. is also working to get Simplimatic's name up on the sign.

// E.D. is working to rename the portion of Simon's Run that runs up to Leesville Road. We also continue to work with Tourism and the Artisan Trail, and also with the Towns of Altavista and Brookneal to promote them as well.

// Mrs. Johnson then explained a new program that is being developed and will encompass the Economic Development department along with several other county staff called 52-In-52. E.D. currently has a business visitation program and this project will entail revamping the process with a push to visit more small businesses as well as to continue the visitation with the large county businesses. Mrs. Johnson shared that the lack of a strong workforce has continued to be a problem that visited businesses have mentioned. Mr. Davidson added that there will also be informal and formal meetings held throughout the year to focus on business visitation as a part of the 52-In-52 program.

// Mrs. Johnson then turned the group's attention to discussion of the CEDS 2017 Update to discuss the Goals & Objectives and Performance Measures that were selected and to receive input from the group.

// **Education—Workforce Training:** Businesses are experiencing a lack of quality employees. The employees lack soft skills. Mr. Davidson asked the group if they have experienced employers mentioning what skill sets they are looking for. At a recent business visitation with the Floor Show, E.D. discovered they are having difficulty finding employees with the skills to lay carpet or tile. Mrs. Kathy Carson mentioned that some schools are implementing classes on money management. Mr. Metz added that such classes as Home Economics used to be standard offerings. In response to these comments, Mrs. Johnson told the group that the technical schools are working with students to provide not only a college track but a trade school track.

// **Business Development:** Mrs. Johnson reminded the group that E.D. works with a consultant to attract businesses to the area and briefly mentioned the 52-In-52 program once more, as it may serve as a means to retain the businesses in the area. Chairman Jones asked if the lack of ready buildings is what is keeping new businesses away, or is it the trade skills factor or lack of broadband? Mrs. Johnson answered that it is probably a combination; however, the lack of ready buildings is a big factor. Mr. Davidson added that the only calls he gets are from businesses looking for buildings, and he used the IDA's building as an example: as soon as construction was complete, a company had already signed a lease for it. Mr. George Rosser asked if any businesses are interested in the Dearing Ford Business and Manufacturing Center, but Mr. Davidson answered that potential businesses feel that it is too far away and even feel that Seneca Commerce Park is not ideally located, even being right on Route 29S.

// **Infrastructure:** Mrs. Johnson reminded the group that Mr. Davidson just finished submitting a broadband application and that there is a Broadband Authority in the county that has been meeting. Also, E.D. has met with several providers. Mr. Richard Metz asked if there were any capital improvement funds for infrastructure and Mr. Davidson answered that the schools have gone a long time without improvements and will require around \$70-90 million dollars over the next ten years. Also, the 1970s-era county telephone system is in need of upgrading. But there is not CIP money for infrastructure aside from those at the moment. Mr. Metz stated that [the county] can guide development, but there has to be infrastructure to do it. Members expressed comments regarding the proposed meals tax as a way for the county to gain free revenue for infrastructure through visitors to the area, those living in neighboring counties, and county citizens alike all choosing to eat in county establishments.

// **Transportation:** Chairman Jones asked if any progress has been made toward forming a partnership with the City of Lynchburg to develop and market the industrial zoned land adjoining the Lynchburg Regional Airport, 100 acres of which belongs to Campbell County. There are ongoing conversations, Mr. Davidson answered, although no action is guaranteed to occur. Campbell County, however, is looking to potentially develop the part of the property that just belongs to Campbell County and to see how much it would cost to do that. VDOT is looking at areas the county would have to change in order to have an industrial park developed at that location.

// **Tourism:** Mrs. Johnson mentioned that the county continues to market the area through the Artisan Trail, through a new tourism brochure, through the Virginia Travel Guide ads with the state, and through the Economic Development website. Mrs. Carson asked if the county uses social media to market, and Mrs. Johnson answered that the county does implement social media but the E.D. department does not. Mr. Davidson added that although social media itself is free, that the department does not have the staff available and the budget for marketing does not allow for the extra marketing resources that would be required. Mrs. Carson then suggested partnering with local high schools to utilize students as interns. Mr. Scott Blankinship thought it would be a good idea. Mrs. Johnson then mentioned a YouTube account the county has where they have uploaded promotional video information about the county but does not know if it was pushed on social media. There are also other videos on the county website promoting the county.

// **Housing:** Mrs. Johnson mentioned the new housing being constructed off of Waterlick Road. She then asked if the members know of anything in particular people are looking for and Mr. Blankinship stated that people are looking for water and sewer. Mrs. Carson added that affordable housing is nonexistent unless \$350,000 or more is considered affordable. Mr. Rosser asked if people are buying older houses that need work and then having to put \$50,000 worth of work into them and Mrs. Carson confirmed that that process is occurring. She indicated that buyers cannot find housing in the Forest, Brookville, Timberlake, Rustburg, Concord areas. Mr. Rosser asked if Campbell County can receive Federal grant funding for sewer and water, but Mr. Davidson explained that Campbell County does not have the distressed criteria to be eligible for Federal grants. Mr. Scott Tweedy then asked if the county could apply for Tobacco Commission money but Mr. Davidson stated that they would not fund residential infrastructure projects. Mr. Blankinship asked if the county could offer help, but Mr. Frank Davis stated that they couldn't with water and sewer. Mr. Davidson added that the Board of Supervisors has discussed if it would be possible but the problem is finding a way to be able to do it.

// **Community Development:** Our E.D. department has met with the Community Development department to determine how we can help make the permitting processes more efficient for business owners. Mr. Blankinship asked if this was regarding the building inspectors as well and suggested that the inspectors' jobs could be made more efficient if they were provided cell phones to take business calls while they are out in the field. Mrs. Carson agreed and added that the Health Department is the same way, although it was also mentioned that the Health Department is understaffed.

// **Towns:** The E.D. department continues to have meetings with the towns to help with promoting and attracting people to the towns. No comments were provided by the commission members.

// **Planning:** The E.D. department continues to plan and research to identify growth areas and continues to research the need and availability for infrastructure. No comments were provided by the commission members.

// **Resources:** The E.D. department collaborates with the other county departments to try to find ways to help the county grow and thrive. No comments were provided by the commission members.

// With the conclusion of the discussion regarding the CEDS 2017 Update Performance Measures to Evaluate Goals and Objectives, Mrs. Johnson turned the meeting back over to Chairman Jones, who asked for any questions the members may like to bring up. Mr. Tweedy asked if Mr. Davidson knew who bought the orchard in Rustburg. Mrs. Carson indicated that she could find out.

// With no other questions presented, Chairman Jones called for a motion to adjourn. Mr. Metz motioned and Mr. Carroll seconded, and the meeting adjourned at 1:07 p.m. The next meeting of the Campbell County Economic Development Commission will take place on Thursday, June 20, at 12:00 noon.